

**Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names  
Outside the Republic of Poland  
Комиссия по стандартизации географических названий  
за пределами Республики Польша  
Komisja Standaryzacji Nazw Geograficznych  
poza Granicami Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej**

Maciej Zych  
Vice-Chairman of the Commission

**Report of Poland on the situation in the standardization of geographical names  
(for the period since the 20th Meeting of the Baltic Division in Riga)**

### **1. National names authorities**

There are two commissions engaged in the standardization of geographical names in Poland:

**Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects** (established in 1934), affiliated to the Minister of the Interior and Administration, establishes names used within Poland's boundaries. After receiving the opinion of the Commission the Minister publishes names' changes in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland*.

The new composition of the Commission was appointed in mid-2021, for 4-years term. The Commission composes 13 members: 7 representatives of scientific institutions (4 linguists, 2 geographers, and 1 historian) and 6 representatives of central government offices (Ministry of the Interior and Administration, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography, Statistics Poland).

**Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland** (established in 1951), affiliated at the Surveyor General of Poland, responsible for: standardizing Polish geographical names of the world, establishing the principles of romanization from languages which use non-Roman writing systems, representing Poland on UNGEGN forum, and participation in international conferences and meetings devoted to geographical names.

The Commission composes 19 members – representatives of scientific institutions (linguists, geographers, and cartographers) and representatives of central government offices (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography).

Both commissions meet several times a year.

### **2. 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 new, 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 (changes of a type can be the result of changes of boundaries of cities and towns). Moreover, regulations of the Council of Ministers on boundaries change might bring changes of a type of locality.

Since 2019, 5 new locality names have been established, 82 names have been changed (including 18 changes of the name, 1 change of the name and type of locality, and 63 changes of the type of locality only), and 40 names have been abolished.

Additionally names of some physiographic objects have been changed:

- January 1, 2020: 8 names were changed (for 2 forests, 2 fields, 2 hills, 1 mount, pond), and 183 names were abolished (for 116 fields, 15 forests, 15 meadows, 13 pastures, 4 oxbows, 4 streams, 3 ponds, 3 rivers, 3 mounts, 2 hills, 1 spring, george, swamp, lake, cliff).

- January 1, 2021: 4 new names were established (for 2 lakes, 1 stream, mound), 14 names were changed (for 7 lakes, 3 streams, 2 meadows, 1 forest, hill) and 282 names were abolished (for 127 fields, 58 forests, 31 meadows, 14 streams, 8 pastures, 8 scrubs, 5 rivers, 5 hills, 4 ponds, 4 mounts, 4 roads, 3 lakes, 3 swamps, and 7 others).

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, 2021, the name of "powiat jeleniogórski" (in Dolnośląskie Voivodship), for the second level administrative unit, was changed into "powiat karkonoski" (after the name of the Karkonosze Mountains), and the name of "Sitkówka-Nowiny" commune (in Świętokrzyskie Voivodship), for the third level administrative unit, was changed into "Nowiny" commune.

### **3. 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.

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. The additional names may be established for objects located in communes where minorities constituting at least 20 per cent of population. Names of inhabited localities may also be established for communes, which do not fulfill the quantitative criterion for the number of residents belonging to a minority. In the case of such localities, an additional name may be introduced if as a result of consultations, over 50 per cent of residents of given locality are in favor of this name.

Since 2005 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. The last minority names were adopted in April 2019.

### **4. 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 has been published in Polish only, but the inset in English, that includes translation of introductory part of the publication, has been also prepared.

The list is regular updated. Since the last meeting of the Baltic Division in Rīga in September 2019 the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland standardized 93 Polish exonyms, changed 97 exonyms and delisted 288 exonyms. The most changes are result of the administrative reform in Ukraine and changed names of rayons for which Polish exonyms were established.

The Commission also works on extension the list. In 2020 works on collection of the original non-Latin names were finished. In 2019-2021 works on collection of genitives, locatives and adjectives from the Polish exonyms were realized. To the date names from all continents except Asia were obtained.

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. Works on this annex started in 2014, and their completion is planned for 2022. The annex will contain names for around 1700 buildings and other urban objects. In the period 2019-2021 lists of buildings from Central and Southern Europe were completed.

