

10 March 2025

English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

**2025 session**

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 7 (d) of the provisional agenda\*

**Effective work programmes: toponymic guidelines for  
international use by map and other editors**

**Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors – Estonia (5th  
edition, 2025)**

Submitted by Estonia\*\*

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\* GEGN.2/2025/1.

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**TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES  
FOR MAP AND OTHER EDITORS -  
ESTONIA**

**Fifth edition, March 2025**

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# 1 LANGUAGES

## 1.1 General remarks

The official language of the Republic of Estonia (in Estonian: *Eesti Vabariik*, short form: *Eesti*) is Estonian. The language (L1) is spoken in Estonia by about 865,000 Estonians, or 65% of the population (according to the 2021 census). In 1945, the percentage of Estonians was 97.3. Historical minorities affecting toponymy are mainly Swedes and Russians (see 1.3). Many people have immigrated to Estonia since 1940; they have mainly settled in the big industrial towns of the Northeast and the capital, Tallinn. According to the last census in 2021, there were 315,252 (23.7%) Russians, 27,828 (2.1%) Ukrainians, 11,606 (0.9%) Byelorussians, and 8543 (0.6%) Finns.

Place names in actual usage have been monolingual (in Estonian, with some exceptions) since the 1920s.

## 1.2 National language - Estonian

Estonian is a Finno-Ugrian language using the Roman alphabet.

### 1.2.1 The alphabet

A a	H h	O o	Ž ž*	Ö ö
B b	I i	P p	T t	Ü ü
(C c)	J j	(Q q)	U u	(X x)
D d	K k	R r	V v	(Y y)
E e	L l	S s	(W w)	
F f*	M m	Š š*	Õ õ	
G g	N n	Z z*	Ä ä	

The letters shown in parentheses appear only in names of foreign origin. *w* was used in older orthography instead of *v*, and it still appears in some family names. In alphabetic ordering, *w* is often regarded as a variant of *v*, and names with these letters are grouped together. The letters indicated by an asterisk (\*) represent sounds that appear in recent loanwords only.

The vowels *õ*, *ä*, *ö*, and *ü* represent independent sounds and should be distinguished from the vowels *o*, *a*, and *u*. Due to technical problems, the letter *õ* ('*o* with tilde') may in some older typewritten or printed texts appear as *ô*, *ó*, *ò*, or even *ö*, but in correct usage, this must be avoided.

In recent maps on South-East Estonia (Võrumaa), the acute accent (´) is used after some consonants to denote their palatalization, e.g., *Kol´o*, *Mar´amäe*. Though this is not considered to be part of normal orthography, this sign has been accepted as essential in writing local names.

### 1.2.2 Spelling rules for the Estonian geographical names

#### 1.2.2.1 Capitalization

Place names always begin with a capital letter. If the generic term is written as a separate word, it begins with a small letter: *Tallinna laht*, *Pärnu jõgi*, *Kihnu saar*. If the name consists of more than

one word, all words except for the generic term are written with a capital initial: *Taani Kuninga aed*, *Väike Munamägi*.

#### 1.2.2.2 Use of hyphens

The hyphen is used:

(a) if the name is preceded by a qualifying word (*hargtäiend*), like *Suur(e)*- 'Great', *Vana*- 'Old', *Põhja*- 'Northern', *Ala*- 'Lower', etc., incl. the name of a wider locality used to distinguish identical names: *Suur-Pakri* and *Väike-Pakri*, *Ala-Palo* and *Mäe-Palo*, *Kiiu-Aabla* and *Kolga-Aabla*.

Exceptionally, the hyphen is not used if the qualifying word is an adjective that can be declined: *Suur Munamägi* (Adessive: *Suurel Munamäel*). Usually, the second part of those names is a compound word containing a generic term (here: *-saar*, *-mägi*);

(b) if the name is a copulative compound name (like *Austria-Hungary*, *Baden-Württemberg*, etc.): *Kohtla-Järve*, *Karksi-Nuia*, *Abja-Paluoja*.

#### 1.2.2.3 Use of one or two words

A characteristic of Estonian place names is the abundance of elliptical names. Most of the names of populated places and several other place names are elliptical, i.e., they usually appear without a generic term. The generic term is used if confusion may arise, e.g., in official sources. In genuine Estonian elliptical names, the nominative form coincides with the genitive form, and the names end with a vowel (*-a*, *-e*, *-i*, *-o*, *-u*, exceptional vowels see 1.2.5).

**A.** As a rule, the specific part of the name and the generic term are written as one word: *Emajõgi*, *Munamägi*, *Põhjalaht*, *Lasnamägi*, *Loodeots*, *Pelgurand*, *Mõisaküla*, *Rannaväray*, *Suveaed*, *Rohukabjasoo*, *Tähigenotsu<sup>m</sup>mägi*, *Loodekarjamaa* (generic terms underlined). Exceptions to the rule are listed below (rules B-E).

