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## **Norwegian Parliamentary Discourse 2004–2014 on the Norwegian Constitution’s Language Form**

**Yordanka Madzharova Bruteig**

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**Abstract:** The Norwegian Constitution (*Kongeriket Norges Grunnlov*) of 1814 is the oldest functioning constitution in Europe. Its amendment procedure has also been unique in that all amendments (prior to very recently) had to be provided in the same archaic language as the Constitution itself – an antiquated language form closer to Danish than to modern day Norwegian. This article observes the parliamentary discourse on constitutional amendments with particular focus on the proposals for language modernization of the Constitution. Included here are also deliberations held prior to the complete language renovation of the Constitution (in both official language forms *bokmål* and *nynorsk*) approved just before its bicentennial in May 2014. The author investigates how procedural, political, and institutional factors have influenced discourse on the Constitution’s language form.

**Keywords:** The Norwegian Constitution, Norwegian parliamentary discourse, language form.

### **Introduction**

Language form is an important aspect of any modern constitution’s textuality [1]. This chapter investigates how members of the Norwegian parliament, Stortinget, perceive the Norwegian Constitution’s language form. The reason for investigating this matter is that until May 2014, the Norwegian Constitution and its amendments were written in a language form corresponding to the written language of juridical and administrative genres in Norway in the last third of the nineteenth century (Vinje 2002). This language form of the Constitution’s text was established in a thorough linguistic revision in 1903. The Norwegian language has evolved considerably since the 1903 revision was done, however, and the Constitution’s language form resembled Danish more than modern Norwegian. Thus, there was a vast gap between the Constitution’s language form and the modern Norwegian language. In May 2014 just before this text went into print, Stortinget finally modernized the Constitution’s language form.

In Norway, the Constitution and all its amendments since 1903 are considered an evolving text: an amendment replaces the original phrasing of the relevant article, and dates of each amendment are entered into the constitutional text. In other constitutions, amendments

do not replace the original constitutional text, but instead are added at its end. The Norwegian Constitution does not specify the language form of constitutional amendments. Yet, since the revision in 1903, the practice has been to write all constitutional amendments in the language form of that revision. This practice is unique in an international context. In addition, it differs from that used in ordinary Norwegian legislation. Despite its unique position, however, the Constitution's language form has rarely been a topic in Norwegian parliamentary discourse. Between 1906 and 2008, Stortinget did not discuss complete renovation of the Constitution's language form, instead only correcting language errors [2].

In 2008, a complete renovation of the Constitution's language form was proposed (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 16 [2007–2008]*). The proposal was eventually rejected by Stortinget in May 2012 mainly (but not only) because it did not take into account both official Norwegian languages, *bokmål* (a modified form of Danish) and *nynorsk* (a nineteenth-century literary form devised from the country dialects). Shortly thereafter, Stortinget's presidium appointed a panel of legal and linguistic experts to draft a proposal for a modernized constitutional text in both languages (*Dokument 19 [2011–2012]*), which resulted in *Grunnlovsforslag nr. 25 (2011–2012)*. The presidium's plan was to have the new language versions of the Constitution adopted before the Constitution's bicentennial on 17 May 2014. As this chapter will show, modernizing the Constitution's language proved to be more difficult and complicated than Stortinget's presidium envisaged.

The main question in this chapter concerns how in the period 2004–2014 members of parliament (MPs) have perceived the Constitution's language form. In the Constitution's Article 112, MPs are given the power to amend the Constitution. Moreover, MPs are key users of the Constitution because they must relate to the Constitution in their legislative work. I look at the MPs' arguments and positioning as expressed in the discourse and at how procedural, political, and institutional factors influence discourse.

This investigation is one of the first studies of Norwegian parliamentary discourse, and builds on approaches developed for analyzing parliamentary discourses as institutional communication (Madzharova Bruteig 2010). The investigation concentrates on what I call "parliamentary discourse on the Constitution's language form," which I define as everything considered relevant to forming discourse (parliamentary discourse in this case) on this topic (for arguments concerning this way of selecting discourse for analysis, see Teubert [2010: 8–24]). Sources include constitutional amendment proposals, official stenographic reports and video records from Stortinget's chamber meetings, Stortinget's committee reports and other parliamentary printed matter, other materials from Stortinget's official website, and selected responses in Norwegian print media.

