

## Tietoa saamen kielistä

(Teksti kuuluu Kielitoimiston ohjepankin ohjeeseen Saamenkieliset nimet, [www.kielitoimistonohjepankki.fi/ohje/182](http://www.kielitoimistonohjepankki.fi/ohje/182).)

### 1.4. The minority language Saami

Saami is a Finno-Ugric language distantly related to Finnish. In Finland, Norway, and Sweden, it uses variants of the Roman alphabet. Three mutually unintelligible forms of Saami are spoken in Finland, namely North Saami, Inari Saami, and Skolt Saami (see Map 1).

In 1995, the Finnish Parliament recognized the Saami people as the indigenous inhabitants of their domicile area (Constitution, article 14). They were then granted cultural autonomy within their domicile area (Constitution, article 51 a), i.e. the right to maintain and utilize their languages and customs. The new [Constitution of Finland](#) in 1999 (the articles 17 and 121) and the [Saami Language Act](#) in 2003 include and define the rights of Saami languages in Finland.

Saami is spoken as a native language by about 1,900 persons or 0.04 % of the population of Finland (2013). Most of them use North Saami but about 300 persons speak Inari Saami and approximately the same number Skolt Saami.

In the [Act on the Saami Parliament](#) (974/1995) a Saami is defined as a person who considers himself a Saami, provided:

- (1) That he himself or at least one of his parents or grandparents has learnt Saami as his first language;
- (2) That he is a descendant of a person who has been entered in a land, taxation or population register as a mountain, forest or fishing Lapp; or
- (3) That at least one of his parents has or could have been registered as an elector for an election to the Saami Delegation or the Saami Parliament.

In the same act the Saami Homeland means the municipalities Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki, as well as the area of the reindeer owners' association of Lapland in Sodankylä.

The Saami languages have official status in Finland. According to the Saami Language Act the most important government documents and all official documents concerning the community itself are translated into Saami. A Saami national has the right to use his or her language before a court of law or in communication with other state authorities. The Lutheran Church has long since used Saami, and this language is taught in schools in the four northernmost municipalities in Finland and the Saami speakers have the right to pass the national matriculation examination in their own language. Saami Radio broadcasts programmes in Saami and the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation produces, jointly with Norwegian and Swedish television, TV news in the Saami language. There are also some periodicals and newspapers published in Saami.

In 1979, the Nordic Saami Council decided to adopt a new, uniform orthography for the North Saami language of Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Since then the Saami names in the maps published by the National Land Survey have been spelled by following these rules.

The North Saami alphabet is as follows:

|     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A a | Ð ð | J j | O o | T t |
| Á á | E e | K k | P p | U u |
| B b | F f | L l | R r | V v |
| C c | G g | M m | S s | Z z |
| Č č | H h | N n | Š š | Ž ž |
| D d | I i | Ŋ ŋ | T t |     |

The diphthongs are *ea*, *ie*, *oa*, and *uo*. Inari Saami has also the vowels *â* and *ä* and the diphthongs *iä* (instead of *ea*) and *uá* (instead of *oa*), and it has no *t*. The more complicated writing system of Skolt Saami does not use *á* or *t* but it has *â*, *ǰ*, *ǰ̃*, *ǰ̄*, *ǰ̅*, *ǰ̆*, *ǰ̇*, *ǰ̈*, *ǰ̉*, *ǰ̊*, *ǰ̋*, *ǰ̌*, *ǰ̍*, *ǰ̎*, *ǰ̏*, *ǰ̐*, and *ǰ̑* and the softening mark ('). The diphthongs of Skolt Saami are *uo*, *ue*, *ua*, *uä*, *ie*, *iä*, and *eä*. In Inari Saami and Skolt Saami, long vowels are marked with double letters.

Some old topographic maps currently for sale contain many names, which are still written with the old orthography. The former version of transcribing Saami place names in Finland was a special adaptation of the Saami orthography of the time. The following examples show how the new orthography differs from the old one:

| Spelling before<br>July 1, 1979 | Spelling since<br>July 1, 1979 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Pissevarri                      | Bissevárri                     |
| Tadšajavri                      | Dážajávri                      |
| Tšoalmmevarri                   | Čoalmmevárri                   |
| Tšahkaljohka                    | Čáhkáljohka                    |
| Keäđgejavri                     | Geađgejávri                    |
| Sarekuoihka                     | Sáreguoika                     |
| Vaggojohka                      | Vákkojohka                     |
| Tšâhkarvarri                    | Čahkarvárri                    |
| Jamehsuolu                      | Jámetsuolu                     |
| Tsuoggajoknjálbmi               | Cuokkajohnjálbmi               |

Table 2 presents the Saami pronunciation. The letters which do not occur in all language forms or which belong to the old orthography have been marked. Diphthongs and consonant clusters do not occur in the table.

Table 2. Pronunciation of the Saami alphabet

| Spelling | Pronunciation<br>IPA alphabet<br>(sec. value in<br>brackets) | Spelling | Pronunciation<br>IPA alphabet<br>(sec. value in<br>brackets) | Spelling | Pronunciation<br>IPA alphabet<br>(sec. value in<br>brackets) |
|----------|--|----------|--|----------|--|
| a        | (a)  | h        | h  | o        | o (o:¹)  |
| á        | a:¹ (a)  | hj       | j  | õ³       | ə (ə)  |
| â², ³    | a (ʌ)  | hl       | l  | p        | p  |
| b        | b̥   | hm       | m̥   | r        | r  |
| c        | ts   | hn       | n̥   | s        | s  |
| č        | tʃ   | hr       | r̥   | š        | ʃ  |
| ɜ³, ⁴    | ɟ̥ʒ̥   | i        | i (i:, j¹)   | t        | t  |
| ž³, ⁴    | ɟ̥ʒ̥j  | j        | j  | ʈ¹       | θ  |
| d        | ɖ  | k        | k  | u        | u (u:¹)  |
| dj       | ɖiɖj   | ķ³       | kj   | v        | v (w:)   |
| ddj      | ɖi:ɖj  | l        | l  | z        | ɟ̥ʒ̥ (z³)  |
| đ        | ð  | lj       | l̥j̥   | zz       | d:ɟ̥ʒ̥ (zz³)   |
| e        | e (e:¹)  | llj      | l̥j̥j̥   | ž        | ɟ̥ʒ̥j (z³)   |
| f        | ɸ  | m        | m  | žž       | d:ɟ̥ʒ̥j (z³)   |
| g        | g  | n        | n  | y²       | y (ʏ)  |
|          |  | nj       | nj   | á⁵       | a  |
| ǵ³       | gʲ   | nnj      | n̥j̥n̥j̥ (n̥j̥:n̥j̥)   | ä², ³, ⁴ | æ  |
| ǧ³       | ɣ  | ŋ        | ŋ  | å³       | ɔ  |

<sup>1</sup> In North Saami.

<sup>2</sup> In Inari Saami.

<sup>3</sup> In Skolt Saami.

<sup>4</sup> Formerly in North Saami.

<sup>5</sup> Formerly and in scholarly works in Inari Saami, now = á.

The maps compiled by the National Land Survey, which cover the Enontekiö, Inari, and Utsjoki municipalities, have North Saami names appearing alone or alongside Finnish names. On the maps covering Inari municipality, Inari Saami names appear either alone or alongside North Saami and Finnish names. Skolt Saami names are very rare on maps of contemporary Finland.

**Sisältyy julkaisuun TOPONYMIC GUIDELINES FOR MAP EDITORS AND OTHER EDITORS.**

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