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**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**



United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Report of Norway 2023-2025

Submitted by Norway **



* GEGN.2/2025/1

** The full report was prepared by Peder Gammeltoft, Noway, Norwegian Language Collections, University of Bergen.

National report	
A	<p>Summary</p> <p>Norway's geographical names management is structured according to the Place Name Act, which distributes responsibilities among several key institutions:</p> <p>The Norwegian Mapping Agency (Statens kartverk) serves as the central authority, overseeing, hosting, maintaining, and developing the Central Geographical Names Register (Sentralt stedsnavnregister - SSR).</p> <p>The Language Council of Norway (Språkrådet) makes recommendations and addresses queries regarding Norwegian and Kven geographical names. Since the last session, there has been significant activity with 508 cases concerning Norwegian geographical names (primarily street names) and 18 cases involving Kven geographical names.</p> <p>The Sami Parliament's (Sametinget/Samediggi) Place Name Service continues its vital work with all aspects of geographical names cases. Throughout 2023 and 2024, the service has provided comprehensive guidance on the spelling of Sami geographical names, naming customs, and naming practices. While significant positive developments have occurred since the implementation of the 1991 law, there remains an ongoing challenge to address the historical legacy where Sami geographical names were systematically silenced, rewritten to Norwegian, or removed from maps, as highlighted in the 2017 United Nations Conference Report on the Standardization of Geographical Names.</p>
B	<p>Member state report on the situation in their country</p> <p>Progress has been made across all major institutions involved in geographical names management during the reporting period. The Norwegian Mapping Agency has made technological advances through the development of a proof of concept that demonstrates the potential of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Machine Learning in processing geographical names from scanned paper maps, offering promising applications for data collection and research.</p> <p>The Language Council introduced new supplementary rules for the spelling of geographical names in Norwegian and Kven, which received approval from the cultural department in August 2024. Similarly, the Sami Parliament adopted Supplementary rules for the spelling of Northern Sami geographical names on August 29, 2023. These rules serve as a supplementary addition to §4 in the Regulation on city names, adopted on May 23, 2017, ensuring consistent linguistic principles in the standardization of Northern Sami geographical names and providing concrete guidance for adaptations.</p> <p>The Norwegian Language Collections (Språksamlingane) has made substantial progress in digital accessibility and evidence-based documentation. In 2021, they published a linked data prototype, "Norske stadnamn," establishing a national portal for digital historical forms of Norwegian geographical names. This was followed in June 2024 by the launch of "Stadnamnportalen," a comprehensive new national portal featuring 1.7 million geographical names entries and 3.8 million historical source forms, all georeferenced and URI-implemented.</p>

C	<p>National and international meetings, conferences, symposiums, publicity and publications</p>	<p>During the reporting period, Norway has been active in both national and international forums dedicated to geographical names. A national collaborative effort was demonstrated through the consultation meeting organized in Guovdageaidnu during October 17-19, 2023, bringing together the Norwegian Mapping Agency, the Language Council, the Language Council, the Sami Place Name Service, and with participation from the Language Collections. The Sami Place Name Service hosted this important gathering, which focused primarily on Sami geographical names.</p> <p>Additional national engagement included participation in the MONS meeting (Meeting on the Norwegian Language) in late November 2024, which featured a dedicated onomastics group where several Language Council employees, the Language Collections and academics contributed with presentations. The academic calendar was further enriched by the Norsk namnelag meeting (Norwegian Names Society) following the MONS onomastic group session.</p> <p>On the international front, Norwegian representatives participated in several significant events. The Language Council contributed to the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) Conference in Helsinki in August 2024, where Ingvil Nordland presented research from her Language Council-owned Ph.D. project. Similar contributions were made at the NORNA Symposium in Uppsala in November 2023.</p> <p>The Norwegian Language Collections, particularly through representative Peder Gammeltoft, maintained an extensive international presence with presentations at various conferences and symposiums throughout 2023 and 2024. These included contributions to the SNSBI Spring Conference 2023 and 2024, ICOS 2024, the Royal Danish Library symposium 2024, NORNA 2023, and an OGC Member Meeting in 2023, among others.</p> <p>Publication output has been robust, with contributions spanning both practical and academic domains, including reviews and reports in the UNGEGN Bulletin, documentation of UNGEGN sessions, and numerous academic papers on geographical names standardization, management, and research. Publications have appeared in journals such as <i>Arc Humanities Press</i>, <i>Maal og Minne NORNA-Rapporter</i>, <i>Viking</i>, etc., showing Norway's commitment to advancing practical and theoretical aspects of geographical names research and standardization.</p>
D	<p>Measures taken and proposed to implement United Nations resolutions on the standardization of geographical names, including the economic and social benefits</p>	<p>In accordance with UNGEGN resolutions II/36 and VIII/1, work is continuing to incorporate Pite Sami and Ume Sami into the regulations of the Place Names Act are ongoing. A legislative argumentation document has been prepared by the Sami Parliament, as well as held public meetings.</p> <p>The publication of Stadnamnportalen by the Language Collections, in key with resolutions XI/7, IV/4.B, and VIII/9, supports standardization of geographical names and by making evidence-based geographical names resources accessible to the public. This effort is complemented by ongoing PhD research investigating the concept of 'local, inherited pronunciation' of geographical names (cf. Res. VII/5), which forms a core constituent in Norway's legal geographical names standardization framework (Lov om stadnamn). Additionally, work has been undertaken in the digitization of historical documentation to support national standardization efforts, ensuring that historical context and usage are preserved and accessible for current standardization processes.</p>