**B.** In elliptical names, where the name can be used with or without the generic term in the same meaning, the generic term is written as a separate word: *Peipsi järv* (=Peipsi), *Tartu linn* (=Tartu), *Aakre küla* (=Aakre), *Räpina alev* (=Räpina), *Surju mõis* (=Surju), *Kihnu saar* (=Kihnu).

**C.** In names of streets, squares, and other address features, the generic term is written as a separate word: *Harju tänav*, *Vabaduse väljak*, *Estonia puistee*, *Lossi plats*, *Suitsu põik*, *Järve tee*. (There are a few exceptions, like *Keskväljak*, where the first part cannot be used as an independent word.)

**D.** If the specific part is a declinable adjective, it is written separately: *Suur väin* (Inessive: *Suures väinas*), *Väike Emajõgi* (Adessive: *Väikesel Emajõel*), *Vaikne järv* (Adessive: *Vaikesel järvel*). In Estonian place names, however, adjectives often combine with the appellatives as compound names: *Suurjärv*, *Vanaküla*, *Uuemõisa*, *Köverlaid*.

**E.** The generic term is also written separately if the place name is a clear secondary name, i.e. arises from another geographical name: *Tallinna laht* (← town name *Tallinn*), *Endla järv* (← village name *Endla*), *Kihnu väin* (← island of *Kihnu*).

### **1.2.3 Pronunciation of Estonian geographical names**

The main stress in Estonian place names is invariably on the first syllable. A weaker secondary stress may occur on the second, third, or fourth syllable of a word unless it is a short final syllable.

The pronunciation of Estonian is regular. The following notes are, however, important for the pronunciation of Estonian names.

**A.** *n* before *g* and *k* is pronounced [ŋ]: *Angerja* ['aŋ.ker.ja], *Kunksilla* ['kuŋk.:.sil.la].

**B.** *b*, *d*, *g*, *s* are pronounced voiceless or, between vowels, as half-voiced, weakened tenues. In genuine Estonian names, *b*, *d*, and *g* are not used in an initial position.

**C.** With sounds *l*, *n*, *s*, *t*, weak palatalization may occur, which is not reflected in the orthography: *Kantküla* ['kanʰt.:.ky.la]. Palatalization is almost regular in consonant clusters preceding *i* or *j*: *Väljaküla* ['vælj.:ja.ky.la], *Kõltsi* ['kɔltʰs.i]. In clusters, only the first consonant is palatalized.

**D.** Vowel and consonant lengths are significant. Long consonants and vowels are represented by double letters: *Saaremaa* ['sa:.re.mɑ:], *Pööraküla* ['pø:.ra.ky.la], *Kõnnu* ['kɔn.nu], *Tallinn* ['talʰ:..lin:].

**E.** Long stressed syllables in Estonian can have either light or heavy accent, which in most cases is not reflected in the orthography. In the case of simple sound sequences, the light accent corresponds to long and the heavy accent to overlong vowels or consonants, e.g. *Kääniku* ['kæ:.nik.ku] - light accent or long [æ:], *Loona* ['lo:..na] - heavy accent or overlong [o:]. No regular rules can be given to identify correct accent from spelling, but usually, names will be understood even if pronounced with an incorrect accent.

**F.** Vowel letter sequences denote diphthongs, and the vowels in diphthongs are pronounced the same way as they would be pronounced separately. The following diphthongs are in Estonian: *ae*, *ai*, *ao*, *au*, *ea*, *ei*, *eo*, *iu*, *oa*, *oe*, *oi*, *ou*, *ui*, *õa*, *õe*, *õi*, *õo*, *õu*, *äe*, *äi*, *äo*, *äu*, *öa*, *öe*, *öi*, *üi*.

**G.** As a rule, the vowels *õ*, *ä*, *ö*, *ü*, and *o* (except in the southern dialects), long vowels, and most diphthongs appear only in the first syllable of a non-compound word. If they appear in other syllables, they signify that the word is compound.

The following table explains the relationship between letters and sounds in Estonian. The letters in parentheses are used only in loanwords.

Spelling	Pronunciation IPA alphabet	Spelling	Pronunciation IPA alphabet	Spelling	Pronunciation IPA alphabet
<b>a</b>	ɑ	<b>l</b>	l, lʰ	<b>t</b>	t, t:, tʰ, tʰ:
<b>aa</b>	ɑ:	<b>m</b>	m	<b>u</b>	u
<b>b</b>	p (b)	<b>n</b>	n, nʰ	<b>uu</b>	u:
<b>d</b>	t, tʰ (d, dʰ)	<b>ng</b>	ŋk (ŋɡ)	<b>v</b>	v
<b>e</b>	e	<b>nk</b>	ŋk, ŋk:	<b>õ</b>	ɤ
<b>ee</b>	e:	<b>o</b>	o	<b>õõ</b>	ɤ:
<b>(f)</b>	f	<b>oo</b>	o:	<b>ä</b>	æ
<b>g</b>	k (ɡ)	<b>p</b>	p, p:	<b>ää</b>	æ:
<b>h</b>	h	<b>r</b>	r	<b>ö</b>	ø
<b>i</b>	i	<b>s</b>	s, sʰ (z, zʰ)	<b>öö</b>	ø:

