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English

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Geographical Names
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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda *

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

Report of Latvia

Submitted by Latvia

Summary

The national report of Latvia covers the two-year period 2023-2024.

The full report provides information on the situation (including developments, processes and events) in Latvia with respect to the standardization of geographical names in following areas:

- international activities,
- activities of national geographical names authorities,
- legislative basis,
- geographical names crowd sourcing and field collection,
- databases and registers (the Place Names Database of Latvia, the National Address Register, the Latvian Place Names Card Index, the Database of Livonian place names etc.),
- promotion of indigenous Livonian place names and dialectal Latvian place names,
- consulting on toponymy,
- publications, educational events,
- treatment of names on maps and map browsers,
- exonyms and country names.

Links to Latvian geographical names related web sources (incl. legislative acts) and contact information of the involved institutions are included.

* GEGN.2/2025/1.

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REPORT OF LATVIA

The report covers the two-year period 2023 – 2024.

I. International activities (UNCSGN Resolutions VI/1, IV/24, II/20)

Latvia is a member state of the Baltic division of UNGEGN. Experts of Latvia participated in the 3rd Session of the (new) United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) (New York, May 2023), in the 22nd and 23rd Meeting of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN (Warsaw, March 2023, Vilnius, October 2024). Latvia participates in the Working Group on Exonyms and the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management.

University of Latvia Livonian Language institute represented Latvia as a member state on the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032) as a member state and as a co-chair (2022–2023) and participated in developing the Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032). The Institute is also involved in the work of UNGEGN Focus Group on Indigenous Geographical Names, collaborates with the group in collection of general information on usage of indigenous geographical names for the the First Global Survey of Indigenous Languages, jointly drafted by the Ad-Hoc Working Groups of the Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages to be launched on March 11, 2025.

II. National activities

1. Names authorities (UNCSGN Resolution I/4 A.)

The Livonian Language Experts Board under the State Language Centre was established on January 15th, 2024, to deal with the standardization of Livonian geographical names.

There are no changes regarding the structure and responsibilities of other Latvian geographical names authorities during the reporting period.

In 2023 – 2024, the **State Language Centre** continued working on a voluminous conclusion regarding the official name proposals (for more than 4,000 natural features) submitted by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency. 20 conclusions on 987 natural features have been prepared and delivered.

Beyond this, 1,699 conclusions regarding 4,660 official name proposals for other kinds of features, among them 278 street names, 63 public road names, 8 public park names, 7 village names were prepared and submitted to responsible place names authorities during the reporting period.

According to the *Regulations Regarding Geographical Names Information*, the conclusion is a basis for approving official names for all kinds of geographical features.

2. Legislative basis (UNCSGN Resolutions I/4, VII/5, VIII/9)

There are no changes in legislative basis for the geographical names standardization in Latvia authorities during the reporting period.

3. Field collection of place names (UNCSGN Resolutions I/4 B, VII/5)

The **field collection** of geographical names has continued mainly in a framework of student tutoring and a scientific research work at the University of Latvia and some other institutions of higher education as well as during the thematical events, like Language Day in 2023.

Crowdsourcing website with electronic geographical names database “Tautas vietvārdu datubāze” was launched by Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia, in 2017. A new platform of the **crowdsourcing tool** for collaborative collecting Latvian geographical names (<https://vietvardi.lu.lv>) was opened for public in February 2023. The platform enables users to register a name, its spelling and pronunciation, administrative territorial localization, mark its location on a map, enter cultural, historical and linguistic data about the place name, and even upload photos. Everyone can search for registered geographical names, via the map as well. 9.800 names have been collected so far.

The platform is also used for various local projects. For example, the Valmiera municipality, within the framework of the project of European Citizen Science Association, used the platform to collect geographical names in seven civil parishes of Central Vidzeme. Users took advantage of the new possibilities to add pictures, comments and pronunciation of geographical names. The collected names and related information are further used for local research.

4. Toponymic data files and gazetteers (UNCSGN Resolutions I/4 E)

The Place Names Database of Latvia, maintained by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency (Laboratory of Toponymy) contains 186,400 geographical names for 131,700 features (data on February 01, 2025). The new application of the database was launched in January 2023, and the new public version (<https://vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv/search>) was launched in May 2024.

More detailed information about the Place Names Database is provided in the **report “Place Names Database of Latvia”**.

A new volume of the place names **dictionary “Latvijas ezeri” (Lakes of Latvia**, in Latvian) was prepared by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency in 2023. It comprises names of 110 standing water bodies (lakes, ponds and reservoirs) situated in Preiļi and Līvāni counties, along with short toponymic and geographic information. The dictionary is published on the Agency’s website, as a [*.pdf file](#).