E	National standardization	
Ea	<i>Field collection of names</i>	<p>The collection and documentation of geographical names has seen activity across multiple institutions. The Sami Parliament has undertaken comprehensive work to collect, systematize, and digitalize available material on Sami geo-graphical names, recognizing the necessity of ensuring this material's accessibility. While their application for establishing a Sami Place Name Archive in collaboration with Sami University of Applied Sciences was not granted by The Research Council of Norway in late 2024, the National Library of Norway has since been given responsibility for this task.</p> <p>The Norwegian Language Council has maintained financial support for name collection initiatives, distributing NOK 1,465,000 in 2023 across 17 different projects, and NOK 1,540,000 in 2024 supporting 16 projects throughout Norway. These collected names are registered in a specially developed database for the Language Council, which currently contains 169,663 names. Furthermore, the Norwegian Language Collections will publish over 500,000 field-collected geographical names in Stadnamnportalen in 2025.</p>
Eb	<i>Office treatment of names</i>	<p>The Language Council has maintained consistent activity in providing recommendations on geographical names, focusing particularly on address names for municipalities and names of farms and topographic features for mapping authorities. In 2023, the Council issued 480 recommendations, followed by 464 recommendations in 2024 (through December 18). This work represents ongoing commitment to maintaining standardized naming practices across Norway.</p>
Ec	<i>Treatment of names in multilingual areas</i>	<p>In regions where Sami, Norwegian, and Kven populations coexist, geographical names in all these languages receive equal protection under the Place Names Act. However, practical implementation has faced challenges, particularly regarding interpretation of the law. A notable example occurred in July 2023, when the Language Council made recommendations regarding the Sami settlements Guovdageaidnu and Kárášjohka, as well as the natural name for the river Kárášjohka. This led to a response from the Sami geographical names service, who contested that the naming was not in accordance with the Place Names Act. Despite the Language Council's acknowledgment in correspondence that there were no Kven names in these places, the case remained unresolved. Representatives from the Sami Place Name Service and the Sami Parliament conducted a meeting in Oslo with the Language Council to seek clarity and establish a common understanding of the law. While the Language Council committed to investigating the matter further, a resolution was still pending at the time of reporting.</p>
Ed	<i>Administrative structure of national names authorities, legislation, policies and procedures</i>	<p>Norway has reversed parts of its administrative reorganization, reverting previously merged counties (<i>Viken, Vestfold og Telemark, and Troms og Finnmark</i>) to their original constituents, <i>Østfold, Akershus, Buskerud; Vestfold, Telemark; Troms, Finnmark</i>. Also, the municipality of <i>Ålesund</i> has been divided into <i>Ålesund</i> and <i>Haram</i>. This restructuring has established 15 counties and 357 municipalities, alongside 1,146 geographical parishes, necessitating comprehensive updates to administrative codes, cf. GEGN.2/2025/12/CRP.12, revised toponymic guidelines of Norway.</p>

