

**Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names
Outside the Republic of Poland
Komisja Standaryzacji Nazw Geograficznych
poza Granicami Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej**

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**Report of Poland on the situation in the standardization of geographical names
(for the period since the 3rd Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names in New York, 2023)**

1. Official names

Names of localities and physiographic objects, according to the *Act of 29 August 2003 on official names of localities and physiographic objects*, are standardized by the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects and next approved by a regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration published in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland*.

The latest, third edition of the national gazetteer entitled *List of official names of localities and their parts* was published in December 2019. The list contains 102,875 official names of localities and their parts, in it: 940 names of towns and cities, 43,057 names of villages, 6,783 names of parts of towns and cities, 36,044 names of parts of villages, 5,137 names of settlements, 4,585 names of hamlets of villages, and 6,329 other names.

Changes of the names given in the list are introduced each year on January 1 after publication in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland*. These modifications are the result of both changes in the names themselves and changes in types of a locality.

The following changes took place on January 1, 2024:

- 92 new locality names were established,
- 859 names were changed (including 90 changes of the name, 12 changes of the name and type of locality, and 757 changes of the type of locality only), and
- 213 names were abolished.

A large number of changes in the types of localities result from the fact that local authorities adapted the type of localities to the regulations according to which only in independent localities can separate address numbers for buildings be provided – most of these changes concern the transformation of non-independent localities into independent ones.

Moreover, regulations of the Council of Ministers on boundaries change might bring changes of a type of locality (as the result of changes of boundaries of cities and towns). Based on this regulation, on January 1, 2024, 34 villages were granted town status.

Names of administrative units (voivodships, counties and communes) and their seats are set by acts of Parliament and regulations of the Council of Ministers. On January 1, 2024, the name of "Słupsk" rural commune (in Pomorskie Voivodship), for the third level administrative unit, was changed into "Redzikowo" commune.

2. Multilingual areas

Consistent with the definitions in the *Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional language*, national minorities (Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian,

German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish), ethnic minorities (Karaim, Lemko, Roma and Tartar) as well as a minority using a regional language (Kashubian) appear in Poland.

There is an ongoing discussion about giving the Silesian language the status of a regional language. On April 26 this year, the Sejm (lower house of Polish Parliament) adopted an appropriate act on this matter. However, the legislative process has not ended yet.

The Act 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.

Till 2023 additional names in minority languages were introduced for 1252 localities. This number consists of 359 German names in 31 communes, 827 Kashubian names in 27 communes, 30 Lithuanian names in one commune, 27 Belarusian names in one commune and 9 Lemko names in 2 communes. In January 2024 two more Kashubian names were established. At the same time, two parts of villages for which additional Kashubian names had been adopted were abolished (see point 1). Therefore, the total number of localities with additional names in minority languages remained unchanged.

3. Exonyms

Standardizing exonyms is the task of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland. The Commission’s decisions do not have normative power but are recommendations. The Commission meets at least 4 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 second edition of the list of Polish exonyms, entitled *Official list of Polish geographical names of the world*, was published at the end of 2019. This is updated edition of the first list of 2013, without significant alterations. It lists Polish names for 13,599 geographical objects that lie outside the boundaries of Poland. For each object the Polish name and the original name (endonym) are given.

The list is updated regularly. In the period from May 2023 to May 2024 the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland standardized 7 Polish exonyms, changed 13 exonyms and delisted 4 exonyms.

The Commission determined that for the Russian city of Kaliningrad the only recommended Polish name would be *Królewiec*, and for the administrative unit the *obwód królewiecki*, not the *obwód kaliningradzki* [Kaliningrad Oblast]. This change entered into force on May 9, 2023. This Commission decision received wide publicity. It was reported not only by domestic media but also by many foreign media.

