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English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on**

**Geographical Names**

**2025 session**

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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 Finland**

Submitted by Finland\*\*

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\* GEGN.2/2025/1

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The report of Finland provides general information on the standardization of geographical names in Finland and particular information on the progress made and measures taken during 2023–2024.

### Background information on the standardization of place names in Finland

In Finland there is no one national authority responsible for geographical names or any specific law that would determine who has the power to decide on different place names and their spelling, who registers the approved names and what place names the authorities should use.

The Institute for the Languages of Finland acts as an authoritative and coordinating organ in matters relating to the standardization of place names by providing guidance for administrative bodies and by checking geographical names in the Geographic Names Register of the National Land Survey. The National Land Survey of Finland has the responsibility to take care of national mapping activities and the maintenance of the national topographic data system, to support and coordinate the development of the national spatial data infrastructure and to release, publish and share map data and other data in its field of activity.

More detailed and up-to-date background information on Finland's language situation, the lack of place name legislation, place name authorities, place name collections, office treatment of place names, place name data sets and services, as well as a list of essential place name publications are available on the Institute for the Languages of Finland's website at <https://en.kotus.fi/on-language/names/#Standardisation-of-geographical-names-in-Finland>.

### Field collection of place names

During the period 2023–2024, the Institute for the Languages of Finland's Names Archive has been supplemented with around 2,500 Finnish name entries from the region of Carelia on the Russian side. The Names Archive comprises about 2.7 million annotated place name entries based on field collection. The collection work done in the Finnish areas in the past decades has been mostly renewed collection.

### Checking and correcting names in the Geographic Names Register

Geographic Names Register is maintained, and national topographic maps are published by the National Land Survey of Finland. The Institute for the Languages of Finland has been checking the names in national topographic maps covering the entire country since 1976.

A total of 1,791 place names were checked in 2023–2024 and added or corrected in the Geographic Names Register if needed. Corrections concerned, for example, spelling, location of the named place and categorization of the type of place. An extensive project to check all the names of urban areas in the register, including parts of cities, towns, and population centers, continued in 2023 and 2024. In addition, the descriptive terms on the maps in Finnish, Swedish, and Saami were checked in 2024 (for example fi: *satama* – sv: *hamn* – sme: *hámman* – smn: *haammân* – sms: *sättkk*). The checked spellings will be taken into use and their uniformity on all National Land Survey maps will be gradually ensured starting in spring 2025.

### Statements, recommendations, and training on place names

The Institute for the languages of Finland acts as an authoritative and coordinating organ in matters relating to the standardization of place names by providing information, giving guidance, and organizing onomastic training for administrative bodies and the general public.

In 2023 the Institute for the Languages of Finland issued a statement concerning a national operational programme for the immaterial cultural heritage. The statement referenced the work of UNGEGN and its recommendations. It proposed that the safeguarding of inherited place names in Finnish, Swedish and Saami should be a crucial part of the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Finland. The following actions were proposed:

1. Ensuring the maintenance and development of the Institute for the Languages of Finland's Names Archive and Digital Names Archive (<https://nimiarkisto.fi/>) with sufficient resources.
2. Enacting a Place Names Act to ensure the appropriate use of inherited place names.

These proposals were, however, not considered in the operational programme that was published in 2024.

In 2023–2024 the Institute for the Languages of Finland also issued six statements concerning parish names. In accordance with the church order that entered into force in 2021, the cathedral chapter must request a statement from the Institute for the Languages of Finland concerning the name of a parish, if the planned name has not been used as a parish name before or if it is otherwise prudent to check that the name is appropriate. The statements emphasized that the specific element in a parish name should be an established place name to ensure that the name contains useful information about the location of the parish.

In 2023 a specialist from the Institute for the Languages of Finland held a training session on Finnish inherited place names and their formation for Suomen Opasliitto (the association of tourist guides in Finland).

In 2023–2024 the Institute's toll-free telephone and e-mail advice service answered couple of hundred questions on the spelling, use, meaning and planning of place names. Due to lesser resources the name advice service has no longer answered questions about the etymology of place names as of April 2024.

The experts of the Institute answered questions on place names in radio programs, wrote articles in Institute's website and gave interviews on place names in newspapers and magazines. In addition, information was given on the social media accounts of the Institute for the Languages of Finland on Facebook (@kotustiedotus), X (@Kotus\_tiedotus) and Instagram (@kotimaistenkieltenkeskus).