## **Constitutional Amendments and Language Form**

Only since 2006 have changes in the Constitution's language form been considered amendments. The draft for the language revision in 1903 was worked out by Stortinget's presidium and approved by the Constitutional Committee (*Kontroll- og konstitusjonskomiteen*) without being debated in the chamber (Hylland 1989: 349–350). Apparently, MPs in those days did not consider mere language corrections to be constitutional amendments per se, so they did not use the formal amendment procedure specified in the Constitution's Article 112.

The 1903 revision mainly changed the orthography of the Constitution's text. The revised edition of the Constitution was published as a book (*Kongeriget Norges Grunnlov og øvrige Forfatningsdokumenter* 1903) and the language form used in this book established the

language norm for subsequent editions. The next official editions of the Constitution, including newly accepted amendments, were printed in 1914 and 1921. In these two editions, changes of the Constitution's language form were not treated as constitutional amendments, either. The 1914 edition established the praxis of proposing constitutional amendments in the language form of the 1903 revision. Up to 2012, this praxis has been adhered to in all revised editions of the Constitution. Since 1967, such revised editions are published every fourth year.

However, MPs have experienced increasing difficulties in complying with the 1903 language form when writing constitutional amendment proposals. A proposal must include the exact phrasing of the proposed amendment. MPs' difficulties stem mainly from the vast difference between today's Norwegian and the Constitution's language form. For example, nouns are no longer written with initial capitals, verbs today have the same form in the singular and the plural, and many words have undergone changes in meaning. One example concerns Article 17, which allows the king (in reality the government) to pass provisional legislation concerning, inter alia, *Politi* while Stortinget is not in session. *Politi* literally means "police," which in today's Norwegian, like in English, refers to the police as an institution for law and order. In 1814, however, this term referred to public regulation and welfare in general, and this is still the legal meaning of *Politi* in the Constitution. It is a safe guess that this meaning will escape most modern readers other than lawyers and other specialists. Finally, legal and administrative language and the language in parliamentary practice have become less formal.

An article by professor in social economy and political science Aanund Hylland (1989) sparked new interest in the Constitution's language form by pointing out that it did not, as was widely believed, date from the 1814 Constitution. The language form of the 1989 edition represented that of the renovated 1903 edition. His article was followed by a monograph by Finn-Erik Vinje (2002) on the Constitution's language form from a historical perspective, a monograph ordered and published by Stortinget. Vinje was professor of Norwegian language until 2006. He also served as a language consultant for Stortinget [3]. These studies may have been instrumental in later attempts to renovate the Constitution's language. As the Constitution is venerated because of its symbolic significance for Norway's independence in 1814, there is less symbolic power in the 1903 language form.

In recent years, MPs have taken a greater interest in the role of the Constitution's language form. When, in February 2006, Stortinget's chamber debated a set of language corrections, MPs unanimously voted for a presidium proposal that stated that "even mere language changes in the constitutional text [require] submission of formal proposals for constitutional amendment and processing in accordance with Article 112" (*Stortingets presidentskap til professor Finn-Erik Vinje* 2004). Therefore, since 2006, corrections of language errors are considered formal constitutional amendments.

The practice of writing constitutional amendment proposals only in the 1903 language form changed in 2008. In a letter specifically about the language correctness of constitutional amendment proposals, then Stortinget president Thorbjørn Jagland expressed willingness to consider having new proposals written in modern language, too, if those making such proposals insist (*Stortingets presidentskap ved Thorbjørn Jagland* 2008). In addition, the letter explained that an arrangement with language consultants had been established to secure the language correctness of constitutional amendment proposals. Only proposals that had undergone language proofing would be announced in print. Already in September 2008, seven out of twenty-five submitted constitutional amendment proposals were written in both the 1903 language form and the modern language form.

