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English

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

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Item 9 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Promotion and capacity-building: Toponymic training and education

Online manual on name planning

Submitted by Finland**

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Resolutions concerned: I/4 (National standardization) VII/2 (Commemorative naming practices for geographical features), VII/5 (National standardization based on local usage), VIII/9 (Geographical names as cultural heritage) and X/4 (Discouraging the commercialization of geographical names).

In Finland, the planning of public administration names and deciding on the planned names lies in the hands of several different agencies. For example, municipalities are responsible for both the names of municipalities and street names, while the Government is responsible for the names of administrative areas and government agencies. VR, the state-owned railway company, decides on the names of railway traffic sites, and the Finnish Transport Infrastructure Agency decides on the names of road bridges. Since the responsibility for names lies with many different authorities, who often do not have expertise in language or names, guidance for planning of functional names is needed.

In December 2023, the Institute for the Languages of Finland published the Online manual on name planning *Hyvän nimistön opas* (*Namnplaneringsguiden* in Swedish) to support the planning of names. The online publication is intended for employees of municipalities, wellbeing services counties and the central government. Its particular target group are all public administration employees who plan proper names or make decisions on proper names. The bilingual guide is written in both national languages (Finnish and Swedish) and contains instructions for forming both Finnish and Swedish names. The guidelines apply to both planned place names and names of organisations and services, such as agencies, hospitals, schools, projects and online services. Some of the guidelines have previously been published as articles or on websites, but completely new instructions are also included.

The Online manual on name planning is available for everyone free of charge. It will be updated as needed and is available at the following addresses:

- in Finnish: <https://kielitoimistonohjepankki.fi/hyvan-nimiston-opas/>
- in Swedish: <https://kielitoimistonohjepankki.fi/sv/namnplaneringsguiden/>.

