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Standardization of the geographical names in Republic of Bulgaria

Submitted by Bulgaria*

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STANDARDIZATION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

**Respected Mr. Chairman,
Respected Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Analysing the social practice during the recent years, the UN documents related to standardization of geographical names, and proceeding from the persuasion that the geographical names are a strategic resource for each developed country, Bulgaria accepts as determinant the following tasks:

- Refining the national standardization of the geographical names;
- Developing the legislative base for standardization of the geographical names;
- Creating manuals and dictionaries with geographical names;
- Register of the geographical names – national and foreign;
- International cooperation and participation in international projects on the problems of the geographical names.

We would like to assure you that more and more valuably, and with ambition to be competent, the Bulgarian experts are solving the national problems on standardization of the geographical names as well as tasks on the international cooperation.

1. National bodies for standardization of the geographical names.

- *Council for Standardization of the Geographical Names* at the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works.

- *Commission on renaming* at the Administration of the Presidency of Republic of Bulgaria, the only body having powers to change names of settlements and geographical objects.

The administrative body, responsible for this activity under the Geodesy and Cartography Act is the Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Agency.

The Council on Standardization of the Geographical Names was created in 2006 in compliance with the requirements of the Geodesy and Cartography Act. It is an inheritor of the Council on Transcription and Orthography of the Geographical Names, created in compliance with Resolution No 4 - "National Standardization", Recommendation No 4 (a) - concerning "National Bodies for Geographical Names", of the UN Geneva Conference. By 2006 was accomplished enormous amount of work, related mainly to the transcription and orthography of foreign geographical names. The realization of a series of important for Bulgaria projects, related to the creation of a national system for cadastre and property registration, to systems for the needs of the tax administration, to the infrastructure of each settlement, and other projects, immediately connected also with the standardization of the geographical names, imposed to review the functions and tasks of the Council on Transcription and Orthography of the geographical names. It was not just renamed, its purpose, powers and vision for the work in this field, were considerably enlarged.

According to the Geodesy and Cartography Act:

“ (1) The Council for Standardization of the Geographical Names proposes to the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works for approval:

1. The procedure and rules for the unification and registration of geographical names in Republic of Bulgaria and their orthography.
 2. The established geographical names in Republic of Bulgaria and their entering in the Register.
 3. The transcription of foreign geographical names and their orthography;
 4. The transliteration of Bulgarian geographical names in Roman alphabet.
- (2) In the fulfilment of its functions, the Council pays attention to the recommendations of international organizations for geographical names as well as to the Bulgarian traditions in their writing.
- (3) The Council accomplishes its activity in compliance with Rules, approved by the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works.
- (4) The Acts of the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works are compulsory for all users of geographical names in the country.”

An operational community of experts, representatives of different interested institutions, has been formed, which solves current problems and formulates and organizes realization of the national priorities in the field of geographical names standardization.

II. Condition of the normative base in the field of the geographical names.

For provision of stability in the use of names of geographical objects, for protection of the state interests, legal persons and Bulgarian citizens, a *Names of the Geographical Objects Act* is under preparation.

In connection with the delivery of the Bulgarian geographical names in Roman alphabet has been prepared and promulgated **Regulation No 3 on the Transliteration of Bulgarian Geographical Names in Roman Alphabet (26 October 2006)**.

III. Main activities.

1. According to the recommendations of the UN conferences, one of the important problems of geographical names standardization is *the delivery in Roman alphabet of geographical names for languages employing non-Roman letters*. The system functioning until recently in Bulgaria was adopted by the Athens conference and required updating. As a result of studies of the practice and a series of public discussions between the institutions as well as with the broad public, has been prepared and normatively adopted a new system for transliteration of Bulgarian names in Roman alphabet. This system is valid for the geographical names and the proper Bulgarian names, what exceptionally facilitates and standardizes the communication. The need of unifying the graphical practice in transliteration of Bulgarian geographical names with Roman letters – and respectively, same written delivery of Bulgarian geographical names in all fields of the state and public life (inside the country and in its international contacts) was urgent also in connection with the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union.

The following Table presents the normatively established in Republic of Bulgaria system for transliteration of Bulgarian geographical names with Roman letters, which is valid from 26 October 2006.

Cyrillic alphabet	Roman alphabet	Abolished version
А,а	A, a	A, a
Б,б	B, b	B, b
В,в	V, v	V, v
Г,г	G, g	G, g
Д,д	D, d	D, d
Е,е	E, e	E, e
Ж,ж	Zh, zh	Ž, ž
З,з	Z, z	Z, z
И,и	I, i	I, i
Й,й	Y, y	J, j
К,к	K, k	K, k
Л,л	L, l	L, l
М,м	M, m	M, m
Н,н	N, n	N, n
О,о	O, o	O, o
П,п	P, p	P, p
Р,р	R, r	R, r
С,с	S, s	S, s
Т,т	T, t	T, t
У,у	U, u	U, u
Ф,ф	F, f	F, f
Х,х	H, h	H, h
Ц,ц	Ts, ts	C, c
Ч,ч	Ch, ch	Č, č; Ch, ch
Ш,ш	Sh, sh	Š, š; Sh,sh
Щ,щ	Sht, sht	Št, št; Sht,sht
Ъ,ъ	A, a	Ā, ā
Ь,ь	Y, y	J, j
Ю,ю	Yu, yu	Ju, ju
Я,я*	Ya, ya	Ja, ja
Letter combinations		
дж	dzh	dž
ьо	yo	jo
йо	yo	jo

* "ия", when is at the end of the word, in Roman alphabet will be written as "ia".