<b>ii</b>	i:	(š)	ʃ	<b>ü</b>	y
<b>j</b>	j	(z)	s (z̥)	<b>üü</b>	y:, yi
<b>k</b>	k, k:	(ž)	ʃ (ʒ̥)		

### 1.2.4 Linguistic strata recognizable in Estonian place names

**A.** Names of Swedish origin are found, apart from the main Swedish-populated territories, in the coastal area of North Estonia, in the western county of Läänemaa, and the islands of Hiiumaa and Saaremaa.

**B.** For centuries, German was the language of the governing elite, and many places had, besides Estonian names, distinct German or Germanized variants. The names of German origin in Estonian usage (e.g., *Heimtali*, *Vardi*, *Voorbahi*) usually proceed from the names of manors, landlords' family names, etc., and they appear throughout Estonia. Those names are often significantly adapted, e.g., *Stackelberg* → *Taagepera*.

**C.** In the areas bordering Russia and Latvia, names of Russian or Latvian origin are encountered, respectively.

### 1.2.5 Estonian dialects

The Estonian dialects have traditionally been divided into three groups: the northern dialects, the southern dialects, and the north-east coastal dialect. Nowadays, the latter is considered to be part of northern dialects. The dialects differ in phonology, morphology, and lexis, esp. the southern dialects from the others. Today, many linguists are also of the opinion that South Estonian was originally a separate Finnic language. The Estonian standard language is based mainly on the central dialect of the northern group.

Local dialects are reflected to a certain extent in standardized place names. Dialectal features are preserved mainly in names containing local dialect words. Names of minor places tend to reflect more local colour than those with an established literary tradition. In writing place names, the guiding principle has been that names are spelled as far as possible according to their actual local pronunciation.

On the Basic Map series of 1:20,000, the names of natural features in Võrumaa, South Estonia, are written close to their local usage. The main differences from Standard Estonian are the following:

**A.** Vowel harmony is being preserved; in non-compound names only front vowels (*ä, e, ö, ü*) or back vowels (*a, õ, o, u*) may occur, e.g. *Härmä* {Standard Estonian: *Härma*}, *Sepä* {*Sepa*}, *Söödä* {*Sööda*}, *Mürgü* {*Mürgi*}, *Tammõ* {*Tamme*}, *Holsta*, *Põrstõ* {*Põrste*}, *Tsutsu*; *i* is neutral, occurring in both environments (*Silla*, *Niidü* {*Niidu*}). Vowel harmony is not complete, however, *o* occurs in words with front vowels instead of *ö* (*Käätso*, *Peedo*). Also, syllables *he*, *gu*, and *ku* may appear in words with front vowels.

**B.** Raised long vowels *ee*, *oo*, and *öö* are written *ii*, *uu*, and *üü*: *Tiidlä* {*Teedla*}, *Suuveere* {*Sooveere*}, *Tüütsmanni* {*Töötsmanni*}.

**C.** Affricate *ds* is used instead of *ts* in certain syllables: *Madsa*, *Nedsäjä*.

**D.** Palatalization is marked with an acute accent: *Mar´a* {Marja}, *Kar´a* {Karja}, *Ton´a* {Tonja}, *Hul´aku* {Hulaku}, *Kol´o* {Kolo}.

**E.** Local generic terms are used if the specific part and generic term are written as one word: *Kirbumõts* (cf. *Väherü mets*), *Põdrašuu* (cf. *Ragandi soo*).

Not all local features are preserved, however, e.g. the raised back vowel [i] is written as *õ* (*Nõnova*, *Võõlastõ*); also, laryngeal stop [ʔ] (*q* in Võru local orthography) at the end of names (rarely occurring in older recordings) is neither reflected (*Hindsa*, *Määsi*).

## 1.3 Place names in minority languages

The Place Names Act states that the place names of Estonia's historical minorities shall be entitled to official approval and use on maps, road signs, etc. In certain cases, two parallel names are allowed, one in the language of the local majority, the other in the language of the local minority. The linguistic situation prior to September 1939 will be taken into account when deciding the priority of local languages.

Estonia's main minorities have been Swedes, Russians, Germans, Jews, Roma, Latvians, Finns, and Ukrainians. Of these, the first three have made the biggest impact on the toponymy, while Jews, Roma, and Finns have practically left no traces in toponymy. Ukrainians are the third-largest ethnic group in Estonia after Estonians and Russians, but they do not constitute a historic minority. For German toponyms, see 1.2.4.

