

**Ninth United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names**  
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Item 9 (e) of the provisional agenda\*  
**National standardization: Toponymic guidelines  
for map editors and other editors**

**Toponymic Guidelines of Poland**

Submitted by Poland\*\*

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## Toponymic Guidelines of Poland

In 2002 the Surveyor General of Poland published the third edition of *Toponymic Guidelines of Poland for Map Editors and Other Users*. Since then no changes of significance justifying the necessity of elaborating the next edition have occurred though there have been minor amendments. In their majority these are changes concerning minor amendments in the administrative division of Poland. These changes are presented during successive UNGEGN sessions as an updating of *Toponymic Guidelines of Poland*. This document also presents information concerning changes of importance from the viewpoint of geographic names which have taken place since the third edition of *Toponymic Guidelines of Poland* was published in 2002.

A new administrative division of Poland was introduced on the 1 January 1999. The previous two-stage administrative division gave way to a three-stage division comprising voivodship (province, Polish – województwo), county (Polish – powiat) and commune (Polish – gmina).

Since its introduction in 1999, the new administrative division underwent only minor modifications. In 2002, 7 new counties and 1 new commune were created, while 12 communes were eliminated. In 2003, 1 county was eliminated. Additionally, the boundaries of voivodships, counties and communes undergo each year insignificant changes. For instance, on the 1 January 2007 corrections were introduced to the boundaries between 8 counties (areas of a total 9.84 sq. km changed county affiliation) as well as between 12 communes (10.01 sq. km). Two new towns were also established – *Wojnicz* in Małopolskie Voivodship and *Daleszyce* in Świętokrzyskie Voivodship.

At present Poland is divided into 16 voivodships, 379 counties and 2478 communes.

Administration in a voivodship is performed by local government and central government bodies. Local government in a voivodship is in the hands of the voivodship assembly elected in general and direct suffrage for a period of 4 years and, as the executive body, the office of the voivodship marszałek (head) headed by the marszałek elected by the voivodship assembly. Central government is represented by the province office headed by the voivode nominated by the prime minister and overlooking the activities of the voivodship local government (voivodship assembly and office of the voivodship marszałek). Most voivodships have one capital which is also the seat of the local government. There are two capitals in two voivodships – one holding the local government and the other the central government bodies. The voivodships bear names originating in the names of geographical and historical regions (13 voivodships) and from the names of major cities (3 voivodships).

Counties are local government units where authority is wielded by a county council elected in general and direct suffrage for a 4-year period. Executive authority is implemented by the office of the county starosta (head) headed by a starosta chosen by the county council. There are two kinds of counties: 314 land counties and 65 urban counties (cities enjoying county rights). Cities enjoying county rights, also called town counties, were instituted for the country's largest cities. Counties have one seat each for their local governments, but in the case of cities with the status of town counties, this seat is also that of the land county neighbouring on it. In the majority of cases counties are named after the names of their seats; three counties bear names taken from the names of two of the county's principal cities while two have names originating in the names of geographical regions

Communes are local government units within the administrative division of the country, their authorities being the commune council elected in general and direct suffrage for a 4-year period. Executive government in communes is in the hands of the wójt (commune administrator) in rural communes, of burmistrz (mayors) in urban-rural and urban communes

and presidents in large urban communes, elected in direct suffrage. There are three kinds of communes: rural communes comprising exclusively rural land, urban-rural communes comprising urban areas and rural land and urban communes comprising urban areas exclusively. Each commune has one commune seat of authority, this being a village or locality in rural communes, the commune seat in urban-rural and urban communes being a town or city. Urban-rural and urban communes include only one town each, with each town being a component of only one commune. Cities enjoying county rights (urban counties) are simultaneously communes, the county boundaries in such cases strictly corresponding to the boundary of one commune. In Poland at present there are 1587 rural communes, 584 urban-rural communes and 307 urban communes (including 65 communes which are also cities with county rights). The names of almost all communes are the same as their seats (with 29 exceptions). In Poland towns are those places which have received urban rights or which have been given urban status. They have defined borders and territories. The areas of towns forming areas of urban communes coincide precisely with the area of those communes while the areas of towns which are parts of urban-rural communes are only part of the areas of those communes. There are 891 towns and cities in Poland at present.

An updated administration map of Poland and also lists of counties and their seats as well as communes and their seats are accessible on the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographic Names Outside the Republic of Poland in an English-language version ([www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/mapa\\_adm.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/mapa_adm.php)) and in a Polish version ([www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/mapa\\_adm.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/mapa_adm.php)).

On 6 January 2005 the Polish Parliament passed an “Act on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages”. The act became valid on 1 May 2005. It is the first comprehensive Act in Poland’s post-war history to regulate issues of national, ethnic and language minorities. 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](http://www.mswia.gov.pl/download.php?s=1&id=2327).

From the viewpoint of geographical names two of this Act’s regulations are important. The first concerns the use of minority languages, the second – geographical names in those languages.