Despite MPs' clearly increased interest in language matters, as reflected in the procedural changes in 2006 and 2008, it should be noted that generally most MPs are far less concerned with language changes per se than with substantive changes (*realitetsendringer*). It is a recurring phenomenon that those arguing in favor of changes in the Constitution's language form guarantee that the proposed changes will not lead to substantive changes in the Constitution itself.

### **Debates on Constitutional Amendment Proposals in the Chamber**

Traditionally, debates on constitutional amendment proposals happen in the chamber twice yearly: once in the spring session and once in the autumn session. When considering most constitutional amendment proposals, MPs debate less actively than they do during routine legislative work (exceptions are a few debates on some recurrent, very controversial proposals). Normally, MPs debate several constitutional amendment proposals during one meeting. Voting takes place after all constitutional amendment proposals have been debated, not separately after debate on each proposal [4]. Presumably, the tendency to debate constitutional amendment proposals less actively and postponing votes until after debates on all constitutional amendment proposals strengthen the debates' consensual character. In debates on these proposals, MPs express agreement rather than disagreement.

Indeed, debates on constitutional amendment proposals in the chamber often consist of consensus-oriented utterances. For example, MPs begin speeches by expressing recognition of and agreement with the previous speaker's point. When a case can be presented as positive or negative, MPs avoid the negative. *Rejection* of a proposal may be announced by the president by emphasizing that the Constitutional Committee's report was *approved*: "Voting: In a vote between the Committee's report and the proposal from the Socialist Left Party, the report was approved by 153 votes against 11 votes" (*Referat Stortinget 2012*).

That all questions must be submitted through the president during debates in the chamber contributes to these debates' consensual character. Speakers do not address each other directly, but via the president. Finally, each constitutional amendment proposal is presented to the chamber by the Constitutional Committee's rapporteur for that specific proposal. The proposal is not presented by its author.

Architectonic features and MPs' seating order further support the consensus-oriented interactions. Because of the chamber's rotunda shape, MPs sit in almost a full circle open to the presidium's seats and the speaker's tribune. Seating is alphabetical by district name. Unlike the seating in many other parliaments, the seating in Norway's is not by party affiliation. Also unlike in many other national parliaments, in Norway's many MPs use their local dialect when debating. Thereby, they emphasize their regional affiliation, perhaps sometimes so that party affiliation is toned down.

Regarding eventually *accepted* constitutional amendment proposals, they are debated briefly and by only a few speakers. Generally, a more lively debate occurs on eventually *rejected* constitutional amendment proposals, such as those proposing separation of church and state or those proposing a republican form of government. These two proposals have been regularly presented to Stortinget since 1870 and 1905, respectively. The first one was finally approved after intense debate on 21 May 2012.

The consensual character of debates on constitutional amendment proposals is perhaps also linked to *grunnlovskonservatisme* (constitutional conservatism) (see Warner et al. in this volume), a notion that Norwegian scholars, political scientists, and legal scholars often use to describe Stortinget's alleged reluctance to amend the Constitution. The notion of

constitutional conservatism is alive despite the fact that three-quarters of the Constitution's articles have been amended one or more times since 1814.

Perhaps the decoration of Stortinget's chamber accentuates to MPs their connectedness with the Eidsvold framers and their veneration for the 1814 Constitution. The Constitution is always present through the only painting in the chamber, Oscar A. Wergeland's *Eidsvold 1814*. The painting forms the visual background for all work in the chamber. It hangs behind the presidium's seats and the speaker's tribune so that it is in front of all MPs (see figure below).

Painted in 1885, it captures the historic moment when, on 17 May 1814, deputies signed the Constitution at Eidsvold. It was painted to hang in this exact place in the chamber [5]. Wergeland's painting is perhaps the most common visual symbol of the Constitution; it receives special attention in relation to Constitution Day, 17 May. In addition, it has become a frequent symbol of Stortinget. For example, it is often seen in televised chamber debates.

However, one reason that the notion of constitutional conservatism is alive and well may also stem from the Constitution's language form. For example, political scientist Bjørn Erik Rasch states, "The myth about constitutional conservatism is still alive, most likely because of the archaic language in which the Constitution and all recent constitutional amendment proposals are phrased" (Rasch 2000).