### 1.3.1 Swedish

Swedish, a Germanic language that belongs to the Indo-European family, used to be spoken before World War II by some 8,000 people on the north-west coast of Estonia (the islands of Vormsi, Osmussaar, Pakri, Naissaar and Ruhnu, Noarootsi Peninsula). Most of the Swedes were forced to emigrate to Sweden in 1944; at present, there are only a few hundred people able to speak Swedish. These areas have now been resettled, mainly by Estonians. The place names in Vormsi (Swedish: *Ormsö*), Ruhnu (*Runö*), Osmussaar (*Odenholm*), Pakri (*Rågö*), and Riguldi (*Rickul*) are mostly Swedish, while in Noarootsi (*Nuckö*), Risti (*Kors*), and Naissaar (*Nargö*), the toponymy is mixed. The standardization of local names has posed problems because of the archaic nature of the Swedish dialects spoken in Estonia. Initial approach has been to keep to the traditional (standard) spellings for names of populated places (e.g. in Vormsi *Norrby*, *Borrby*, *Rälby*, *Saxby*) while those of natural features would be represented in a form closer to the local pronunciation: *Austurgrunne* {Standard Swedish: *Östergrundet*}, *Västurvike* {*Västerviken*}, *Håubjäre* {*Högberget*}, *Äustärnäse* {*Östernäset*}.

### 1.3.2 Russian

Russian, a Slavonic language, is spoken as a minority language by the descendants of Old Orthodox believers on the north and west coast of Lake Peipsi, and also by New Orthodox Russians in some border areas with Russia. Villages inhabited mainly by Russians include Permisküla (in Russian Cyrillic and in the 1987 UN romanization system: *Верхнее Село/Verhnee Selo*), Vasknarva (*Сыренец/Syrenec*), Alajõe (*Олешницы/Olešnicy*), Kolkja (*Кольки/Kol'ki*), Varnja



(Воронья/*Voron'ja*), Piiri (on Piirissaar, *Межа/Meža*), Beresje (*Березье/Berez'e*). Russian uses the Cyrillic alphabet. Russian place names are written in Estonian texts according to a transcription table using the letters from the Estonian alphabet proper, e.g., *Smolnitsa* (cf. Russian *Смо́льница/Smol'nica*). If approved officially, they may be accompanied by romanization according to the 1987 UN romanization system to record the original Cyrillic spelling.

Since 1940, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, large numbers of people have immigrated to Estonia from parts of the Soviet Union. Their *lingua franca* is usually Russian, and they make up the vast majority of the present-day non-Estonian population. They have mainly settled in the big industrial cities of the Northeast (Narva, Sillamäe, Kohtla-Järve, Jõhvi), the capital, Tallinn, and the town and peninsula of Paldiski. These processes have had very little influence on local toponymy.

## 2 NAMES AUTHORITIES AND NAMES STANDARDIZATION

Basic principles in the standardization of Estonia's geographical names are laid down in the **Place Names Act**, originally adopted on December 11, 1996, and subsequently revised on November 5, 2003. Based on some of the earlier legal acts, this Act incorporates all the main rules of names standardization. A short summary of the Act is as follows.

Article 5 determines the competence in establishing place names. The Government is responsible for naming administrative units. Naming populated places is, according to the latest version of the Territory of Estonia Administrative Division Act, the prerogative of the Minister of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. The names of rural municipality and city districts, streets, and other features located in the territory of one local government are established by the local government authorities. Names for cross-municipality features and water area features are established by the Government or a minister.

Various requirements are to be followed in approving geographical names: publicity of naming procedures (Art. 6), giving reasons for changing names (Art. 7), etc. The place names of Estonia are in the Estonian language, but exceptions may be allowed that are historically or culturally justified (Art. 9, see also 1.3). The spelling of Estonian place names will comply with the rules for the Estonian orthography but may reflect the local (dialectal) sound structure (Art. 10). The spelling of one and the same specific part of a name will be harmonized. In certain cases, parallel official names are allowed, either with Estonian and non-Estonian name variants or double Estonian names (Art. 11). Names with long-standing local usage and wide distribution, as well as those with more historical and cultural value shall be preferred in approving new official names (Art. 13).

The National Place Names Register will collect and record all official place names, making the data available online (Art. 17–19).

The Place Names Board is formed (Art. 20–22) to advise the Minister of Regional Affairs and Agriculture and other names authorities in name matters. The Board may also approve, by a resolution, official place names for features that do not have official names yet in the interests of cartography, etc.

Articles of the Act also deal with the use of place names in texts and signs (Art. 14), the use of non-official place names (Art. 15), etc.

The **Place Names Board of Estonia** ([kohanimenõukogu](http://kohanimenõukogu.eki.ee/knn), address: Suur-Ameerika 1, 10122 Tallinn; [eki.ee/knn](http://eki.ee/knn)), formed on 17 June 1997 and succeeding the former Governmental Place Names Committee, is the main advisory and coordinating body of the place names standardization activities in Estonia. The Board advises the Minister of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. The Board consists of representatives of various ministries as well as experts from scientific institutions, publishing companies, etc. The Board's statements are required before various name decisions are made, and it also has a statutory right to approve certain official place names.