2. The used until recently, in the most common sense, instrumental approach in the work, according to which the names are means, a tool for orientation in the

geographical and social space, presumed mainly description of the existing names and preparation of rules for their delivery and recording.

In the linguistic consciousness of the consumers however, the names contain and activate spaces of their own life, of the life of their parents, even from still older times. The names represent the historical memory of a nation, of a community, and by this they have exceptional social and cultural value. The fixation of the current names at this moment has applied character, but the history of the names of one and the same object, in practice represents the history of this object, of the social community, of the respective nation, etc. The change of the name of a geographical object is not just **naming**, but reflection of the social relationships, as the process of naming is symbolic – a process of adding a social quality.

Proceeding from this persuasion, the Council for Standardization of the Geographical Names involves in its work the toponymic problems in a social aspect, binding the separate elements in the entirety of the life. In addition to its attentiveness towards the history, it is exceptionally productive in respect of strategic fields, as for example, the military, regional-administrative. This approach is sceptic about the instrumental idea for the language, respectively for the names, according to which they are just a resource for improving the life of those who are using them. These problems have relation with the practice of the language planning, understood in a generalized sense.

The toponymy, in cooperation with the modern trends in the linguistics, for example the sociolinguistics, represents an activity close in essence and significance to that of preservation of cultural monuments. On the one hand, the new names, which unavoidably accompany the development of the socium, have to obtain popularisation in order to serve the practice. On the other hand – the history of naming a settlement or another geographic object represents a process, history of the respective region or object, the traditions and customs, with which in the linguistic consciousness of the members of separate communities is fixed the experience of preceding generations communicative behaviour. Those problems sound even more seriously in the context of the infrastructure for spatial information in Europe and the increasing requirements of the free market for pan-European geographical information, what will have enormous impact on all national cartographic and cadastral agencies

In this sense is organized the work on preparation a **database for the Bulgarian geographical names**, containing not only the updated names, the transliteration in Roman alphabet, but also information about old names of the settlement, history of the region, geographical information and other. In essence this is part of a joint project of the European association - EuroGeographics – EuroGeoNames, in which participates Bulgaria.

3. The today's social and political processes involve Bulgaria in accelerated integration. The **openness of the country** in the essential sense – the possibility to travel, as well as the arrival of foreigners at us, on the one hand, and the accession processes on the other hand, naturally and irreversibly involve the Bulgarian and foreign names in an everyday turnover. In those processes there are **priority directions** – for example the European countries and their partners in terms of the European integration, as well as **extreme**, as the case is with the terrorist acts in the USA, the war in Iraq, the Libyan process, which have entered in the everyday turnover names and denominations from not much known and not bound with the immediate political and social practice of the country, as well as of the world.

The Council on Standardization of the Geographical Names formulates the priorities in its work in conformity with the strategic interests of the country. On the base of this are updated lists with foreign geographical names in order to enrich the database, what is an attempt to approach maximally up-to-date towards those problems.

From today's viewpoint, in addition to complementing the list of geographical names (updating names), for certain languages is necessary to update also the very rules, as languages are dynamic systems. In addition, from the viewpoint of applicability, and in the sense of this enormous work, the rules will be published in order to become known by all, and especially to be observed by the broad community – of course in the first place by the institutions, but most of all by the mass communication means. The proper transcription and orthography of foreign names, not only represents an element of the speech culture, but also attitude towards the respective country and its culture. All recent investigations in this field indicate that the names (including the geographical) are so much personal and significant from the viewpoint of the individual and public consciousness, that their proper pronunciation is already attitude and prerequisite for positive context of acceptance. Obviously, the correct transcription and orthography have also the **pragmatic function** to orientate in the multitude of names and cultures.

In compliance with the priority interests of Bulgaria and its partners will continue the work on development of rules for transcription and orthography of foreign names in other languages, for which such rules are still not worked out. This requires a more profound study in a social-political aspect of priority partners and their eventual partners and contacts that could follow.

IV. Summing up

The activity of the national bodies on standardization of the geographical names, as a final product has to secure the *uniform and sustainable use* of the names of geographical objects in all fields of the country's life. Normatively this will be guaranteed by the *Names of the Geographical Objects Act*. Communication-wise it will be secured by a *digital Register of the geographical names*, created in the already presented understanding for the essence of the geographical names.

We hope on the next session to share the experience and results from the achievement of these objectives.