### **Proposals for Partial Language Renovation 2004–2012**

Constitutional language matters are perceived as changes of an administrative character that are the responsibility of Stortinget's presidium. Therefore, presidium members have made



Oscar A. Wergeland's painting *Eidsvold 1814* in Stortinget's chamber. Copyright: Stortinget

almost all constitutional amendment proposals for changes of the Constitution's language form. MPs have paid little attention to partial language renovation. Such renovation typically concerns correcting language errors.

If in the chamber MPs mention such corrections, they typically do so only in passing. For example, in a chamber debate on the important Article 100, which concerns the freedom of speech, the Constitutional Committee's rapporteur Svein Roald Hansen said, "Hereby, a thorough debate and a broad hearing on freedom of speech will hopefully be brought to a final agreement on Article 100 of the Constitution, with the exception of possible language errors" (*Referat Stortinget* 2006a).

Constitutional amendment proposal number 8 (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 8 [2003–2004]*) concerned language corrections in fifteen articles. When the proposal was debated in the chamber on 2 February 2006, only one speaker was on the agenda, the chair of the Constitutional Committee. In his first sentence, he guaranteed that the constitutional amendment proposal would not lead to substantive changes: "This is a constitutional amendment proposal that does not change the Constitution's substance, but that suggests correcting language errors" (*Referat Stortinget* 2006b). The proposal was accepted by unanimous vote after this short presentation. The whole consideration took four minutes [6].

The next Storting constituted for October 2009–October 2013 debated four constitutional amendment proposals on 27 May 2010. Proposal number 15 (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 15 [2007–2008]*) suggested some small, mostly orthographic, changes in four articles. In the Constitutional Committee's report, the committee guaranteed that these language corrections did not cause substantive changes. Therefore, the committee approved the corrections: "The Committee would like to underline that the proposals did not evoke any substantive changes, but only correction of obvious language mistakes" (*Innstilling 254 S [2009–2010]*). MPs voted, without debate (no MP made a speech, not even the Constitutional Committee's rapporteur), to approve the proposal after Stortinget's president had read it.

Debates in the chamber concerning language corrections, therefore, have often been merely formal, even after such corrections were given the status of constitutional amendment proposals.

### **Proposal for Complete Renovation of the Constitution's Language Form**

In his monograph on the Constitution's language form from a historical perspective, Vinje (2002: 150–160) listed five possible variants for the Constitution's future language form: (1) restore the language form of the 1814 Constitution (based on either the 17 May edition or the 4 November edition), and write new amendments in that same language form; (2) keep the status quo, that is, the language form of the 1903 edition; (3) do not revise the present form, but write new constitutional amendments in modern language—as is the praxis of ordinary legislation; (4) translate the Constitution into present-day Norwegian; and (5) carefully modernize the language form.

Vinje followed up his work by authoring, in 2008, a constitutional amendment proposal for complete renovation of the Constitution's language form. The proposal included the entire constitutional text in the renovated language form. The renovation followed the fifth variant above and, according to Vinje, the proposed changes were only "language adjustments." [7]. The proposed changes consisted mainly of orthographic changes (for example, *aa* would change into *å*, *th* would change into *t*), as well as single morphological, syntactical, and lexical adjustments. The proposed renovation would not modernize the Constitution's language form into contemporary Norwegian. The Constitution would still have an archaic language form. Moreover, some realities that had ceased to exist would nevertheless be maintained in the constitutional text. The Constitution's language form would still display

traces of the Norwegian language's evolution so that readers could appreciate the text's historical significance.

Vinje's constitutional amendment proposal presented the constitutional text only in *bokmål*. This presentation conforms to the Norwegian tradition of approving new legislation only in *bokmål* or *nynorsk*. Decisions concerning which language laws should be submitted in are in praxis made by the MP who is the case's rapporteur in Stortinget's relevant committee.

Because since 2006 changes in the Constitution's language form are considered constitutional amendments, this complete language renovation must follow constitutional amendment procedures as regulated by Article 112. The former vice president of Stortinget Carl Ivar Hagen submitted the constitutional amendment proposal on behalf of Vinje (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 16 [2007–2008]*).