The **Institute of the Estonian Language** (*Eesti Keele Instituut*, address: Roosikrantsi 6, 10119 Tallinn; [eki.ee](http://eki.ee)) is the Office of Onomastic Expertise, being one of the main research centres for names in Estonia. The Institute has a vast collection of place names both in digital and paper format. As a result of field research, a total of 540,000 commented entries have been included in the place names archives. The archive can be accessed digitally ([eki.ee/kohanimed](http://eki.ee/kohanimed)). Apart from the collection, a digital database KNAB (presently ca 46,000 records on Estonia) has been formed, which contains mostly names from official sources, older maps, etc.

The **Võru Institute** (*Võru Instituut / Võro Instituut*, address: Tartu 48, 65609 Võru; [wi.ee](http://wi.ee)) has been active in collecting place names of South-East Estonia (Võrumaa) and standardizing the Võru-based local form of the names. It also participates in the national mapping programme by providing names for the Estonian National Topographic Database. A digital database of the toponyms of the historical county of Võrumaa AVKA is available.

## 3 SOURCE MATERIALS

### 3.1 Maps

The production of official maps of Estonia is maintained by the **Estonian Land and Spatial Development Board** (*Maa- ja Ruumiamet*, address: Mustamäe tee 51, 10621 Tallinn; [maaruum.ee](http://maaruum.ee)). Since 2007, all the main cartographic programmes have been centralized into the **Estonian National Topographic Database** (*Eesti topograafiline andmekogu*, ETAK) that will serve as a core for producing all the maps in different scales (incl. the Basic Map, 1:10,000 digitally, and 1:20,000 in printed form). Toponyms in printed maps are usually carefully revised and more numerous than in the digital version; they can be considered the most authoritative source for geographical names.

Extensive map data is available through the **Geoportal of the Estonian Land and Spatial Development Board** ([geoportaal.maaamet.ee/eng](http://geoportaal.maaamet.ee/eng)) that has several public map applications, including the Basic Map, address data map, place names register map, cadastral map, and historical maps starting from the beginning of the 20th century. The maps can be queried using geographical names, the interface is bilingual Estonian-English. WMS and WFS services are also provided. All the spatial data on Estonia will be found in the **Estonian National Geoportal** ([geoportaal.ee/eng/](http://geoportaal.ee/eng/)) that corresponds to the requirements of the INSPIRE directive. A **spatial data catalog** is provided where one can search among 330 datasets, services, and maps.

Nautical charts of Estonia are produced by the **Estonian Transport Administration** (ETA, *Transpordiamet*, address: Valge 4, 11413 Tallinn; [transpordiamet.ee](http://transpordiamet.ee)). Web application Nutimeri displays the Estonian Transport Administration's official electronic navigational charts above the background of orthophoto or [base map from the Estonian Land and Spatial Development Board](#). Data layers from the Hydrographic Information System and/or spatial data objects like aids to navigation, fairways, and harbours can be added to the chart layers. The application works on all platforms, allowing GPS positioning, making queries of data objects, and using measuring and drawing tools.

Various other maps are produced by cartographic companies. **AS Regio** (address: Väike-Tähe 20, 51010 Tartu; [regio.ee](http://regio.ee)) has published the Estonian Road Atlas 1:100,000 (the latest edition, 2022, also available as a CD atlas and NAVI Garmin version) with an index of place names.

## 3.2 Databases and gazetteers

All official geographical names are registered in the **National Place Names Register** ([xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik](http://xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik)), which is maintained by the Land and Spatial Development Board. Currently (February 2025), the register contains 364,000 named features with some 360,000 names. Names can be queried online in Estonian or English. Named features can be viewed using a map interface. In April 2025, a new Address and Place Name System and a new Place Name Register will be implemented.

Two other onomastic databases should be mentioned: **KNAB**, maintained by the Institute of the Estonian Language ([eki.ee/knab/knab.htm](http://eki.ee/knab/knab.htm), 44,000 named features with some 111,000 names), and **AVKA**, maintained by the Võru Institute (23,000 entries). The data in these registers is unofficial, but they both can also be viewed using the Land and Spatial Development Board's geoportal (as part of the address data here: [xgis.maaamet.ee/xgis2/page/link/HrLXDCgE](http://xgis.maaamet.ee/xgis2/page/link/HrLXDCgE)).

The names of populated places were first standardized in 1977, when the number of official names was reduced from 7,400 to about 3,500. In 1997 and 1998, more than 1,100 names were restored, and some names were changed. Statistics Estonia and the Ministry of Finance produced in 2000 an official listing (with national codes) of administrative units and populated places (*Eesti Vabariigi haldus- ja asustusüksuste klassifikaator*, EHAK). The current list of populated places (2025) holds more than 6,600 names; the full updated list is available on the [Statistics Estonia](#) website.

