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Romanization rules for the Lemko (Ruthenian or Rusyn) language in Poland

Lemkos (Ruthenians or Rusyns) is an ethnic minority which has been recognized in Poland on the basis of the *Act of 6th January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages*. The act mentions, in addition to the Lemkos, 9 national minorities: Belorussian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Jewish; 3 ethnic minorities – Karait, Roma, and Tartar; as well as one regional language – the Kashubian language.

The Act lays down, among others, that traditional names in a minority language for localities, physiographic objects and streets may be used as “additional names” alongside geographic names established in the Polish language. To date (as of 1st June 2015), additional names have been introduced in 1204 localities and parts of them located in 57 communes. There were introduced: 27 Belarussian names, 359 German names, 779 Kashubian names, 9 Lemko names, and 30 Lithuanian names. Additional names in minority languages appear on road signs, they are also used on some maps.

Pursuant to the *Regulation of the Minister of Administration and Digitization of 14th February 2012 on the national register of geographical names*, the Surveyor General of Poland shall maintain the database of the National Register of Geographical Names.

In the Register, among others, officially adopted names in minority languages shall be listed. Regarding the names originally written in non-Romas scripts, the Romanized forms should be given alongside its original non-Roman form. These Romanized forms shall be provided according to the transliteration rules adopted by the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names outside the Republic of Poland.

To the date the minority names in German, Kashubian, Lithuanian, Belarussian, and Lemko (Rusyn) have been established in Poland – the last two languages are written in non-Roman script named Cyrillic. For the Belarussian language, the Commission has adopted the official Belarussian system of 2007 (based on the traditional Roman alphabet – *iacinka*), which was also adopted by the United Nations on the 10th Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

Ruthenians (or Rusyns) are a complex of ethnic groups belonging to the Eastern Slavs, relatives of the Ukrainians. Traditionally, they lived mainly in two regions: the area of the Eastern Carpathians (territories of Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania – Prešov/Carpathian Rusyns, Lemkos, Hutsuls, Boykos, Subcarpathian Rusyns) and the southern part of the Pannonian Basin (areas of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina – Pannonian Rusyns).

The Ruthenian language (in any dialect) has been recognized as a minority language in eight countries:

- Serbia – in Vojvodina is one of official languages of this autonomous province,
- Hungary – as minority language since 1993 (Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities),

- Slovakia – as minority language since 1995,
- Croatia – since 1997 listed in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,
- Poland – as minority language since 2005,
- Romania – since 2008 listed in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,
- Bosnia and Herzegovina – since 2010 listed in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,
- Ukraine – as minority language since 2012 (law “On the principles of the state language policy”).

In three countries Ruthenian names of localities are used alongside national-wide forms of names:

- Serbia – in 6 communes,
- Slovakia – for 68 localities,
- Poland – for 9 localities.

In Poland, Lemkos are a widely dispersed ethnic minority. In the census of 2011, the Lemko nationality was declared by 10 531 people, from which 9640 were Polish citizens (they are Lemko minority according to the act on minorities). They lived mainly in the western and southern parts of Poland: in Dolnośląskie Voivodship – 4736 persons (49,1% of Polish Lemkos), Małopolskie Voivodship – 2186 (22,7%), and Lubuskie Voivodship – 1413 (14,7%). Traditional members of this minority inhabited the area of so-called Łemkowszczyzna, that is the Beskid Niski Mountains and a part of the Beskid Sądecki Mountains (southern part of Podkarpackie Voivodship and south-eastern of Małopolskie Voivodship) from where they were displaced in 1947 as a result of Operation “Vistula” carried out by the then communist authorities. Today the most numerous groups of Lemkos live in Gorlicki County of Małopolskie Voivodship (1791 persons) and Lubiński County (1282 persons) and Polkowicki County (1004 persons) of Dolnośląskie Voivodship. In one commune, members of the Lemko minority constitute over 10 per cent of their residents – in Uście Gorlickie commune (12,5% of communes population).

The Lemko language is an ethnolect of the Lemko ethnic community. It belongs to the East Slavic languages, with the frontier characteristics – with many elements of the West and South Slavic, with the influence of Hungarian, Romanian, and also with the preserved components of Church Slavonic. In previous classifications the Lemko dialects were generally included to the Ukrainian dialects. The contemporary (after 1989) codification processes classify this language as one of the regional variants of Rusyn (Ruthenian) language. The tradition of writing Old Ruthenian texts with local Lemko characteristics dates back to the sixteenth century. They were recorded graphically according to the rules adopted for Old Ruthenian languages, with historical modifications. The first manifesto of separateness of the Lemko language from other Ruthenian languages was published in 1871. Since 1911 magazines and books have been regularly published in this language. In the interwar period (1934-1938) Lemko was taught in schools of Łemkowszczyzna area. This process was resumed only in 1991, as the teaching of Lemko language as an extra-curricular subject in schools.

The spelling of the Lemko language is based on the Cyrillic alphabet, as used in the East Slavic languages, with some curiosities. A full set of so-called iotated letters does not apply here (there are lack of letters ‘ë’ and ‘ï’), the use of the soft sign (ь) is limited, and the hard sign (ѣ) is used only in some words. In a sequence of vowel graphemes ‘i’ – ‘и’ – ‘ы’, the first two refer to the same phoneme, where after soft consonants only the letter ‘i’ occurs,

while the letter ‘ы’ means the separated phoneme – therefore, the words differ only in the record of letters ‘и’ – ‘ы’ have different meanings, for example: бити ‘beat’ – быти ‘to be’.