### Toponymic data sets and services

In 2021, the National Land Survey of Finland introduced a beta version of URI-based (Uniform Resource Identifier) information cards for the named places and place names stored in the Geographic Names Register. The permanent URI allows linking the information card to any site, document, or service on the internet. The data for the information cards come from a National Land Survey's geographic names web feature service (OGC API – Features). An example of the information cards and URIs is Ivalo Airport, <http://paikkatiedot.fi/so/1000772/10889461>. The cards are in Finnish, Swedish and English. The beta version of the information card service is available at <https://tietokortit.maanmittauslaitos.fi/nimisto>. The production version will be published in coming years.

The digital Names Archive maintained by the Institute for the Languages of Finland is available at <https://nimiarkisto.fi/>. Each name entry in the digital archive includes the spelling of the place name, the year of collection, the name of the collector, and the type of place. Most of the name entries have a location given as point coordinates.

In 2023, a large collection of 625 000 document names was published in the digital Names Archive. The collection contains personal and place names that have been selected from 16th century accounting ledgers in the National Archives. Digitizing the collections of Finnish and Swedish place names into the database format continued in 2023–2024. At the same time, errors in digitization, such as incorrect location information, were corrected.

More information on the digital Names Archive is available on the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland at <https://en.kotus.fi/corpora-and-other-material/the-names-archive/>. Information on the digitalization process is available in working paper [WP 28/16](#) of the 29th UNGEGN Session.

### Publications, campaigns, symposiums, and websites

#### The wiki catalog of Finnish intangible cultural heritage

The Institute for the Languages of Finland wrote two articles in the wiki catalog of Finnish intangible cultural heritage, one on traditional place names in general (<https://wiki.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/wiki/Paikannimet>) and the other on the maintenance of the

National Land Survey's Geographic Names Register as a good practice that maintains our cultural heritage ([https://wiki.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/wiki/Paikannimiaineiston\\_huolto](https://wiki.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/wiki/Paikannimiaineiston_huolto)).

### Online manual on name planning

In 2023 The Institute for the languages of Finland published an online manual on name planning. The manual is written in national languages Finnish and Swedish and gives guidance on planning both Finnish and Swedish names. It is available for everyone free of charge in Finnish at <https://kielitoimistonohjepankki.fi/hyvan-nimiston-opas/> and in Swedish at <https://kielitoimistonohjepankki.fi/sv/namnplaneringsguiden/>.

The target group of the manual is all employees of the public administration, especially those who plan proper names or make decisions on proper names. The manual contains almost 20 guidelines on forming various kind of place names such as names of administrative units, merging municipalities, traffic sites and streets, commemorative naming, using dialectal features, taking care of bilingualism etc.

More information on the contents of the online manual is available in the working paper GEGN.2/2025/80/CRP.80 of the 2025 UNGEGN Session.

### Other publications

Couple of changes were made to the publication Names of Countries in Seven Languages in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Finnish full name of the United Arab Emirates was changed from *Yhdistyneet arabiemiirikunnat* to *Yhdistyneet arabiemiraatit*. The official short name was changed from *Arabiemiirikunnat* to *Arabiemiraatit*. The Finnish full name of the Federated States of Micronesia was changed from *Mikronesian liittovaltio* to *Mikronesian federaatio*. The full name of Iceland, *Islannin tasavalta*, was removed because the country only uses the short name.

In 2023–2024, approximately 800 additions or corrections were made to the Index for settlement names in Finland of the Institute for the Languages of Finland. The results of the 2022 municipalities questionnaire were transferred to the catalog and additional supplements and corrections were provided by the extensive project to check all the names of urban areas in the Geographic Names Register of the National Land Survey. The separation of standardized and local inhabitant names was improved. More information on the index is available in conference paper [E/CONF.105/77/CRP.77](#) of the 11<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 2017.

Some minor updates were made in the database of Finnish exonyms. The spelling and use of German exonyms included in the database were checked in co-operation with Roman Stani-Fertl from Austria.

Etymological studies of the settlement names of Satakunta, Uusimaa, Mikkeli Province and Viipuri Province were published in PDF format on the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland. The studies were compiled by Saulo Kepsu. The works are available at <https://kotus.fi/nimistonhuolto/nimijulkaisut/>.

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An up-to-date list of essential publications on standardized place names can be found on the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland at [https://www.kotus.fi/standardisation\\_of\\_geographical\\_names](https://www.kotus.fi/standardisation_of_geographical_names).

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