The Place Names Board has also approved a list of 1,166 official lake names. These have been published in *Eesti järvede nimestik. Looduslikud ja tehiskärved* (2006) by the Estonian Environment Information Centre. The publication contains descriptions of 2,804 lakes.

The list of 1,253 island names was approved by the Place Names Board in 2008, but currently, some names have already become outdated because of the changes in the shoreline according to the newest aerial photos.

Official names for rivers and streams are usually taken from *Eesti NSV jõgede, ojade ja kraavide ametlik nimestik*, Tallinn 1986 (Official Gazetteer of Rivers, Brooks and Ditches of the Estonian SSR), containing 1,755 names.

Lists of other names have no official status.

# 4 GLOSSARY OF APPELLATIVES, ADJECTIVES, AND OTHER WORDS NECESSARY FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF MAPS

In parentheses, the genitive form of the word is given if different from the nominative. If the genitive form differs only in a vowel being added to the end of the word, only the vowel is shown, otherwise, the word is spelled out in full. Some words are given in the genitive form only, as the nominative form is rarely, if ever, used in names. Plural nominative forms may be created by adding *-d* to the singular genitive forms, e.g., *järved*, *saared*, etc. For words typically used in dialects only, superscript symbols have been added: <sup>D</sup> - dialectal (general), <sup>S</sup> - South Estonian dialects, <sup>V</sup> - Võru dialect.

*abajas (abaja)* 'cove, inlet'  
*aedlinn(a)* 'garden city, garden suburb'  
*ala-* 'lower'  
*alev(i)* 'borough' /second-degree urban settlement/  
*alevik(u)* 'small borough' /first-degree rural settlement/  
*allikas (allika)* 'spring'  
*alt-* 'lower'  
*aru* 'dry meadow'  
*asula* 'populated place, settlement'  
*asundus(e)* 'settlement'  
*ede-*<sup>S</sup> see *ees-*  
*edela* /Gen./ 'south-west(ern)'  
*ees-*, *ede-*<sup>S</sup> 'front, fore-'  
*heinamaa* 'meadow, hayfield'  
*holm(i)*<sup>D</sup> 'islet, peninsula'  
*ida* 'east, eastern'  
*jaam(a)* 'station'  
*juga (joa)* 'waterfall'  
*jõesuu* 'river mouth'  
*jõgi (jõe, jõõ<sup>V</sup>)* 'river'  
*järv(e)* 'lake'  
*kaasik(u)* 'birch wood'  
*kabel(i)* 'chapel'

*kadastik(u)* 'juniper scrub'  
*kaev(u)* 'well'  
*kaevandus(e)* 'mine'  
*kagu* 'south-east(ern)'  
*kai* 'quay, wharf'  
*kaitseala* 'reservation'  
*kallas (kalda)* 'shore, bank'  
*kalmistu* 'cemetery'  
*kanal(i)* 'canal'  
*kare* 'islet'  
*kari* 'reef, rocky islet'  
*kari (karja)* 'cattle'  
*karjamaa* 'pasture'  
*kerik* see *kirik*  
*kesk-* 'central, middle'  
*kihelkond (kihelkonna)* '(ecclesiastical) parish'  
*kirde* /Gen./ 'north-east(ern)'  
*kirik(u), kerik (kerigu)*<sup>V</sup> 'church'  
*kivi* 'stone, boulder'  
*koppel (kopli)* 'enclosure, paddock'  
*korgõ<sup>V</sup>* see *kõrge*  
*kosk (kose)* 'rapids'  
*kraav(i)* 'ditch'  
*kund (kunnu)*<sup>V</sup> 'wilderness, waste land'

*kurk (kurgu)* 'strait'  
*kuusik(u)* 'spruce wood'  
*kõnd (kõnnu)* 'wilderness, waste land'  
*kõrge, korgõ<sup>V</sup>* 'high'  
*kõrgustik(u)* 'upland'  
*küla, külä<sup>V</sup>* 'village, hamlet'  
*külanõukogu* 'village soviet, rural municipality' /1945 - 1990, since 1990 cf. *vald*/  
*laas (laane, laanõ<sup>V</sup>)* 'primeval forest'  
*laht (lahe)* 'bay, gulf'  
*lai(a), lai (laja)<sup>D</sup>* 'broad, wide'  
*laid (laiu)* 'islet'  
*lamm(i)* 'valley flat'  
*land (lannu)<sup>V</sup>* 'pool, puddle, muddy pond'  
*lennujaam(a)* 'airport'  
*lennuväli (lennuvälja)* 'airfield'  
*lepik(u)* 'alder grove'  
*liiv(a)* 'sand'  
*linn(a)* 'town'  
*linnus(e)* 'castle, stronghold'  
*lood (loo)* 'rocky islet; alvar'  
*loode* /Gen./ 'north-west(ern)'  
*looduskaitseala* 'nature reservation'  
*loss(i)* 'castle'  
*luht (luha)* 'water meadow'  
*lõpp (lõpe)* 'cove'  
*lõugas (lõuka)* 'cove, inlet'  
*lõuna* 'south, southern'  
*läte (lätte)* 'source, spring'  
*lääne* /Gen./ 'west, western'  
*maa* 'land, county'  
*maakond (maakonna)* 'county'  
*maalinn(a)* 'fenced stronghold'  
*maantee* 'road, highway'  
*maastikukaitseala* 'landscape reserve'  
*madal(a)* 'shoal, shallow'  
*madalik(u)* 'lowland'  
*majakas (majaka)* 'lighthouse'  
*majand(i)* 'enterprise, farm'  
*meri (mere)* 'sea'  
*mets(a), mõts(a)<sup>V</sup>* 'wood, forest'  
*must(a)* 'black'  
*muul(i)* 'pier'  
*mõis(a)* '(country) estate, manor'

