



Kartverket

# Revisions of the Norwegian place- name legislation

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Norway has had a Place-name Act since 1991  
Revised in 2015, new regulations in 2017.  
Still under debate and revision

## Main issues

- Who has the right to decide spelling of names?  
Central authorities – local authorities – the owner
- Which spelling rules should apply for names?  
Dialect – standard Norwegian – pre-1907 (Danish) forms
- Who decides the choice of names?

# Why spelling is such a major issue in Norway

- The Norwegian written standards are young. Until ca. 1900, Danish was the written language.
- Two standard languages – one based on Danish, the other on Norwegian dialects. A range of choice within each of these.
- A tradition for allowing dialectal features in place-names.

→ Words and place-names can be spelt in more than one way in Norwegian

# Who has the right to decide the spelling of a name?

Present legislation (linguistic counselling mandatory)

- The municipalities decide names of streets, residential areas, municipal constructions etc.
- The mapping authorities decide the names of farms, natural features and state constructions
- New in 2015: The owner of an individual farm can decide the spelling of the name if the spelling he /she claims is documented in official records.

Gnr 150	Dettlia
1	Dettlia
2	Sandvoll
3	Tørset
4	Detlidriva
5	Olsheim



## Local authorities should have a greater say in place-name matters (stated by the minister for culture)

The bill is on its way. Possible scenarios:

- The municipalities get the right to decide the spelling of all place-names in their area except state constructions
- More say in the choice of names, not having to consider traditional names in the area (trad. names have been protected by the law)
- No right of complain on municipal decisions, cannot be taken to the appeal committee

# Spelling guidelines under revision

- The Place-name Act states that as a rule, spelling of names should be based on local pronunciation, written according to current spelling principles.
- A proposal for new guidelines by the Language Council of Norway allows more regional and dialectal forms in spelling and grammar. Regional forms rank alongside standard forms.
- The regulations of 2017 state that if a written form has long tradition, current spelling principles may be left out of account.

# Summary

- The present revisions of the Norwegian Place-name Act furthers variation rather than standardisation in the spelling of names.
- We may see a transfer of the right to decide the spelling of names from central authorities to local authorities and individuals