The preparation of the next volume (Krāslava County) is expected to be completed in 2025.

The National Address Register maintained by the State Land Service includes names of all administrative territories and territorial units of Latvia (36 counties, 511 civil parishes, 81 cities and towns), 6,267 officially recognized villages (including 1,357 villages and 4,910 small villages), 18,649 streets, 223,557 houses, other buildings and land units intended for buildings (data on January 01, 2025).

Since 2022, 67 street names have been changed in Latvia, of which 58 were inherited from the Soviet era. Information on the changed street for the period since 2022 was published on the Open Data portal at the beginning of 2024.

Names search is available on the **data distribution portal of the State Land Service of Latvia** at: <https://www.kadastrs.lv/> (interface in Latvian and English). Search of real estate names is also available there. Textual and spatial data cover all the territory of Latvia.

The Latvian Place Names Card Index (or card file) (approximately 1 million domestic geographical names) is maintained by the Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia, since the very beginning of the 19th century (no public access). The cards comprise mainly linguistic information. Digitized basic part of the Card Index – 842,000 scanned place names cards – is available for scientific research and geographical names standardization purposes by the request.

The Card Index continues to serve as the main source for compiling a comprehensive **linguistic dictionary “Latvijas vietvārdu vārdnīca” (Dictionary of Latvian Place Names**, in Latvian, with preface in English). A new volume of the dictionary with toponyms “Sgajevski-Šlukuma”, comprising almost 21,000 names, was published in November 2024 (available as a [*.pdf file](#)).

Tēzauris - the largest online dictionary and thesaurus for Latvian (available at: <https://tezaurs.lv>), contains ~64,000 geographical names (domestic names and Latvian exonyms) and their glosses.

The Electronic Historical Latvian Dictionary (<https://lvvv.tezaurs.lv/>) based on the “Corpus of Early Written Latvian Texts” (<https://korpuss.lv/id/Senie>) comprises now 612 historical proper names from historical sources.

5. Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names (UNCSGN Resolutions VIII/1, IX/5)

The *Official Language Law* determines that the state shall ensure the maintenance, protection and development of the Livonian language as the language of the indigenous (autochthonic) population. Names of places in the Livonian coastal territory shall also be created and used in Livonian. The Law also determines that the State shall ensure the maintenance, protection and development of the Latgalian written language as a historic variant of the Latvian language.

The University of Latvia Livonian Institute has created and maintains a **database of Livonian place names** with 1,561 Livonian place names and a **Livonian place names map**. Public version of the database and the map both are accessible at: <https://livonian.tech/en/>.

Additionally, a layer of Livonian place names has been integrated in the map product of SIA “Jāņa sēta” (Jana seta Ltd) and is available now on the platform *Balticmaps.eu* along with the interface in [Livonian](#).

Identifying and reconstruction of place names in the historical Livonian area with intension of using these names in the public space has been done. The first Latvian/Livonian road sign was installed by Talsi municipality in Northwestern Latvia on February 20, 2023

In 2023, for implementing the Law on Latvian Historical Lands, the state budget, among other, provided funding for complete replacement of existing road signs with bilingual ones in territory of the Livonian Coast as well as for installation of numerous Latvian/Latgalian road signs in Latgale. Practical work on the erection of road signs featuring place names in Livonian and in Latgalian written language was started in the respective regions (Livonian Coast and Latgale) in 2023 and continued in 2024.

6. Toponymic education, consultations, exchange of knowledge on domestic and foreign names (UNCSGN Resolution VII/9)

Regional Place Names Days, organized almost yearly by the Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia in collaboration with Latvian Geospatial Information Agency and local governments are going to become a good tradition. The aim is – to promote awareness of regional toponyms, their importance and role, to summarize the results, exchange experience, impressions and opinions, to involve local people and schoolchildren in place names collecting fieldwork. In 2023, this turned into a three-day event – Language Day.

On the Language Day 2023, local librarians and teachers were involved in collecting information on current and historical geographical names. The project was carried out with the financial support of the State Culture Capital Foundation. More than 500 geographical names with related cultural and historical information have been collected in Kauguri civil parish (87.83 square kilometers). These data will be a basis for a series of toponymic publications "Atlas of Homeland" (one municipality in one volume with geographical names, illustrative and cartographic material, and historical, linguistic and cultural data).

The Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia continued to consult on geographical names and different toponomastic issues.

Consultations on the spelling of foreign geographical names, and other related matters, are available at the Department of Language Development of the Latvian Language Agency. The public webpage <http://www.valodaskonsultacijas.lv> maintained by Latvian Language Agency, offers answers to various questions on the spelling and pronunciation of the Latvian language, including information on the geographical names of Latvia.