*mõts(a)<sup>V</sup>* see *mets(a)*  
*mäe-* 'upper'  
*mägi (mäe)* 'hill'  
*männik(u)* 'pine wood'  
*neem(e)* 'cape, foreland'  
*niit (niidu, niidü<sup>V</sup>)* 'meadow'  
*nina* 'cape, foreland'  
*nukk (nuki)* 'cape, promontory'  
*nurm(e), nurm(õ)<sup>V</sup>* 'field, pasture'  
*nõmm(e)* 'heath'  
*oja* 'brook, stream'  
*org (oru)* 'valley'  
*ots(a)* 'end, cape'  
*palu, palo<sup>V</sup>* 'low meadow or forest'  
*pank (panga)* 'steep limestone coast, rocky cape'  
*park (pargi)* 'park'  
*pea, pää<sup>S</sup>* 'head, point, end'  
*peakraav(i)* 'main ditch, canal'  
*pealt-* 'upper'  
*peatas(e)* 'stop'  
*pere* 'family, household'  
*piir(i)* 'border, boundary'  
*pikk (pika), pitk(a)<sup>D</sup>* 'long'  
*plats(i)* 'square'  
*poolsaar(e)* 'peninsula'  
*puiestee* 'avenue, boulevard'  
*põhja* /Gen./ 'north, northern'  
*põik (põigu)* 'lane, crossroad'  
*põld (põllu)* 'field'  
*pää* see *pea*  
*raba* 'bog, swamp'  
*rahu* 'reef'  
*rahvuspark (rahvuspargi)* 'national park'  
*rajoon(i)* 'district' /1950 - 1990, since 1990 cf. *maakond*/  
*rand (ranna)* 'shore, coast, beach'  
*raudtee* 'railway'  
*saar(e), saar(õ)<sup>V</sup>* 'island'  
*saarestik(u)* 'archipelago'  
*sadam(a)* 'harbour; port'  
*saun(a)* 'small farm, cottage; bath-house'  
*soo, suu<sup>V</sup>* 'swamp, marsh, mire'  
*sild (silla)* 'bridge'  
*suu* 'mouth'  
*suu<sup>V</sup>* see *soo*

*suur(e), suur(õ)<sup>V</sup>* 'great, large'  
*säär(e)* 'narrow foreland'  
*taga-* 'hind'  
*talu, talo<sup>V</sup>* 'house, farm'  
*tammik(u)* 'oak grove'  
*tee* 'street, way'  
*tehas(e)* 'works, factory'  
*tiik (tiigi)* 'pond'  
*tulepaak (tulepaagi)* 'beacon'  
*tuletorn(i)* 'lighthouse'  
*tuulik(u)* 'windmill'  
*tänav(a)* 'street'  
*uus (uue)* 'new'  
*vabrik(u)* 'factory'  
*vahe-* 'middle'  
*vahtnõ (vahtsõ)<sup>V</sup>* see *vastne (vastse)<sup>S</sup>*

*vald (valla)* '(civil) parish, rural municipality'  
*valge, valg-* 'white'  
*vana* 'old'  
*vastne (vastse)<sup>S</sup>, vahtnõ (vahtsõ)<sup>V</sup>* 'new'  
*veehoidla* 'water reservoir'  
*veski* 'mill'  
*viik (viigi)<sup>D</sup>* 'bay, cove'  
*voor(e)* 'hill, drumlin'  
*väike (väikse, väikese), väiku<sup>V</sup>, väiko<sup>V</sup>* 'small, little'  
*väin(a)* 'strait, sound'  
*väli (välja, vällä<sup>V</sup>)* 'field, plain'  
*väljak(u)* 'square'  
*ülem-* 'upper'

## 5 ABBREVIATIONS USED IN MAPS

Abbreviation	Estonian	English
AÜ	aiandusühistu	gardening association (address area name)
kr	kraav	ditch
mnt	maantee	road, highway
pk	peakraav	main ditch, canal
pst	puiestee	avenue, boulevard
SÜ	suvilaühistu	cottage association
tn	tänav	street
vkt	väikekoht	small place (address area name)

