

**United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
East Central and South-East Europe Division (ECSEED)**

**The Nineteenth Session of the
East Central and South-East Europe Division
of the UNGEGN**

Zagreb, Croatia, 19 – 21 November 2008
Item 3, 5, 9, 10, 13 and 14 of the agenda

Document Symbol: ECSEED/Session.19/2008/12

Report of Poland 2007-2008

Submitted by Poland*

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**19th Session of the East, Central and South-East Europe Division
of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names**
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1. National standardization

Establishing geographical names

Geographical names within Poland are established in various ways, depending on the type of object described:

- the names of administrative units (voivodships, counties and communes) and their seats being established by acts of parliament and bills of Council of Ministers
- the names of districts of Warsaw city are established by act of parliament
- the names of localities and physiographic objects are established by ordinances of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, after consultation with the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects
- the names of areas of protected nature are established at central government (names of national parks), voivodship (landscape parks, reserves) and local levels (reserves and other protected areas)
- the names of streets squares, parks etc. are established by commune and city councils

Organizations standardizing geographical names

Two organizations exist in Poland which deal with standardizing geographical names:

- *Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects (Komisja Nazw Miejscowości i Obiektów Fizjograficznych)*, affiliated to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, establishes names used within Poland's boundaries
- *Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland (Komisja Standaryzacji Nazw Geograficznych poza Granicami Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej)*, affiliated at the Surveyor General of Poland, responsible for standardizing Polish geographical names of the world.

The Commission for Establishing Names of Localities nominated in 1948 initially dealt with standardizing geographical names in Poland. In 1948 it was transformed into the Commission for Establishing Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects and in 2003 into the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects. The Commission delivers opinions on applications to establish, amend or eliminate official geographical names, on projects of official lists of geographical names as well as proposes the establishing, amending or eliminating of official names of unpopulated localities and their parts. On receiving the opinion of the Commission, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration changes the names, such changes being published once yearly as a Minister's ordinance in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland (Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polski)*. These changes always take effect on the 1 January. Addresses of the Internet websites of the appropriate ordinances in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* are listed on: http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/standar_nazw_geo_pl.php.

It was the Commission of Geographical Names appointed in 1951 at the Polish Geographical Society which initially dealt with standardizing Polish geographical names of the world. That commission was moved to the Institute of Polish Geography in the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1953 and renamed to the Commission to Establish Geographical Names. The Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names of the World was appointed at the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology in 1973. In 1984 its name was changed to the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside Poland. The Commission operated under the Minister of National Education since 1988 and since 2000 at

the Surveyor General of Poland. In 2001 its name was changed once more to Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland. The Commission changed its ministerial affiliation several time in recent years: in 2005 it was shifted to the Ministry of Transport and Construction, in 2006 to the Ministry of Construction and in 2007 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration.

The Commission mainly deals with establishing the Polish exonyms and the spelling of foreign geographical names used in Poland. The Commission's decisions are currently published on website (www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy_pol.php).

Legislation concerning geographical names

An "Act on official names of localities and physiographical objects" ("Ustawa o urzędowych nazwach miejscowości i obiektów fizjograficznych") was approved in 2003, in place of the "Ordinance of the President of the Republic of Poland on establishing names of localities and on numbering properties" ("Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej o ustaleniu nazw miejscowości i o numeracji nieruchomości.") which came into force in 1934. In the new Act the following were defined:

- objects for which official names are established
- principles and manner of establishing, amending and eliminating official names of localities and their parts and also official names of physiographical objects
- operating principles of the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects
- the manner of establishing and publishing lists of official names of localities and their parts and also physiographic objects.

In 2005 an "Act on national and ethnic minorities and on regional languages" was approved (the English-language version of this Act is available on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration: www.mswia.gov.pl/download.php?s=1&id=2327). It is the first ever Act in Polish post-war history which comprehensively regulates issues of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities. Till recently Polish legislation concerning these matters was fragmented in many legal regulations while some issues had never been codified at all. From the viewpoint of geographic names, two regulations of this Act are of great significance. It introduces the possibility of using minority languages in selected areas and also geographic names in those languages.