The spelling variant used in the Rusyn language of Slovakia differs from the one adopted in the Lemko language by occurrence of letters ‘ě’ and ‘i’. Whereas, in the Rusyn language used in Vojvodina there are lack of letters ‘i’, ‘ы’, and ‘ь’ occurring in the Lemko language, however, the letter ‘i’ is used.

The comparison of the Lemko alphabet with Rusyn alphabets used in Slovakia and Serbia (Vojvodina) is as follows:

Lemko	Rusyn of Slovakia	Rusyn of Vojvodina
А а	А а	А а
Б б	Б б	Б б
В в	В в	В в
Г г	Г г	Г г
Ґ ґ	Ґ ґ	Ґ ґ
Д д	Д д	Д д
Е е	Е е	Е е
Є є	Є є	Є є
–	Ě ě	–
Ж ж	Ж ж	Ж ж
З з	З з	З з
І і	І і	–
–	Ї ї	Ї ї
И и	И и	И и
Ы ы	Ы ы	–
Й й	Й й	Й й
К к	К к	К к
Л л	Л л	Л л
М м	М м	М м
Н н	Н н	Н н
О о	О о	О о
П п	П п	П п
Р р	Р р	Р р
С с	С с	С с
Т т	Т т	Т т
У у	У у	У у
Ф ф	Ф ф	Ф ф
Х х	Х х	Х х
Ц ц	Ц ц	Ц ц
Ч ч	Ч ч	Ч ч
Ш ш	Ш ш	Ш ш
Щ щ	Щ щ	Щ щ
Ю ю	Ю ю	Ю ю
Я я	Я я	Я я
Ь ь	Ь ь	Ь ь
Ъ ъ	Ъ ъ	–

The Lemko language did not have a Romanization rule till 2014. The romanization tables of Lemko (transliteration and Polish phonetic transcription) has been developed on the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names outside the Republic of Poland request and was officially adopted on the Commission’s session on 26th February 2014.

The applied Polish phonetic transcription of Lemko alphabet is based on the principles adopted in the Polish spelling by the *Regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration of 30th May 2005 on the manner of transliterating the names and surnames of persons belonging to national and ethnic minorities written in an alphabet other than the*

Latin one, and has been developed by analogy with the Polish transcription for other East Slavic languages.

The adopted rules of transcription are as follows:

А а	a
Б б	b
В в	w
Г г	h
Ґ ґ	g
Д д	d
Е е	e
Є є	je ¹ , e ² , ie ³
Ж ж	z
З з	z
І і	i ⁴ , ji ⁵
И и	y
Ы ы	y
Й й	j
К к	k
Л л	l ⁶ , l ⁷
М м	m
Н н	n
О о	o
П п	p
Р р	r
С с	s
Т т	t
У у	u
Ф ф	f
Х х	ch
Ц ц	c
Ч ч	cz
Ш ш	sz
Щ щ	szcz
Ю ю	ju ¹ , u ² , iu ³
Я я	ja ¹ , a ² , ia ³
Ь ь	- ⁸ , i ⁹ , ¹⁰
Ъ ъ	- ¹¹

¹ at the beginning of words, after vowel letters, and after ъ and ь

² after л

³ after other consonantal letters

⁴ at the beginning of words, and after all the letters except ъ

⁵ after ъ

⁶ before є, я, ю, and ь and in gemination лл

⁷ in other cases

⁸ omitted after л and before: а, у, є, я, and ю

⁹ before о (omitted when it occurs after л even it is before о)

¹⁰ in other cases is rendered as sign of palatalization: in combinations is rendered as: зь = ź, нь = ñ, сь = ś, ць = ć; in other cases as ´ placed after a letter, for example ть = t´, дь = d´

¹¹ The hard sign in the transcription, until recently, was marked by an apostrophe and an iotation in the subsequent phone (for example зьїзд – z'jizd, б'є – b'je, об'єднаня – ob'jednania) or an iotation only; currently, in transcribed notation is omitted and its existence is pointed out only by an iotation of the subsequent phone (for example зьїзд – zjizd, б'є – bje, об'єднаня – objednania)

The transliteration rule for the Lemko language is based on the International Slavistic Romanization System of the Cyrillic Script. This transliteration system will be applied in the

database of the National Register of Geographical Names, but not on maps, where only names in the Cyrillic script are used.

The adopted rules of transliteration are as follows:

А а	a
Б б	b
В в	v
Г г	h
Г г	g
Д д	d
Е е	e
Є є	je
Ж ж	ž
З з	z
І і	i
И и	y
Ы ы	ŷ
Й й	j
К к	k
Л л	l
М м	m
Н н	n
О о	o
П п	p
Р р	r
С с	s
Т т	t
У у	u
Ф ф	f
Х х	ch
Ц ц	c
Ч ч	č
Ш ш	š
Щ щ	šč
Ю ю	ju
Я я	ja
Ь ь	'
Ъ ъ	"

The Romanization of officially adopted minority names in the Lemko language are as follows:

Polish name	Lemko name	Romanization of Lemko name
Bielanka	Білянка	Biljanka
Blechnarka	Бліхнарка	Blichnarka
Gładyszów	Гладышів	Gladŷšiv
Konieczna	Конечна	Konečna
Kunkowa	Кункова	Kunkova
Nowica	Новиця	Novycja
Regietów	Регетів	Regjetiv
Ropki	Ріпки	Ripkŷ
Zdynia	Ждыня	Ždŷnja