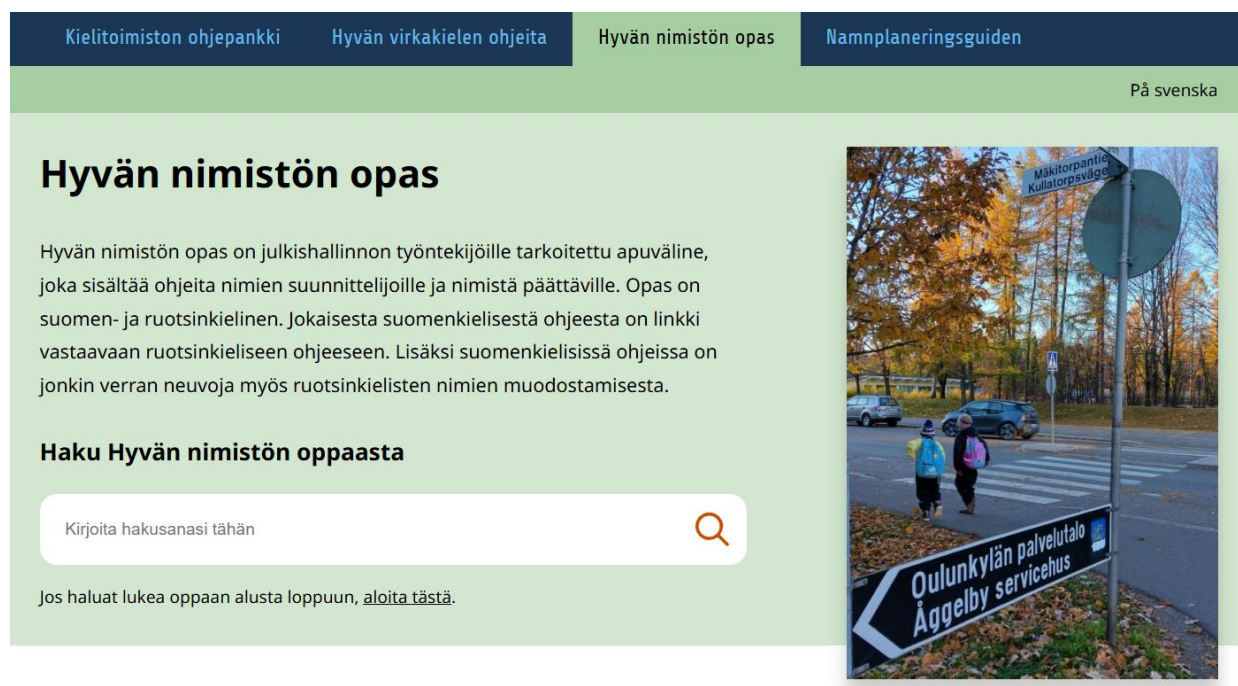


Figure 1: The Finnish-language front page of the Online manual on name planning

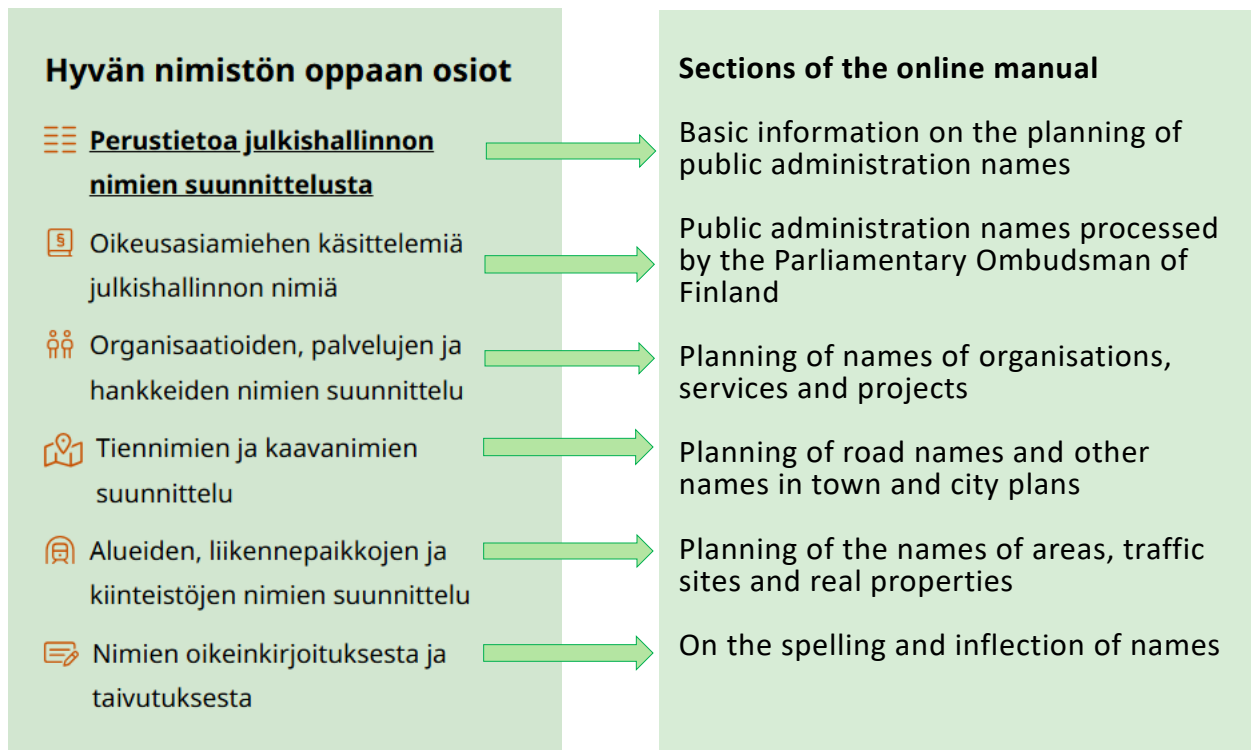


Figure 2: Sections of the Online manual on name planning in Finnish, and translated into English.

Guidelines for place names

The manual contains a total of 16 guidelines for place names. Below is a brief overview of the main contents of each guideline for place names and their planning.

Two types of place names: inherited and planned

- The guidelines emphasise that the planner of names must be able to distinguish between inherited and planned place names. Inherited names, such as the names of natural sites, farms, houses and villages, have emerged in the speech of the people living in the area because there has been a need to talk about the places. They are part of our intangible cultural heritage, and in Finland, the public administration has no authority to decide on them, or change them. For example, a municipality does not have the right to change the name of an island or lake in its area. The Institute for the Languages of Finland standardises inherited place names, that is, the Institute checks which name is used for a particular place and decides on its spelling.
- Planned place names include the names of roads and streets, parks, administrative areas, traffic sites and natural parks. Usually, planned place names are also official, so that a decision is made on them that falls within the competence of an authority. In order for the planned place names to be linked with the correct location, the guidelines recommend using standardised inherited place names as the basis for the planned names. They can be found in the National Land Survey of Finland's electronic map service.

Principles for the planning of road and street names and names in town and city plans

- The purpose of the road name is to separate the road from other traffic routes and direct users to the right place without problems. Guidance is supported by the permanence of the name, and that is why no established name should be changed without good reason. A good road

name is immediately perceived as a road name and is easy to remember, pronounce, write and inflect. The words included in road and park names should be neutral in meaning.

- It is advisable to save the naming criteria for the purposes of future name planning, for example, in the municipal data register. The naming criteria may include the inherited name of a nearby location, the name of a person having influenced the area, a nearby site or the characteristics of the terrain. Knowledge of the naming criteria used makes future name planning easier, as the background of the name is not always clear on the basis of the name itself (e.g. *Puolantie* may have been chosen according to a dialect word referring to 'puolukka', Finnish for lingonberry, or the bobbing of a weaving machine, or Poland, the country name, 'Puola' in Finnish).

