Standardization of Geographical Names in Latvia, 2015-2016

Vita Strautniece
Head of the Laboratory of Toponymy

(The information from other institutions, submitted by Sanda Rapa, Jānis Karro, Agris Timuška, Jānis Turlajs, is included)

The 18th Meeting of the Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNEGGN)
Saint Petersburg, August 23 – 25, 2016
The Main Topics

1. Legislation and names authorities

2. Geographical names collection, maintenance and data distribution → data bases, registers and other repositories, dictionaries

3. Geographical names in cartography

4. Exonyms and renderings

5. Links
Legal Basis
(the main legislative acts)

LAWS

• The State Language Law
• The Geospatial Information Law
• Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas

REGULATIONS OF THE CABINET OF MINISTERS

• Regulations on Toponymic Information
• Regulations on Addressing (on December 2015 succeeded the previous – Regulations on the System of Addressing)
In 2015/2016 the situation on the field of geographical names information was analyzed by involved ministries and other institutions in order to compile an informative report including proposals for elaboration of relevant legislative acts. The draft Report is under consideration now.
Names Authorities – decision makers (no changes since 2013)

Parliament, Government

names of cities and upper level administrative units

ministries and state institutions

names of the features they are responsible for (e.g. Ministry of Transportation is responsible for roads and road names)

all local (or self-) governments

names of villages, homesteads, farms, factories, cemeteries, parks, ponds, reservoirs and other man–made features

Latvian Geospatial Information Agency

names of natural features, excluding those important for maritime navigation
Names Authority - supervisor of the geographical names standardization

State Language Centre

gives conclusions binding for authorities approving official names; the Geographical Names Subcommission (linguists, geographers, cartographers) evaluates official names proposals and complaints, drafts conclusions etc.)

The work on a huge conclusion regarding the official names proposals submitted by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency continues since 2014
Names Authorities – advisors, consultants, reserchers

Latvian Geospatial Information Agency (LGIA) - advisory and scientific body in some particular directions of geographical names standardization

Latvian University (Institute of Latvian Language) - advisory, scientific and consulting body

State Language Agency - consulting body
Geographical Names Collection and Maintenance

Names collection: excretion from literature, maps, unpublished materials etc.
decisions of names authorities
field work (very limited amount)

Data maintenance: electronic systems
one significant card file
Geographical Names Data Repositories

Latvian Geographical Names Database
National Address Register
Latvian Place Name Card Index (or Card File)

Other initiatives collecting geonames or operating with a significant amount of them – Register of Cadastre, Latvian and foreign geographical names database of «Jāņa sēta Map Publishers» (no public access), upes.lv, ezeri.lv, melioracija.lv, historia.lv, Zudusī Latvija (zudusilatvija.lv) etc.
Latvian Geographical Names Database

maintained by Latvian Geospatial Information Agency

154 000 names for 118 000 features

serves needs of cartography, natural feature names standardization and research work in applied toponymy

Location of names related features is characterized by coordinates of the point and areal objects centres, and mouths of flowing water features.

Besides that:
- named flowing water features are characterized by rough geometries (lines)
- drawing of named areal feature geometries (willages, forests, bogs) was launched in 2013-2014
Latvian Geographical Names Database - Contents

- Populated places: 67%
- Hydro-orographic features: 1%
- Cemeteries: 2%
- Forests: 2%
- Bogs, swamps, mires: 3%
- Industrial and social features: 1%
- Relief features: 5%
- Named areas: 1%
- Standing and flowing water features: 14%
- Meadows: 2%
- Other: 1%

Names percentage by feature type, data on August 15, 2016
short public version on the Web (Edition 7)
http://vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv/

offers access to 127 000 names of 99 000 features located in territory of Latvia and conspective related information (user interface in Latvian only)
National Adress Register

maintained by the State Land Service, includes:

- names of all administrative and territorial units: 110 counties, 497 civil parishes, 76 cities and towns;
- **6,397** officially recognized villages (number of official villages is decreasing),
- **17,283** streets
- **513,561** houses and other buildings (data on July 1, 2016)

Names search is available on the data distribution portal of the State Land Service of Latvia at: [https://www.kadastrs.lv](https://www.kadastrs.lv) (in Latvian and English).

Data harmonization with other registers – Land Registry, Population Register, Register of Enterprises etc. has been continued.
Latvian Place Name Card Index

The Latvian Place Names Card index (or card file) (approximately 1 000 000 domestic geographical names) is maintained by Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia (since the very beginning of 19th century, no public access)

Digitizing of the basic part of the Card Index - 842 000 geographical names - is completed. The work is continuing on digitizing duplicates, additional card indexes (few thousand units) and expedition notebooks with place name data. The tools for displaying linguistic data have been elaborated

The crowd-sourcing tool for collecting place names is being elaborated, too. The open-access of it is scheduled on October 2016
Both sides of each card are registered, even the opposite side of paper is blank, because sometimes information on the place name can follow.