		<p>The Place Name Act underwent amendments in 2019 and 2022, strengthening provisions for Sami and Kven toponyms while enhancing local community involvement in standardization processes. New supplementary spelling rules for Norwegian, North Sami and Kven were implemented in 2024 (guidelines so far only in Norwegian). The framework for managing multilingual toponyms has been refined, featuring updated protocols for parallel names in Norwegian, Sami, and Kven languages, including revised formatting and hyphenation guidelines for municipalities with multiple official names.</p>
Ee	<i>Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors</i>	<p>The 2025 edition of Norway’s Toponymic Guidelines introduces technical and practical updates to support geographical name management (GEGN.2/2025/12/CRP.12). Key revisions include publication of recent administrative changes (see section <i>Ed</i>, above), including a new county map reflecting the current administrative structure.</p> <p>The technical specifications for standardization have been expanded, incorporating additional exceptions for the use of letters c, q, z, and aa in standardized geographical names. These modifications maintain systematic consistency while allowing greater flexibility in name standardization.</p> <p>The guidelines continue to serve their fundamental purpose of preserving geographical names as cultural monuments while ensuring practical standardization for international use, with particular emphasis on protecting indigenous and minority language toponyms. The document provides clear protocols for handling multilingual naming conventions and maintains Norway’s commitment to toponymic heritage preservation.</p>
F.	Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity	<p>The preservation and documentation of geographical names as cultural heritage is demonstrated through Norway’s extensive field collection efforts and office treatment of names, as detailed in sections <i>Ea</i> and <i>Eb</i>. This work reflects the nation’s commitment to maintaining geographical names as vital elements of cultural identity, particularly in areas with indigenous and minority language communities.</p>
G.	Exonyms	<p>A significant development occurred on January 29, 2024, when Oslo municipality adopted a Sami geographical name for Oslo. The municipality decided to implement the South Sami name <i>Oslove</i> alongside the Norwegian name <i>Oslo</i>, even though the Sami Place Name Service had not provided a recommendation for a Sami geographical name for either the city of Oslo or Oslo municipality. This decision has generated considerable discussion within the naming authorities.</p> <p>The Sami Place Name Service had investigated the rationale in two separate letters, with assessments conducted by two different geographical name consultants. The municipality’s decision has been noted to contravene the Place Names Act, but they proceeded despite professional recommendations to the contrary. While the Norwegian Mapping Authority held the right to appeal this decision, they chose not to support the Sami Place Names Service’s and declined to appeal the municipality’s decision. Subsequently, the name was officially registered. The case is notable as it introduces a South Sami name for an area where the language has not been historically spoken, conflicting with traditional naming principles.</p>

H.	Toponymic data files and gazetteers	
<i>Ha</i>	Content requirements and standards	<i>[without changes]</i>
<i>Hb</i>	Data management and interoperability	<p>The Norwegian Language Collections has contributed to Linked Open Data provisions. In 2024, they added dataset to the linked data service, <i>Kulturnav</i>. A new dataset, Norges kartlegging, is a linked data collection for cultural heritage of standard Norwegian map series. This system includes coordinates and comprehensive attribute data covering year of printing, version, map code, published names and centroid and bounding-box coordinates, where applicable. The system encompasses two major map series:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Norge 1:50,000 2. Økonomisk kartverk
<i>Hc</i>	Data services, applications and products	<p>The development of digital services for geographical names has been ongoing. In 2021, the Norwegian Language Collections published the linked data prototype <i>Norske stadnamn</i>, establishing a national portal for digital historical forms of Norwegian geographical names. This was followed in June 2024 by the launch of Stadnamnportalen, a comprehensive new national portal for digital historical forms of Norwegian geographical names (GEGN.2/2025/8/CRP.8). This enhanced platform maintains the same extensive coverage while improving accessibility and functionality for users seeking historical geographical name information.</p>
I	Terminology in the standardization of geographical names	<p>In 2024, the Norwegian Language Collections undertook the digitization of Tom Schmidt (1981) <i>Fagordliste for norsk namnegransking</i>, Oslo (Terminology for Norwegian Name Research). This comprehensive Norwegian language onomastic terminology list contains more than 570 specialized terms and represents a crucial reference work also in the field of geographical names research and standardization.</p> <p>The digitization initiative aims to make onomastic terminology more accessible to researchers, administrators, and practitioners, supporting consistent terminology usage across Norway's geographical names standardization work.</p>
J	Writing systems and pronunciation	
<i>Ja</i>	Romanization	<i>[without changes]</i>
<i>Jb</i>	Conversion into non-Roman writing systems	<i>[without changes]</i>
<i>Jc</i>	Writing of names in unwritten languages	<i>[without changes]</i>
<i>Jd</i>	Pronunciation	<i>[without changes]</i>
K	Country names	<i>[without changes]</i>