A collection of onomastic articles “Onomastica Lettica” (available as a [*.pdf file](#), in Latvian) was published in November 2024. Four articles of the “Onomastica Lettica” are devoted to geographical names (toponyms with the component “dižs” (big), names of railway stations, issues on rendering and motivation of geographical names).

The Latvian Geospatial Information Agency deals with information on its work on geographical names standardization and other toponymic issues in the section “Areas of Work” (<https://www.lgia.gov.lv/en/areas-work>) of its website.

7. Geographical names in cartography (UNCSGN Resolution VII/5)

The most significant state cartography projects regarding the geographical names are:

1) The **Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:10 000** (2,792 sheets) is being prepared in digital version only. The 4th edition is going to be completed in 2025. The toponymy for this map is being compiled and updated by cartographers using geographical names data from the Place Names Database and the National Address Register, with advice/assistance of the Laboratory of Toponymy. The 4th edition is special in sense that, for the first time in the practice of Latvian national cartography, the cartographic features such as watercourses and waterbodies are linked with the UID of the features of the Place Names Database.

2) The **Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:50 000** (131 sheet) is being prepared in digital and printed versions. All the toponymy for this map was updated by the Laboratory of Toponymy. The 4th edition is being prepared now.

Toponymic work at the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency as far as it is possible follows the principle stated in the UN resolution VII/5 in 1998: geographical names standardization, based on a local usage of the local place names forms (collected through the extensive field work during 1990-s and elaborated and updated along with the cartographic production updating cycles).

The **Latvian Geospatial Information Agency Map Browser “LĢIA Karšu Pārlūks”** offers search and viewing of geographical names on the latest versions of maps of Latvia in scales 1: 1 000 000 - 1:10 000 (the central part of Riga at scale 1: 2 000) prepared by this institution. Names from the Place Names database along with address feature names from the National Address Register and administrative and territorial unit names can be used for the search. Rough geometries from the Place Names Database, illustrating the extent of names, are also accessible there. The Map Browser is available at <https://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/karte>.

The private cartography and geospatial intelligence solution company SIA “Jāņa sēta” (Jana seta Ltd) is the only enterprise in Latvia preparing world and national atlases and cartographic editions for schools. The **map viewer “BalticMaps”** (<http://www.balticmaps.eu>) maintained by the company offers geographical names search on the maps prepared by “Jāņa sēta Ltd”. Geographical names are presented in original languages (in original script (if Latin) or romanized).

8. Exonyms and country names (UNCSGN Resolutions VI/10, V/11)

As Latvian is a flexive language, it is impossible to keep most of the foreign geographical names unchanged in Latvian. Moreover, the cultural-historical value of traditional Latvian exonyms is recognized. *Regulations on the Toponymic Information* state the preservation of them.

The responsible **authority for standardization of the Latvian forms of foreign geographical names is the Latvian Language Experts Board at the State Language Centre.**

In 2023, the Latvian Language Experts Board:

- 1) standardized the official Latvian forms of 23 place names from the USA and Australia, (available at [download \(vvc.gov.lv\)](https://www.vvc.gov.lv), in Latvian);
- 2) recommended to change the official form of the Russian place name **Kaliningrad in Latvian to Karaļauči or Kēnigsberga.**

Latvian Language Agency has issued **guidelines on rendering Byelorussian and Ukrainian proper names in Latvian.** Both contains recommendations of rendering geographical names, too:

- 1) Kopoloveca, Nadežda. Baltkrievu īpašvārdu atveide latviešu valodā. Valodas prakse: vērojumi un ieteikumi. Populārzinātnisku rakstu krājums. Nr. 18. Rīga : Latviešu valodas aģentūra, 2023. 124.-144. lpp.
- 2) Hansons, Arturs, Poļakova, Māra. Ukrainu īpašvārdu atveide latviešu valodā: Ieteikumi. Rīga : Latviešu valodas aģentūra, 2023. 192 lpp.

The most extensive Latvian database comprising Latvian exonyms and renderings is maintained by the private cartography and geospatial intelligence solution company SIA “Jāņa sēta” (Jana seta Ltd).

It contains 218,000 geographical names in their original languages, as well as exonyms and renderings: 91,000 – into Latvian, 3,000 – into Estonian, 14,000 into Lithuanian, 10,000 into Russian (no public access).

In 2023, the company Jana seta Ltd introduced the "Burtnieks" solution (<https://burtnieks.kartes.lv/>), which enables rendering of place names from their original languages into Latvian and vice versa. Part of geographical names can also be translated into Estonian and Lithuanian. This solution includes over 100,000 place names in Latvian, all stored in the company's database.