In subsequent debates conducted in newspapers, participants argued that the Constitution's position as a national symbol should not be weakened. For example, some argued that the Constitution is a ceremonial document with representative and symbolic dimensions and that these are perhaps best served by an elevated archaic language form. Others argued that improving the understandability of the Constitution required renovating its language form because many of its articles are written in language that is difficult to understand today.

As testament of the importance placed on the Constitution's language form, the Constitutional Committee held its first ever open hearing on constitutional amendment proposals to discuss this very proposal for complete renovation of the Constitution's language form. Normally, the Constitutional Committee's meetings are closed to the public. Thus, the hearing on 1 March 2012 was characterized by its chair, Anders Anundsen, as "historic" ("Åpen høring i Stortingets" 2012) [8]. The following experts spoke before the Constitutional Committee: professors Vinje and Hylland, professors of law Eivind Smith and Mads T. Andenæs, ombudsmann Arne Fliflet, and representatives from the Norwegian Language Council, Arnfinn Muruvik Vonen (director) and Åse Lill Kimestad (deputy chair of the board). All argued in favor of renovation to remove inconsistencies and language errors from the Constitution, which was characterized as "a national treasure." The Constitution, they argued, has a unique importance and a consolidating and unifying function. Several speakers (experts and Constitutional Committee members alike) referred to the proposed renovation of the Constitution's language form as a "translation." Andenæs emphasized that the significant distance between the Constitution's current language form and contemporary Norwegian creates a tension between the antiquated language form and the Constitution's living content. Smith called the Constitution's 1903 language form an "unnecessary screen" between the people and the Constitution's text. He argued that if the Constitution's language form is renovated, people will understand the Constitution better and perhaps debate it more. Therefore, he concluded, renovation could influence the functioning of Norwegian democracy.

For Constitutional Committee members, the most significant issue was whether the proposed renovation of the Constitution's language form would allow new interpretations of the content and therefore substantive changes. They feared that the proposed renovation would not be a purely linguistic change.

The Norwegian Language Council representatives emphasized two aspects as most important: the Constitution must exist in a language understandable for all, and both official Norwegian languages, *bokmål* and *nynorsk*, should be treated equally. It was also mentioned

that perhaps a version in the Sami language (the language of the Sami minority) should be considered.

Official Norwegian state policy is that state institutions should use both *bokmål* and *nynorsk* in public documents (*Lov om målbruk i offentleg teneste* 1980). The practice for other important texts is similar. For example, in 2011, two translations of the Bible were published simultaneously, one volume in *bokmål* and one in *nynorsk*. However, until 2012, the only proposal for renovating the Constitution's language form in both *bokmål* and *nynorsk* was submitted in 1906. This proposal (by Nikolaus Gjelsvik) was not approved (Hylland 1989: 356; see also Holmøyvik 2010). It included changes to content, such as numbering of articles, and some substantive changes.

Mainly because of the unsolved issue of *bokmål* and *nynorsk*, on 21 May 2012 Stortinget adopted the Constitutional Committee's report rejecting the constitutional amendment proposal for complete renovation of the Constitution's language form. Eight MPs spoke prior to the voting (including both the rapporteur for the proposal and the committee's chair), and the consideration in the chamber was unusually lengthy, nearly an hour. In their speeches, most MPs praised the work of the committee's rapporteur and of Vinje. On the other hand, they emphasized the need to have the Constitution in a renovated language form and in both official languages. A minority consisting of MPs from the two biggest rightist parties supported adopting the proposal (the proposed renovation only in *bokmål*) because, as voiced by MP Per-Kristian Foss (of the Conservative Party), "We have managed without a *nynorsk* version for nearly two hundred years" (*Referat Stortinget* 2012). However, after the roll call vote, the constitutional amendment proposal was rejected 95–69. In a new vote, 151–12, Stortinget accepted the following proposal for further work on complete renovation of the Constitution's language form: "Stortinget asks the presidium to see that updated language editions of the Constitution, in *bokmål* and *nynorsk*, are prepared. In this work, the two editions should have equal positions and linguistic modernization should not change the substance of the old (current) Constitution" (*Referat Stortinget* 2012).

