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**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**

**Report of the Republic of Moldova on the activities in the field of
standardization of geographical names from 2021 to 2022**

Submitted by Republic of Moldova **

Summary

Republic of Moldova will present its activities in the field of standardization of geographical names in the country report, during the period from March 2021 to December 2022.

The naming and renaming of geographical objects is a living natural process that reacts to the cultural, political and social evolutions taking place in the country and meets the modern needs of society and the state. Given the importance of geographical names, special attention is paid to their standardization.

According to art. 3 and art. 81 of the Law 778/2001 on geodesy, mapping and geoinformatics, the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre (ALRC) is responsible for implementing the policies related to the standardization, recording and regulation of the use of geographical names. In order to develop the draft Law on Geographical Names, a Working group for its development has been established by Order of the General Director no. 10 of February 20, 2020. The group consists of representatives from different state institutions.

The draft Law on Geographical Names was developed by the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre in collaboration with the Mapping Authority of the Kingdom of Norway - Kartverket within the project "Maps for Sustainable Development", granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway. The Law is currently in the stage of coordination and approval.

In 2022, Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre in cooperation with Norwegian Mapping Agency Kartverket started to develop the State register of geographical names as an electronic database of standardized geographical names and is responsible for maintaining it.

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** Prepared by the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre of the Republic of Moldova

The database contains information about the naming and renaming of geographical objects, and changes related to their status and type, and is constantly updated.

In 2020-2022, Kartverket organized virtual events: trainings, seminars, workshops on geographical names. Language experts, GIS experts, representatives from different state institutions participated at the events.

1. Status of legal and regulatory base in the field of geographical names

The draft Law on Geographical Names was developed by the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre in collaboration with the Mapping Authority of the Kingdom of Norway - Kartverket within the project "Maps for Sustainable Development", granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway. The Law is currently in the stage of coordination and approval.

1.1. National bodies on standardization of geographical names

According to the Law on Geographical Names, state administration in the field of geographical names is carried out by:

central executive body which ensures the formation of state policy in the field of topographic, geodetic and cartographic activities – Government of the Republic of Moldova

central executive body which implements the state policy in the field of topographic, geodetic and cartographic activities – Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre of the Republic of Moldova

The competence of the Government:

- a) determines the state policy in the field of geographical names;
- b) ensures the realization of the state policy in the field of geographical names;
- c) approves the normative framework governing this law;
- d) approves the composition of the National Commission for Geographical Names and the Regulation of its operation;
- e) ensures the creation and maintenance of the Register of Geographical Names.

Duties of the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre of the Republic of Moldova:

- a) elaborates drafts of normative acts in the field of geographical names;
- b) coordinates and monitors state policy in the field of geographical names;
- c) develops and ensures the implementation of state programs in the field of identification, standardization, establishment, registration, use and protection (safeguarding) of geographical names;
- d) ensures the activity of the National Commission for Geographical Names;
- e) ensures the creation and maintenance of the Register of Geographical Names;
- f) ensures data exchange with other state registers through government solutions interoperability for free;
- g) exercises internal control over the Register of Geographical Names;
- h) provides information from the Register of Geographical Names;
- i) ensures records of data in the Register of Geographical Names;
- j) ensures compliance of the data in the Register of Geographical Names;
- k) determines uniform requirements, norms and rules in the field of geographical names.

Duties of the local public administration authorities of the first level:

- a) to establish the name of the objects located within the territorial-administrative limits of the territorial-administrative unit, with the exception of those within the competence of

the specialized central public authorities. For objects located on two or more administrative-territorial units, the assignment of the name is carried out by the local public administration authorities of the respective administrative-territorial units;

- b) to issue normative acts establishing geographical names;
- c) to organize public consultations on the application for naming/renaming the object located within the territorial-administrative unit;
- d) to inform the National Commission for Geographical Names and the holder of the Register of Geographical Names about the establishment of the geographical name in accordance with the provisions of this law.

The institutional responsibilities related to the place names governance in the country are divided between several authorities. Thus, the overall responsibility for geographical names' management lies within the Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre. At the same time, the Agency for Public Services runs the national Address Register, which includes the geographical names of all settlements, streets, and transport arteries. The Road Authority is responsible for place names related to the national road network. The Forest Authority – is responsible for place names related to forests, and the Water Authority – is in charge of place names of all water objects in the Republic of Moldova. In addition, local administrations hold a decisive mandate for appointing new place names.

2. Main activities in the field of geographical names standardization in the inter-sessional period

Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre of the Republic of Moldova provided the following activities in the field of standardization of geographical names in the inter-sessional period:

2.1. Trainings, seminars, workshops

In collaboration with the Mapping Authority of the Kingdom of Norway - Kartverket within the project "Maps for Sustainable Development", granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, there were organized virtual events: trainings, seminars, workshops on geographical names. Language experts, GIS experts, representatives from different state institutions participated at the events.

Despite the COVID pandemic in 2020-2021, which did not allow field missions for data collection in the Republic of Moldova, the project team met regularly online. The first project meeting in person took place in Norway in October 2022. The 5-day workshop was held at the University of Bergen, where the results of a two-year work were summed up.

2.2. Legal framework

The project team, consisting of experts from Kartverket and the University of Bergen, worked with the working group, experts, and academia from Republic of Moldova on developing a legal framework for the Geographical Names infrastructure, including a Glossary of Terms for Standardization of Geographical Names in the Romanian language, Procedures for Geographical Names Standardization, Methodological Guide for Geographical Names Standardization, and a Draft Law on Geographical Names.

2.3. Geographical Names Register

By the end of 2022, the Geographical Names Register was developed, including an application for data collection. The development was done in-house as part of the institutional cooperation agreement between Kartverket and ALRC. It included database design, development, and testing. The Register consists of two integrated databases – spatial and scientific.

The Agency's National Geospatial Data Collection runs the Register and serves as a connection hub for the involved place names' data producers and the Register. The Register provides the data to users, while any updates delivered by data producers are inserted in the Register by ALRC after verification using automated procedures.

2.4. Data provision on geographical names

Geographical names are an important part of the overall capacity of the geospatial information. In this sense, it is important to achieve technological compatibility with other registers and databases in order to ensure uniformity and invariability in the use of geographical objects' names.

3. Conclusion

As an institution responsible for the maintenance of the geographic names database, the Agency of Land Relations and Cadastre will continue to work on the development of the legal framework, dissemination and promotion of uniformity and invariability in the use of geographical names.