How to find material for road names, street names and other names in town and city plans

- The road and street names and other names in land use planning linked to local inherited names preserve the local language and culture and also convey relevant information to new residents and future generations. When inherited names are used as basis for the planned names, the residents can usually relate to the names and the names become both informative and more distinctive in many respects.
- Inherited place names do not always provide sufficient material as basis for all the new names that are needed. Names can also be given on the basis of the characteristics of the location or a site located in the particular place. The site should be permanent or significant in terms of the region's history or nature (no company names in road names). Other naming methods include commemorative names and thematic names. Thematic names should be based on the history, livelihoods and industries, nature or other local characteristics of the place (e.g. names of local plants, construction of railways, fishing as a traditional livelihood).

Bilingualism in road names and other names in town and city plans

- In officially bilingual municipalities, road names and proposed names in land use planning are created in both Finnish and Swedish. The names should be planned simultaneously and in collaboration with experts in both languages. This helps avoid unwieldy translations of names.
- Inherited name relating to nature, the name of a village or a house that do not have an equivalent in another language may not be translated in the road name. If both Finnish and Swedish-speaking people know a house by the name *Albacka* (in Swedish, *al* for 'alder' and *backa* for 'hill'), the Finnish road name *Albackantie* 'Albacka's genitive form + 'road' and the Swedish name *Albackavägen* (in Swedish, *vägen* for 'road') are suitable. The name *Leppämäentie* should not be created in Finnish because the name 'Leppämäki' (Finnish: *leppä* for 'alder' and *mäki* for 'hill') is not used by local residents. If translated, the name would no longer refer to the same site, the Albacka house.

Saami-language road names and other names in town and city plans

- The same principles apply in the Saami region as in the bilingual Finnish and Swedish-speaking regions. In Inari, where three different Saami languages are spoken, the planned place names should be given at least in one Saami language. Alternatively, the names can be given systematically in Finnish, Northern Saami, Inari Saami and Skolt Saami. Inherited place names are not translated even in this case.

Commemorative names and designated places

- Careful consideration should be given to choosing a commemorative name, because the names of people and events often carry idealistic and political meanings that the residents may have different opinions about. It is also a good practice to ask the person's family members or other relatives if they think it is appropriate to give a commemorative name.

- The principles based on the UNGEGN's recommendations (resolution VII/2) must be followed when giving commemorative names. A place should not be given a commemorative name if the recipient is alive. The recipient of a commemorative name should be respected and appreciated also outside their own field, political reference group and era. The person must be associated with the named place in a significant and positive way.
- The instructions also consider the advantages and disadvantages of using only the first or last name, the full name of a person or, for example, the stage or professional name in the commemorative name.

Local dialect in road names and other names in town and city plans

- National maps aim at clarity in standard language and comprehensibility, which is why the dialectal forms of inherited place names have primarily been converted to standard language on the maps. However, some local dialectal features may have been preserved so that the residents of each area can relate to the names on the map.
- If the dialectal feature has been retained in the inherited place name of the National Land Survey of Finland's basic map, it should also be retained in the proposed names in land use planning formed on the basis of the inherited name. E.g. *Isoniittu* → *Isoniituntie*. The word '*niittu*' is a dialectal form of the standard language word '*niitty*' meaning 'meadow', and *iso* means 'big, large'.
- Dialectal words or features can also be included, after careful consideration, in proposed names in land use planning that have been formed according to a name topic derived from the surrounding area. In order for the names to fit into their surroundings, the dialectal words and features used in the names must belong to the dialect of the region in question. When new proposed names in land use planning are given according to a theme, it is usually best to form the names in standard language.

First part of a road name: Pihlajatie or Pihlajantie?

- The guidelines explain the difference in meaning between the nominative and genitive forms of the first part of a Finnish road name. The genitive case usually refers to a specific object (a rowan tree, *pihlaja*, growing by the road) and the nominative refers more generally to some item or phenomenon (on the topic of trees), but there are also exceptions to the main rule. In Swedish names, there is not the same difference in meaning with names in the genitive and nominative case as in Finnish.

The generic term in the road name: tie (road), katu (street) or kuja (alley)?

- The guidelines explain in what kind of environment and for what kind of object the different words referring to the traffic route are suitable in names. Sometimes, a term that refers to something other than a passageway can also be used as the generic term in the address name (for example, *mäki* for hill, *ranta* for beach or shore, or *aukio* for square). After consideration, also a word that figuratively refers to the shape of the passageway (e.g. *Pukinsarvi* 'Goat's horn') can be used. However, for reasons of comprehensibility and usability, it is advisable to avoid other types of address names that do not contain a word referring to a place at all (e.g. *Kuunvalo* 'Moonlight').