L	Toponymic education	<p>The Language Council has updated its E-learning course on the executive work of Norwegian geographical names standardization, which was originally released in 2021. The updates include current links and corrections of previous errors. This course primarily targets public sector employees working with geographical names at the local government (municipal) level. Through visual and interactive content, the course aims to engage users and foster understanding of geographical names' importance for society and culture. The implementation of this course has resulted in improved comprehension of the Norwegian Place Name Act's rationale and has enhanced awareness of standardization procedures. The course is readily accessible through www.sprakradet.no and various other relevant public sector websites.</p> <p>Additionally, the Sami Parliament has integrated educational components into their funding program for Sami geographical names collection. As part of this initiative, the Sami geographical name service offers a short collection course to successful funding applicants, ensuring proper methodological approaches to name collection.</p>
M	Features beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation	
Ma	<i>Features common to two or more nations</i>	<i>[without changes]</i>
Mb	<i>Bilateral and multilateral agreements</i>	<i>[without changes]</i>
Mc	<i>Coastal seas</i>	<i>[without changes]</i>
Md	<i>Geonames of international waters and marine features in international waters</i>	<i>[without changes]</i>
Me	<i>Geonames in Antarctica</i>	<i>[without changes]</i>
Mf	<i>International cooperation</i>	<p>During the reporting period, Norway has maintained extensive international engagement through various initiatives. The Norwegian Language Collections has participated in significant international exchange programs, including an ERASMUS+ Mobility Exchange to the Placenames Branch Ireland and Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge at Dublin City University. This exchange focused on geographical names standardization practices in Ireland and Scandinavia, as well as geographical names database management methodologies.</p>
N.	Arrangements for the UNGEGN	<p>Norway has maintained substantial involvement in UNGEGN activities across multiple areas. The Norwegian Language Collections has played a particularly active role, with representation in various capacities. During the 2023 UNGEGN (3rd Session), Norway's delegation made significant contributions, presenting multiple papers and reports. These included the Report of the Norden Division, reports on the Working Group on Publicity and Funding, Training Courses in Toponymy, and several other specialized topics.</p>

		<p>The country's commitment to UNGEGN extends to leadership roles, with participation in both Bureau and Extended Bureau activities. From 2023-2025, Norway has maintained membership in the UNGEGN Extended Bureau, participating in five out of eight extended bureau meetings. Within the Norden Division, Norway has held the Vice-Chair position from 2017-2025, organizing various division meetings both in-person and online.</p> <p>Working Group involvement has been particularly strong, with Norwegian representatives serving as Convenors for multiple groups. These include the Working Group on Publicity and Funding (2011-2023), Training Courses in Toponymy (2017-2023), and the merged Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy (2023-onwards).</p> <p>Publications have been consistent, with multiple contributions to the UNGEGN Bulletin, including detailed articles on the Geographical Names Portal Stadnamnportalen, artificial intelligence applications in standardization, and various working group reports. Norway has also actively participated in webinars and international cooperation efforts, including presentations at the UN-Maps conference in Valencia.</p>
O	Supporting sustainable development	<p>Norway's management of geographical names aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrating a comprehensive approach to cultural preservation and sustainable development. Norway's commitment to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) is evident through its investment in digital infrastructure and pioneering innovative OCR applications and AI research for geographical names standardization, as well as the development of the Stadnamnportalen.</p> <p>A strong focus on equality and inclusion (SDG 10 - Reducing Inequality) is demonstrated through the equal protection of Sami, Kven and Norwegian language toponyms, alongside dedicated funding and initiatives to address historical inequities where indigenous names were systematically suppressed. The educational dimension (SDG 4 - Quality Education) is addressed through the E-learning course, specialized training programs for name collection, and active participation in international educational initiatives.</p> <p>Norway's approach to preserving geographical names as cultural monuments and involving local communities in naming processes supports SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). The country's institutional framework, transparent standardization processes, and legal structures through the Place Name Act contribute to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Furthermore, Norway's international engagement, including participation in UNGEGN activities, leadership roles in global working groups, and involvement in international exchange programs, exemplifies its commitment to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This showcases how geographical names management can contribute to broader sustainable development objectives.</p>
P	Other	<p>During the reporting period, two initiatives have emerged that fall outside the standard categorization framework but represent important developments in geographical names work in Norway.</p> <p>The Norwegian Language Collections has commenced exploring the potential applications of artificial intelligence in geographical names standardization. This comprehensive investigation encompasses four key</p>

		<p>areas of AI application. First, they are developing methods for the automated retrieval of historical source forms, enhancing access to historical naming documentation. Second, the research addresses romanization processes, seeking to improve the systematic conversion of names between writing systems. Third, they are working on bi-directional conversion capabilities between phonetic transcription and written forms. Finally, the research includes the development of predictive models capable of generating expected phonetic forms from written representations of geographical names.</p> <p>In parallel with these technological advances, the Sami Parliament has established a new funding mechanism to support the preservation and documentation of Sami geographical names. This initiative provides financial support for the collection of Sami geographical names, with funding awarded to applicants who meet established criteria and requirements. To ensure the quality and consistency of the collected data, the Sami geographical name service has developed and implements a specialized short collection course. This course is offered to funding recipients, providing them with the necessary methodological training and guidelines for systematic name collection. This combined approach of financial support and technical training represents a comprehensive strategy for preserving and documenting Sami geographical names.</p>
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