# Annex: ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF ESTONIA

(March 2025)

Estonia is divided into 15 counties (Estonian singular: *maakond*, plural: *maakonnad*). Counties are divided into municipalities, which are of two kinds: rural municipalities (otherwise called communes, or parishes, *vald*, plural: *vallad*) and urban municipalities (or towns, *linn*, plural: *linnad*). Populated places are termed as towns (*linn*), boroughs (*alev*, plural: *alevid*), small boroughs (*alevik*, plural: *alevikud*), and villages (*küla*, plural: *külad*), but these have no administrative functions. Note that since at least 1998, the towns may be either self-governing municipalities, or they may be incorporated into rural municipalities (*vallasisene linn*, town within a municipality). Furthermore, some of the municipalities are termed as towns, although they also contain rural areas. Consequently, in these cases, there is a distinction between towns as populated places and towns as administrative units. For instance, Pärnu town as an administrative unit includes the former municipalities Audru, Paikuse, and Tõstamaa, being a much larger area than Pärnu town as a populated place. Some towns are divided into districts (*linnaosa*, plural: *linnaosad*) with limited self-government: Tallinn consists of 8 districts (Haabersti, Kesklinn, Kristiine, Lasnamäe, Mustamäe, Nõmme, Pirita, Põhja-Tallinn), Kohtla-Järve of 5 districts (Ahtme, Järve, Kukruse, Oru, Sompä).

For a chronology of administrative and territorial changes, see the [website of Riigi Teataja](#).

## Counties

County centres are in brackets.

1 Harjumaa (Tallinn)	9 Pärnumaa (Pärnu)
2 Hiiumaa (Kärdla)	10 Raplamaa (Rapla)
3 Ida-Virumaa (Jõhvi)	11 Saaremaa (Kuressaare)
4 Jõgevamaa (Jõgeva)	12 Tartumaa (Tartu)
5 Järvamaa (Paide)	13 Valgamaa (Valga)
6 Läänemaa (Haapsalu)	14 Viljandimaa (Viljandi)
7 Lääne-Virumaa (Rakvere)	15 Võrumaa (Võru)
8 Põlvamaa (Põlva)	

Note: The names of counties have double variants in Estonian. The compound names ending in *-maa* have wider usage, and these are used in most contexts. In official practice, however, the use of two-word names prevails where the ending *-maa* is replaced with *maakond* and written as a separate word: *Harju maakond*, *Hiiu maakond*, *Jõgeva maakond*, *Saare maakond*, etc.

## Municipalities (urban /*linn*/ and rural /*vald*/)

Numbers refer to counties above.

Alutaguse vald 3  
Anija vald 1  
Antsla vald 15  
Elva vald 12  
Haapsalu linn 6  
Haljala vald 7  
Harku vald 1  
Hiiumaa vald 2  
Häädemeeste vald 9  
Jõelähtme vald 1  
Keila linn 1  
Jõgeva vald 4  
Jõhvi vald 3  
Järva vald 5  
Kadrina vald 7  
Kambja vald 12  
Kanepi vald 8  
Kastre vald 12  
Kehtna vald 10  
Kihnu vald 9  
Kiili vald 1  
Kohila vald 10  
Kohtla-Järve linn 3  
Kose vald 1  
Kuusalu vald 1  
Luunja vald 12  
Lääne-Harju vald 1  
Loksa linn 1  
Lääne-Nigula vald 6  
Lääneranna vald 9  
Lüganuse vald 3  
Maardu linn 1  
Muhu vald 11  
Mulgi vald 14  
Mustvee vald 4  
Märjamaa vald 10  
Narva linn 3  
Narva-Jõesuu linn 3  
Nõo vald 12  
Otepää vald 13

Paide linn 5  
Peipsiääre vald 12  
Põhja-Pärnumaa vald 9  
Põhja-Sakala vald 14  
Põltsamaa vald 4  
Põlva vald 8  
Pärnu linn 9  
Raasiku vald 1  
Rae vald 1  
Rakvere linn 7  
Rakvere vald 7  
Rapla vald 10  
Ruhnu vald 11  
Rõuge vald 15  
Räpina vald 8  
Saarde vald 9  
Saaremaa vald 11  
Saku vald 1  
Saue vald 1  
Setomaa vald 15  
Sillamäe linn 3  
Tapa vald 7  
Tallinn 1  
Tartu linn 12  
Tartu vald 12  
Toila vald 3  
Tori vald 9  
Tõrva vald 13  
Türi vald 5  
Valga vald 13  
Viimsi vald 1  
Viljandi linn 14  
Viljandi vald 14  
Vinni vald 7  
Viru-Nigula vald 7  
Vormsi vald 6  
Võru linn 15  
Võru vald 15  
Väike-Maarja vald 7