Moreover, the Commission has started work on elaboration of recommended English names for the most important geographical features from Poland. This list is prepared mainly for the internal use, as large number of English language publications is prepared in Poland and there is a need for such a list of correct English names of Polish geographical features.

## **5. Toponymic data files**

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

Currently (as on 14th January 2021) the Register holds approximately 255,900 names of which app. 124,700 are names of localities and its parts and app. 131,200 are names of physiographic objects (app. 22,900 names of water objects, app. 33,300 names of land shaping objects, and app. 75,100 names of other objects).

In the Register the following types of names are collected: official names (i.e. names published by ordinance of the Minister – app. 137,800 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 – app. 16,500 names), unstandardized names (i.e. other names listed on topographic maps or other sources – app. 101,600 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 on the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography website. The data are published in .shp, .xls and .gml formats, and updated on the website every 3 months. Additionally, through a national access point – National Geoportal: [geoportal.gov.pl](http://geoportal.gov.pl), it is possible to searching, browsing, and viewing names with attributes according to accepted criteria.

## **6. Country names**

In consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Council for the Polish Language the fifth edition of the *Official list of names of countries and non-self-governing territories* was published at the end of 2019. 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. Attached to the register is a list of nine territories with undetermined or disputed international status and others.

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.

As in the previous editions updates and corrections in endonyms have been introduced in this fifth edition of the list. However, the main changes concerned on the adoption of new names for Swaziland and (FYRO) Macedonia. The first was replaced by *Eswatini*, while the following by the name of *North Macedonia* (*Macedonia Północna* in Polish). Changes in country names have brought changes in adjectives from these country names and names of citizens used in Polish.

Other changes included an adding the name of new capital city of Burundi (i.e. Gitega), a change of the name of capital city of Kazakhstan (i.e. Nur-Sultan), and a modification of Romanization systems for two languages: Mongolian and Tigrinia.

Finally, the main change in the fifth edition concerned the extension of information provided to entries for countries that use non-roman scripts. In the case of such 68 countries and territories names in non-roman scripts are included next to its Romanized forms. It means that names in 40 languages and 20 writing systems (namely: Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Burmese, Chinese, Cyrillic, Devanagari, Ge'ez, Georgian, Greek, Hebrew, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Sinhala, Tamil, Thaana, Thai, Tibetan, Tifinagh) have been added to the list.

The sixth edition of the list is scheduled to be published in November of 2021 (the publication has already been submitted for printing).

## **7. Romanization**

One of the scopes of activity of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland refers to an establishment of romanization rules governing names of geographical objects originally expressed by means of non-Roman writing systems. As a part of its activity the Commission has adopted, for each language exclusively, both rules of transliteration and rules of Polish phonetic transcription. There are some exceptions for Asian languages – for Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Lao, Burmese, and Khmer only a transliteration is recommended.

To the date the Commission has adopted romanization rules for 38 languages (36 national languages and 2 local language). Since 2012 works are carried out to verify the previously adopted romanization rules together with the elaboration of extended romanization tables (apart from the romanization table itself, it contains information on the language, writing system, rules for the use of capital letters, etc.). In the period 2019–2021 romanization rules for Burmese (Myanmar) and Hindi were verified and extended. Moreover, romanization rules for Mongolian in Mongolian script were adopted – recommended are: the official Chinese romanization scheme based on Pinyin, the scientific transliteration of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw (modification of the Vladimircov-Mostaert system) and the Polish phonetic transcription.

## **8. Co-operation with neighborhood countries and international organizations**

Due to the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, the most of international meetings were canceled or delayed. Members of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland participated in two meetings at the end of 2019 and one virtual meeting in 2021:

- 24-26 September, 2019 (Rīga, Latvia): Meeting of the Baltic Division,

- 5-9 November, 2019 (Vienna, Austria): GeoNames19 Symposium “Place names and migration”,
- 2st Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (3-7 May 2021, on-line), including meetings of: the East Central and South-East Europe Division (28 April), the Working Group on Exonyms (4 May), the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy (5 May), the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage (6 May).