Multilingual areas

Consistent with the definitions in the "Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on regional languages", national minorities (Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish) and ethnic minorities (Karaim, Lemko, Roma and Tartar) appear in Poland as well as a minority using a regional language (Kashubian). The new Act allows the language of these 14 minorities to be used as a "supporting language" in contacts with commune bodies and also in first instance court procedures. A minority language as a supporting language may be used exclusively within those communes where the population belonging to the minority whose language is to be used amounts to at least 20 percent of a given commune's population and the commune has been entered in the "Official Register of Municipalities where a Supporting Language is Used" (Urządowy Rejestr Gmin, w których jest używany język pomocniczy"). Entry into the Register is performed exclusively on an application of the council of the commune in which the minority language is to be obligatory. At present only four minorities (Belarusians, Kashubians, Lithuanians and Germans) account for at least 20% of the inhabitants of 51

communes, among which 21 introduced supporting languages by 24 November 2008: Belarusian in Hajnówka urban commune in Podlaskie Voivodship, Kashubian in Parchowo and Sierakowice communes in Pomorskie Voivodship, Lithuanian in Puńsk commune in Podlaskie Voivodship and German in 17 communes of Opolskie Voivodship (Biała, Bierawa, Chrzastowice, Izbicko, Jemielnica, Kolonowskie, Lasowice Wielkie, Leśnica, Prószków, Radłów, Reńska Wieś, Strzeleczyki, Tarnów Opolski, Turawa, Ujazd, Walce, Zębowice).

The Act also lays down that traditional names in a minority language for localities, physiographic objects and streets may be used as “additional names” alongside geographic names established in the Polish language. The names of uninhabited localities, physiographic objects as well as streets, squares etc. in minority languages may be established only for communes in which the minority constitutes at least 20% of the inhabitants. In the case of inhabited localities, minority names may be set also for communes that do not satisfy the quantitative requirement of minorities residing therein (20%). For such places an additional name in the minority language may be introduced if in consultations more than a half of its residents were in favor of the establishment of an additional name. Names of localities and physiographic objects in minority languages may be introduced throughout a whole commune or for parts of it.

175 German names for localities in 15 communes (Biała, Chrzastowice, Cisek, Dobrodzień, Izbicko, Jemielnica, Kolonowskie, Krzanowice, Leśnica, Radłów, Rudnik, Strzeleczyki, Tarnów Opolski, Ujazd, Zębowice) in Opolskie and Śląskie Voivodships, 86 Kashubian names for localities in 2 communes (Chmielno, Stężycza) in Pomorskie Voivodship, 30 Lithuanian names for localities in 1 commune (Puńsk) in Podlaskie Voivodship and Lemko (Rusyn) name in 1 commune (Gorlice) in Małopolskie Voivodship had been introduced by 24 November 2008.

2. Exonyms

Standardizing exonyms is the task of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland affiliated at the Surveyor General of Poland. The Commission’s decisions do not have normative power but are recommendations. The Commission meets 4 to 7 times yearly, delivering its opinions on proposals standardizing Polish geographical names of the world, their amendments or elimination from the list of recommended exonyms. The Commission met 11 times in 2007 and 2008, at which it delivered 1097 decisions on geographical names. All amendments introduced in Polish exonyms are published on the Commission’s website (www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy_pol.php).

Work on issuing a gazetteer of the world’s more important geographical objects has been undertaken since 2002, which is also to contain all Polish exonyms. During work on this gazetteer working volumes are issued (to the moment 9 volumes of the gazetteer have appeared, containing around 50,000 names: Vol. 1. America, Australia and Oceania, Vol. 2. Middle East, Vol. 3. Africa, Vol. 4. South Asia, Vol. 5. Central Asia and Transcaucasia, Vol. 6. Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Vol. 7. South-East Asia, Vol. 8. Antarctica, Vol. 9. East Asia), with work connected with its publication being planned for 2009.