Taking the structure of the road network into account in names

- In order to ensure that roads refer to a location as specifically as possible, for example in emergencies, it is also important to take the local traffic arrangements into account in the planning. Road names with the same specific element must form a logical network. For example, *Mäntykuja* 'Pine Alley' usually diverges from *Mäntytie* 'Pine Road' and refers to a traffic route of lesser significance. The road should not continue with the same name, for example, when turning off a roundabout or when the road crosses a higher category road, such as a collector street. If the road is cut so that, for example, access to the

eastern and western part of the road takes different routes, different names should be given to the new separate road sections.

Address names of islands

- The island's inherited place name is usually adopted directly as its address name. However, there may be several islands of the same name in the same municipality, and these cannot have the same address name. In this case, the address name is formed by supplementing the inherited name with, for example, the name of a village, lake or large island, e.g. *Isokari* → *Ruonin Isokari*. *Ruoni* is the name of a nearby village. Even if an attribute is assigned to an address name, the inherited name remains unchanged on the basic map without the specifying attribute. The municipality should try to find a name for any islands that are anonymous on the basic map, for example, from the collections of the Institute for the Languages of Finland's Name Archive or by interviewing local residents.

Roads of the same name in merging municipalities

- When municipalities merge, road names often have to be changed, as there cannot be many roads with the same name in the same municipality for safety reasons in the case of emergencies. The guidelines present factors that can be used as basis for deciding which names to keep and which to change. Factors in favour of keeping the road or street name include a large number of people living along the road or street, the significance of the road or street as a passageway, the historical background of the road name, its longevity or strong connection to the surroundings.

Names of municipalities

- The names of municipalities are usually names of villages or other inhabited places that have become established over a long period of time. The spelling of these names must comply with the current spelling recommendations (compare with the document formats according to the former orthography). Usually, an established name of a municipality can only be changed when municipalities merge.
- The name of the largest municipality, often the urban centre, a former joint parish name or other historical name, a well-known village name or the name of a central geographical site, such as a lake, can be agreed upon as the name for the merging municipalities. For example, the name of an area or geographical site that is larger than the municipality, double-barreled names, mechanical letter combinations or overly generic expressions, such as *saaristokaupunki* 'archipelago city', are not recommended.

Names of administrative areas

- Anyone hearing the name of an administrative area must be able to place the area in the right part of the country based on the name. The use of place names and points of compass must support the general perception of the areas. For the sake of comprehensibility, the names of the areas of operation used in different administrative branches and the place names used in them should be compatible with each other. The designation of the administrative unit and its area of operation should also be considered in parallel in the planning.
- As it is often necessary to form derivatives from the designation of the administrative area, it is advisable to aim for as short a designation as possible, e.g. *kunta* 'municipality', *lääni* 'province'. At the same time, however, it must be ensured that the term is understandable. A name describing an activity is best when the description of the task is clearly defined, e.g. *pelastusalue* 'rescue area'.

Names of traffic sites

- Traffic sites include railway stations, ports and airports. Their names are intended to guide visitors to the right place, so it is appropriate to use traditional names of inhabited places in the names. The size and area of influence of the traffic site play a role in what kind of inherited place name works best in the name of the traffic site. The name of a municipality works in the name of an airport, the name of, for example, a municipality or a village works in the name of a railway traffic site, and the name of a residential area, block or side street works in the name of a bus stop. Various brand names, such as commemorative names, are not recommended as they do not locate the target.

Real property names

- It is a good idea to keep the name of a locally known residential building or yard, such as the name of the original estate, to refer to the same location in the event of parcelling out and changes of ownership. However, a new name is needed for the new residential estate parcelled out. The name is given by the owner of the premises and it is entered in the National Land Survey of Finland's Real Estate Register.
- In terms of structure, meaning and spelling, a good estate name corresponds to traditional Finnish farm names. For example, an attribute referring to age or location can be added to the name of the original estate (*Heikkilä* → *Ranta-Heikkilä* 'Heikkilä → Shore-Heikkilä'), or the topic for the name can be taken from nearby place names or the surrounding nature. Estate names must be written in accordance with the current spelling guidelines.

Place names are mentioned in many other guidelines in the manual, not only in the instructions for planning of place names. For example, in the names of educational institutions and indoor swimming pools, it is recommended that primarily the names of places in use that indicate the location of the site should be used. The compiled guidelines for spelling and inflection of names, the guidelines on name competitions and the guidelines on organising name planning in the public administration also apply to planned place names.

Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Take note of the guidelines on place names published in the Online manual on name planning.
- (2) Comment and provide input on the content of the guidelines.
- (3) Provide information on similar instructions on planned place names and their functionality in other countries.