9. List of links

A. Legislative Acts

- Official Language Law (Valsts valodas likums): <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/14740-official-language-law>
- Regulations Regarding Geographical Names Information (Vietvārdu informācijas noteikumi): <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/243610-regulations-regarding-geographical-names-information>
- Geospatial Information Law (Ģeotelpiskās informācijas likums): <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/202999-geospatial-information-law>
- Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas (Administratīvo teritoriju un apdzīvoto vietu likums): <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/315654-law-on-administrative-territories-and-populated-areas>
- Regulations on Addressing (Adresācijas noteikumi), in Latvian only: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324387-adresacijas-noteikumi>
- Laws and Regulations of the Republic of Latvia in English: <https://www.vvc.gov.lv/en/latvijas-republikas-tiesibu-akti-anglu-valoda>

B. Geographical names and maps of Latvia

- Place Names Database of Latvia (Latvijas Vietvārdu datubāze), public version (in Latvian only): <https://vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv/search>; brief description in English: <https://www.lgia.gov.lv/en/place-names-database-0>
- Database and Map of Livonian Place Names: <https://livonian.tech/en/>
- Crowdsourcing platform of Institute of Latvian Language: <https://vietvardi.lu.lv>
- Standardized Latvian Names of Regions of European Union Member States: <https://www.vvc.gov.lv/lv/media/152/download?attachment>
- Standardized Latvian names of the countries and regions of the World (*Valstu un teritoriju atveidojumi latviešu valodā*): [Latviešu valodas ekspertu komisija | Valsts valodas centrs \(vvc.gov.lv\)](#), subsections "Par pasaules valstu un teritoriju nosaukumiem latviešu valodā" (basic list) and "Par pasaules valstu un teritoriju nosaukumiem latviešu valodā, papildināts" (amendments)
- Tool for place names rendering "Burtnieks" by SIA "Jāņa sēta" (Jana seta Ltd) <https://burtnieks.kartes.lv/>
- Data distribution portal of State Land Service of the Republic of Latvia (textual and spatial data in National Real Estate Cadastre information system and in National Address Register): [Data distribution portal](#) or <https://www.kadastrs.lv/>
- Latvian Geospatial Information Agency Map Browser (LĢIA Karšu Pārlūks) <https://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/karte/>
- Geoportal of Latvia: <https://geolatvija.lv/geo/mapviewer>
- Digital map collection of the Latvian National Library with Georeferenced map viewer: <https://kartes.lndb.lv/> or [Latvijas vēsturiskās kartes](#)
- Dodies.lv historical map portal: <https://vesture.dodies.lv/>
- GISNET Map Browser: <http://kartes.gisnet.lv/>
- SIA "Jāņa sēta" (Jana seta Ltd) Map Browser _BalticMaps: <https://balticmaps.eu/lv>
- JSC Latvia's State Forests (LVM) Map Browser: <https://www.lvmgeo.lv/en/maps>

C. Open data and INSPIRE data sets on territory of Latvia

- <https://www.lgia.gov.lv/en/place-name-data-open-data>
- <https://www.lgia.gov.lv/en/inspire>
- <https://geolatvija.lv/geo/search> (open data on geographical names, administrative territories, cadastral units, addresses)
- <https://inspire-geoportal.ec.europa.eu/>

10. Further information may be obtained from:

Latvijas Ģeotelpiskās informācijas aģentūra

(Latvian Geospatial Information Agency (LGIA))

Ojāra Vācieša iela 43

Rīga, LV-1004, Latvia

www.lgia.gov.lv

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(Ms. Vita Strautniece, Laboratory of Toponymy; e-mail: vita.strautniece@lgia.gov.lv)

Valsts valodas centrs

(State Language Centre)

Raiņa bulvāris 15

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Phone: (+371)67331814; e-mail: pasts@vvc.gov.lv

LU Latviešu valodas institūts

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LU Lībiešu institūts

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Rīga, LV-1010, Latvia

www.livones.net/lili/

<https://www.facebook.com/livodinstitut>

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LU MII Mākslīgā intelekta laboratorija

(Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Latvia)

Raiņa bulvāris 29

Rīga, LV-1459, Latvia

<https://ailab.lv/en/>

e-mail:

info@ailab.lv

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(Latvian Language Agency)

Meistaru iela 10-401

Rīga, LV-1050, , Latvia

<https://valoda.lv/>

Fax: (+371)67201680; e-mail: agentura@valoda.lv

Valsts zemes dienests

(State Land Service)

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