3. Toponymic data files

The final stage of work on elaborating a State Register of Geographical Names is presently under way, consisting of names verification. Currently the State Register of Geographical Names holds approximately 173,000 names of which ~105,000 are names of localities, ~16,000 are names of water objects and ~52,000 are names of land shaping objects.

The names contained in the Register will be published in a national gazetteer both as an Internet georeference database as well as a printed publication. Separate parts of the gazetteer of Poland will appear as the verification process progresses.

Moreover, the Central Statistical Office runs the base of official geographical names named “National Official Register of the Territorial Division of the Country” (“Krajowy Rejestr Urzędowy Podziału Terytorialnego Kraju”). That document contains a regularly updated list of units of the territorial division (4082 names), a specification of names of localities (102 624 names) and a specification of names of streets (223 803 names). All names are accessible on the Internet website of Central Statistical Office: <http://www.stat.gov.pl/broker/access/definitionTree.jspa>.

Geographical names bases are being elaborated and are held also by other government and scientific institutions. However these are mainly not official collections, but have only been created for the short-term purposes of a specific institution.

National gazetteer

Consistent with the decisions of the “Act of 29 August 2003 on official names of localities and physiographic objects” a list of official names of localities and their parts should appear by the end of 2008 (but works are delayed) and, by the end of 2013, a list of official names of physiographical objects. Work is presently under way on collecting standardized forms of names in the State Register of Geographical Names. The present outcome of this work is the publication (issued in 2006) of the first volume of a national gazetteer of Poland “Geographical Names of Poland, volume 1. Hydronyms”. A total of 15,857 names are mentioned in the list – 8100 names of streams, 136 names of sources (springs), 16 names of waterfalls and 7605 names of standing waters. The list is also accessible on the Internet website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland: http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/ngopv_01.php.

4. Toponymic websites

The commissioning of a georeference Internet database is planned for 2009 on geoportal.gov.pl website (official Polish geoportal is run by the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography). Toponymic data can presently be found on the Internet website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland (www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/) and some others web-sites. Data in this website are regularly updated in the following lists:

- changes in Polish names of the world: www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy_pol.php, only in Polish (website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland)
- National Gazetteer of Poland, Volume 1. Hydronyms: www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/ngopv_01.php (website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland)
- list of names of voivodships, counties and their seats: http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/pliki/podzial_administracyjny_polski_2006-eng.pdf (website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland)
- list of communes (third stage administrative units) and their seats: <http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/pliki/gminy2008.pdf>, only in Polish (website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland)

- list of changes in the administrative division of Poland:
http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/mapa_adm.php, only in Polish (website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland)
- official list of names in minority languages in Poland (“Register of the communes where place-names in minority language are used”):
<http://www.mswia.gov.pl/download.php?s=1&id=2424>, only in Polish (website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration)
- list of country names: http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/wykaz_panstw_3.php (website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland)
- semi-official list of names of administrative units, localities and streets arranged in the administrative division contained in the National Official Register of the Territorial Division of the Country: <http://www.stat.gov.pl/broker/access/definitionTree.jspa>, only in Polish (website of the Central Statistical Office)

5. International cooperation

The Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland participated actively in:

- May 19-21 2008: Symposium GeoNames08 (DGSD) in Vienna
- August 12-15 2008: 31st Congress of the International Geographical Union in Tunis
- September 9-11 2008: meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms in Timișoara
- September 16-18, 2008: meeting of the Baltic Division in Kaliningrad

6. Country names

In the end of 2007 the Commission published the third updated issue of the “Names of countries, their capitals and inhabitants” list in which the names of independent countries, non-self-governing, dependent and selected autonomous territories are taken into account. This list names 193 independent countries, 72 non-self-governing territories and territories of undetermined or disputed status as well as 34 autonomous territories. The list presents all accessible information of names in the official languages of the countries and territories, taking into consideration names of countries and territories as well as their capitals in those languages. As a result the list holds names in 123 official languages, 41 languages are given in official non-Roman alphabets. A Polish-English dictionary of country names is enclosed to the list. Publication is accessible on the Commission’s website: http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/wykaz_panstw_3.php.