The Act lays down that communes in which persons belonging to a national, ethnic minority or using a regional language constitute at least 20% of the inhabitants can introduce a minority language as an “supporting language” used in contact with commune organs and in first-instance court procedures. At present only four minorities (Belarusian, Kashubian, Lithuanian and German) account for at least 20% of the inhabitants of 51 communes, among which 15 introduced assistant languages by 1 January 2007:

- Kashubian in Parchowo Commune in Pomorskie Voivodship
- Lithuania in Puńsk Commune in Podlaskie Voivodship
- German in 13 communes of Opolskie Voivodship: Biała, Chrzastowice, Izbicko, Jemielnica, Kolonowskie, Lasowice Wielkie, Leńnica, Prószków, Radłów, Reńska Wieś, Strzeleczyki, Ujazd, Walce.

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 a name to be established constitute at least 20% of the inhabitants. In the case of inhabited localities, minority names may be set also for communes which do not satisfy the quantitative requirement of minorities residing therein. For such places an additional name may be introduced should consultations, the principles and method of

undertaking to be defined by the commune council, be supported by more than 50% of its inhabitants. Names of localities and physiographic objects in minority languages may be introduced throughout a whole commune or its part. These names may not be used independently and must also appear following the official name in Polish. Contradictory to names in Polish, names in minority languages are not official names only “additional names” (“auxiliary names”). Names in minority languages may not refer to names between 1933 and 1945 granted by the Third German Reich or the Soviet Union.

By 1 January 2007 names in a minority language were introduced in only Radłów Commune in Opolskie Voivodship. Eleven German names for villages and other settlements were introduced within that commune.

**Official Polish name:**

Biskupice  
Kolonia Biskupska  
Kościeliska  
Ligota Oleska  
Nowe Karmonki  
Psurów  
Radłów  
Stare Karmonki  
Sternalice  
Wichrów  
Wolęcin

**Additional German name:**

Bischdorf  
Friedrichswille  
Kostellitz  
Ellguth  
Neu Karmunkau  
Psurów  
Radlau  
Alt Karmunkau  
Sternalitz  
Wichrau  
Wollentschin

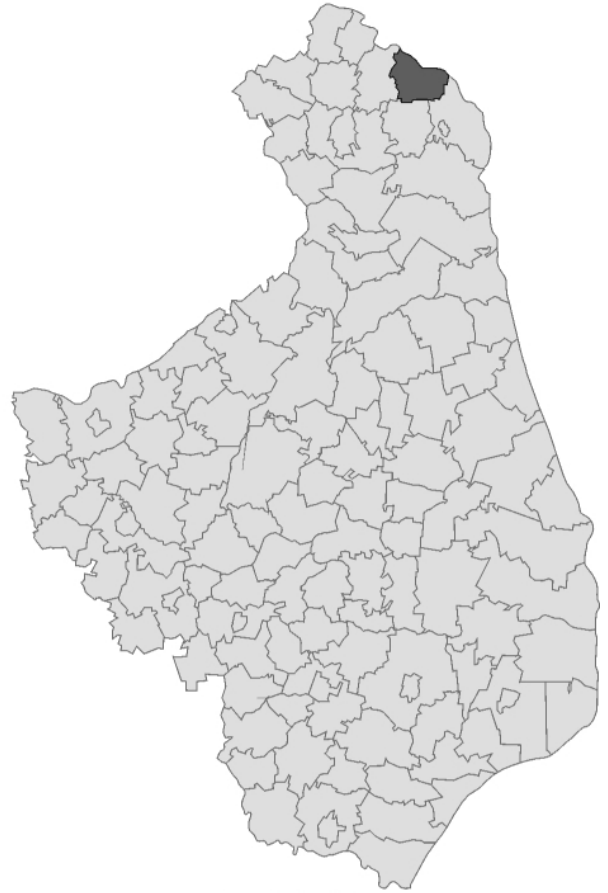
Several other communes also intend to introduce names in a minority language, with administration procedures currently under way to introduce these names.

Pomorskie  
Voivodship



Podlaskie  
Voivodship

1:8 000 000



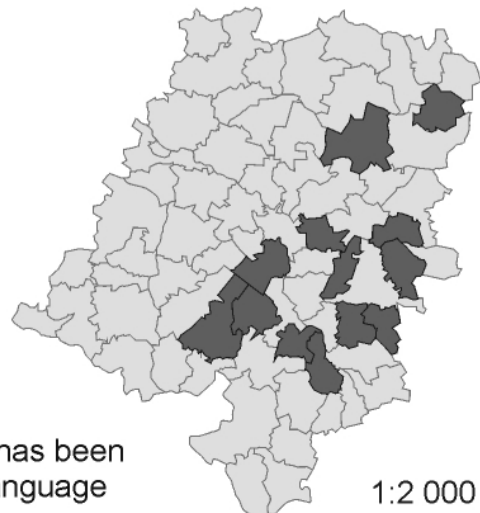
1:2 000 000

Communes in which Lithuanian has been introduced as a supporting language



1:2 000 000

Communes in which Kashubian has been introduced as a supporting language



Communes in which German has been introduced as a supporting language

1:2 000 000



Opole Voivodship  
1:2 000 000



1:100 000

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Biskupice        | Official Polish name   |
| <i>Bischdorf</i> | Additional German name |
|                  | Built-up area          |
|                  | Roads                  |
|                  | Borders of units       |

Additional German names in Radłów Commune in Opole Voivodship