The decision also caused a great reaction on the Russian side – it was commented in an abusive way, among others by: former president Medvedev and presidential spokesman Peskov. On the Russian side, there were proposals, also made by high representatives of the government, to establish German names as Russian exonyms for Poland’s main cities as a form of retaliation, or even to establish a new Russian name for Poland. The issue of changing the recommended Polish name for Kaliningrad was also dealt with by the Committee of the Federation Council (i.e. the upper house of the Russian Parliament) for the protection of state sovereignty and prevention of interference in the internal affairs of the Russian Federation.

The Commission has also decided to elaborate an addendum to the list containing the Polish names of the most important buildings and other urban objects. By the end of 2023, all substantive work was completed. Editorial work is currently underway, and the publication is planned for autumn 2024. The addendum contains Polish names for 1690 buildings and other urban objects.

In addition, the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography has prepared the geoportal that allows browsing of Polish geographical names of the world (Polish exonyms) on the map along with obtaining information on a given object contained in the Official list of Polish geographical names of the world.

4. Toponymic data files and open data

The National Register of Geographical Names (PRNG) is maintained by the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography.

Currently (as on 20th April 2024) the Register holds 255,877 names of which 124,442 are names of localities and its parts and 131,435 are names of physiographic objects (22,882 names of water objects, 33,305 names of land shaping objects, and 75,248 names of other objects).

In the Register the following types of names are collected: official names (i.e. names published by the ordinance of the Minister – 137,829 names), standardized names (i.e. names adopted by the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects but not yet published by ordinance of the Minister – 26,597 names), unstandardized names (i.e. other names listed on topographic maps or other sources – 91,451 names), and minority names (1,252 names).

Since 17 July 2014 on the basis of the *Geodetic and Cartographic Law of May 17, 1989* all data from the National Register of Geographical Names are available free of charge. The Register is available through a national access point – National Geoportal: geoportal.gov.pl. The data are published in .shp, .xls and .gml formats, and updated on the website every 3 months. Additionally, through geoportal.gov.pl, it is possible to searching, browsing, and viewing names with attributes according to accepted criteria.

Publications prepared by the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland are also available as an open data:

- Official list of Polish geographical names of the world
- Official list of names of countries and non-self-governing territories
- Toponymic Guidelines of Poland for Map Editors and Other Users
- List of English names of major geographical features situated in the territory of the Republic of Poland
- Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names (Polish edition)
- Romanization rules
- List of Polish locality names from Ukraine

5. Country names

In consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Council for the Polish Language the seventh edition of the *Official list of names of countries and non-self-governing territories* was published at the end of 2023. The list contains 195 countries recognized by the Republic of Poland (namely: 193 member states of the United Nations Organization, as well as Kosovo and Vatican City) and 69 non-self-governing territories.

The names of countries, territories, and their capitals included in the list have obtained approval of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The footnotes explaining the status of countries and territories have been provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The adjectives derived from names of countries and territories, as well as names of citizens and inhabitants have been provided in line with the opinion provided by the Orthography and Onomastics Unit of the Council for the Polish Language of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The list is published in Polish only, but the inset in English has been also prepared.

6. Co-operation with neighborhood countries and international organizations

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

- 1-5 May, 2013 (New York, United States): 3rd Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, including meetings of: the Working Group on Exonyms (1 May), the East Central and South-East Europe Division (2 May), the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology (2 May), the Working Group on Romanization Systems (3 May), the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy (5 May)
- 5 September, 2023 (Prague [Praha], Czechia): 7th Joint Tripartite Meeting of Geographical Names Commissions of Czechia, Poland and Slovakia
- 13-18 August, 2023 (Cape Town, South Africa): toponymic sessions of the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy during the 31st International Cartographic Conference of the International Cartographic Association
- 14 November, 2023 (on-line): 4th Meeting of UNGEGN Bureau and Division Chairs
- 12 April, 2024 (on-line): 5th Meeting of UNGEGN Bureau and Division Chairs

Poland is the chair-country of the UNGEGN Baltic Division for the period 2021-2025.