Latvian Place Name Card Index – card examples
A popular etymological dictionary «From Abava to Zilupe. The Origin of Latvian Geographical Names. A Short Dictionary» comprising names of the ~100 most significant settlements, natural features, etc. was compiled by Ojārs Bušs and Laimute Balode, researchers of the Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia

The dictionary is a bilingual (Latvian/English) book. It was published by the Latvian Language Agency in 2015
The next volume of the linguistic dictionary «Latvijas vietvārdu vārdnīca» (Latvian Place Names Dictionary, in Latvian) comprising place names with the initial letter S, is being edited and supplemented by new place name data (including data of Geographical Names Database of Latvia maintained by Latvian Geospatial Information Agency). The former version of this volume (from 1990s) has been increased almost threefold.
The Joint Fieldwork

At joint summer field work of Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvian Language Institute and Latvian Geospatial Information Agency in the Middle Latvia (around Sāviena Lake) was carried out in June 2016. Dozens of place names have been collected, corrected and supplemented by historical and cultural data.
Names only from the Geographical Names Database (official and unofficial) and from the National Register of Addresses (official names) are used now.

The most actual cartographic projects:
- Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:50 000 – the 3rd cycle since 2012
- Simplified Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:10 000 – the 3rd cycle since 2009 (more than ¾ is complete)
Map Browsers Offering Names Search

Map Browser of the Latvian Geospatial information Agency offers geographical names search on latest maps of Latvia prepared by the Agency (in various scales - 1: 1 000 000 - 1:10 000).

The Geographical Names Database data, Address Register data and toponymic layer from the Topographic Map, scale 1:10 000, can be used for the search.

Rough linear geometries of water streams from the Geographical Names Database also are available there.

The public version of the Map Browser: http://kartes.lgia.gov.lv
(user interface in Latvian and English)
Jāņa Sēta public Map Browser Balticmaps, covering Latvia and European countries (geographical names are presented only in original languages - in original script (if Latin) or transliterated (if Cyrillic)
Available at:
http://balticmaps.eu
(user interface in Latvian, Russian and English)
Endonyms and Exonyms

On maps prepared by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency, foreign names only in original languages - in original script (if Latin) or transliterated (if Cyrillic) - are used.

On school maps and cartographic products created only for domestic use, traditional exonyms are used, if existing. All other foreign geographical names are rendered into Latvian. Renderings keep (as far as it is possible), the sounding of the original name:

Великие Луки → Veljikije Luki
Санкт-Петербург → Sanktpēterburga
Кронштадт → Kronštate
Exonyms and Latvian renderings are vitally necessary for communication in Latvian by reason the Latvian is a flexive language. Besides that exonyms are a part of our cultural history.

Examples of traditional exonyms:
Москва → Maskava
Псков → Pleskava
Чудское озеро → Peipusa ezers
Финский залив → Somu jūras līcis
The largest in Latvia database of exonyms and renderings - *Latvian and foreign geographical names database* is maintained by private cartographic enterprise «Jāņa sēta Map Publishers» (not available for public)

It contains **218 000 geographical names in their original languages with exonyms and renderings:** 91 000 – into Latvian, 34 000 – into Estonian, 14 000 into Lithuanian, 10 000 into Russian

Geographical names data of Ukraine and Latvian renderings of Portuguese speaking countries have been updated during the reporting period
SOME USEFUL LINKS

1. Official Language Law ([unofficial translation](#)), actual version in [Latvian](#)
2. Geospatial Information Law ([unofficial translation](#)), actual version in [Latvian](#)
3. Regulations Regarding Geographical Names Information ([unofficial translation](#)), actual version in [Latvian](#)
4. Regulations of the Addressing („Adresācijas noteikumi”, actual version, in [Latvian](#) only):
5. Data on administrative and territorial division of Latvia: Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas, actual version in [Latvian](#) with Annex 1 (list of cities). Annex 2 (list of municipalities and the territorial divisional units thereof), Annex 3 (schematic map of cities and municipalities 2010 - 2011) and [unofficial translation](#) of the previous version of the Law)
6. Geographical Names Database of Latvia, public version (in Latvian only), description in English
8. LGIA Map Browser (in English), description in English
9. GISNET Map Browser - Soviet topographic maps of Latvia and a national map (scale 1:75 000, compiled in 1930-s)
10. Jāņa Sēta Map Browser Balticmaps (in Latvian, English and Russian)
11. Database of translated legislative acts - search for unofficial English translations
Further and/or more detailed information could be obtained from:

**Vita Strautniece** - Head of the Laboratory of Toponymy, [Latvian Geospatial Information Agency](mailto:vita.strautniece@lgia.gov.lv), (e-mail: vita.strautniece@lgia.gov.lv)

**Sanda Rapa** - Deputy Director of the [Institute of Latvian Language](mailto:sanda.rapa@inbox.lv), University of Latvia, (e-mail: sanda.rapa@inbox.lv)

**Jānis Karro** - Head of the Adress Register Division, [State Land Service](mailto:Janis.Karro@vzd.gov.lv) (e-mail: Janis.Karro@vzd.gov.lv)

**Agris Timuška** - Deputy Director of the [State Language Centre](mailto:info@vvc.gov.lv) (e-mail: info@vvc.gov.lv)

**Jānis Turlajs** - Jāņa sēta Map Publishers (e-mail: kartes@kartes.lv)