Shortly after, Stortinget's presidium appointed an expert committee (*Grunnlovsspråkutvalget*) charged with working out the proposals for renovations in both *bokmål* and *nynorsk*. The committee's report became a main part of the constitutional amendment proposal presented on 28 September 2012 (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 25 [2011–2012]*). This proposal consists of two complete renovations of the Constitution's language form: one in *bokmål* and one in *nynorsk*.

Despite Stortinget's decision in 2012 to have an expert committee prepare updated language versions of the Constitution was made with a huge majority (151–12), Vinje and his supporters in Stortinget were not satisfied with the outcome. Consequently, MPs of the Conservative Party and the Progress Party also put forward Vinje's language version as an amendment proposal in 2012. As a result, in May 2014 Stortinget had to choose between two variants either the *bokmål* and *nynorsk* versions of the expert committee appointed by the presidium, or the *bokmål* version of Vinje joined by the *nynorsk* version of the expert committee (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 21 [2011–2012]*, *Grunnlovsforslag 22 [2011–2012]*).

When the two proposals came up for discussion in the Constitutional Committee in February 2014, it quickly became apparent that the language reform would not pass the Committee smoothly. This time, the main point of dispute was not the *nynorsk* edition of the Constitution, but the *bokmål* edition. The political parties could not agree on the choice between the more conservative language style in Vinje's *bokmål* edition and the more modern language style and more comprehensive modernization in the *bokmål* edition prepared by the

expert committee. Language is a sensitive issue in Norway, and the choice between language styles can be of historical, cultural and social significance. In this case, the language is of particular importance as it concerns the Constitution, with its own deep historical, cultural and political significance in Norway.

After another public hearing on 19 February, members of the Committee argued in the media for quite different outcomes of the proposed language reform. A majority still supported the language version prepared by the expert committee on the request of the presidium. They argued that a language reform would strengthen Norwegian democracy and the Constitution itself since the reform removed the linguistic barrier between the Constitution and the citizens. However, the rightist Progress Party still supported Vinje's language version, while the Christian Democratic Party and the Conservative Party eventually opposed all the amendment proposals for language reform. On one hand, the opponents to the language reform stressed that the archaic language symbolized the Constitution's historical and cultural roots, and on the other hand they were worried that the language reform might lead to unintended substantive changes. Even though these parties were in a minority in the Committee, they could still block a reform of the Constitution's language as they held more than 1/3 of the votes in Stortinget. In Norway, constitutional amendments require a 2/3 majority.

In the end the political deadlock was broken when the Progress Party and the Christian Democratic Party reached an agreement with the parliamentary majority only a few days before the vote on 6 May. At that time the media reported that the language reform was doomed. The prospect of a failed language reform, intended as a symbolic act of giving the Constitution back to the people for the bicentenary, was probably instrumental in turning the tide. The end result was a compromise which few were happy with. The majority reluctantly agreed to Vinje's language version as the *bokmål* edition of the Constitution, while the Progress Party and the Christian Democratic Party agreed to a *nynorsk* version. When the Conservative Party realized they were left alone in their opposition to the language reform, they too abandoned all their arguments against the reform and joined ranks with other parties. In the end, the language reform was passed on 6 May 2014 with a convincing 168–1 vote. The large majority provides a formal veil of consensus over the harsh rhetoric and the disputes between MPs and between the political parties in the months before and indeed also in the parliamentary debate on the day of the vote. The two new and quite different language versions of the Constitution, a *bokmål* version in a conservative language and a *nynorsk* version in a modern language and with modernized concepts and structure, was an unforeseen outcome when Stortinget in 2012 decided to modernize the Constitution's language. In 2014 the outcome was considered by the parliamentary majority to be an unhappy but necessary compromise. Therein is the germ for future discussions of the Constitution's language.

## Conclusions

Since 2006, significant procedural changes have occurred regarding the Norwegian Constitution's language form. These changes are unique in the Constitution's 200-year history. MPs have become more aware of the need for language correctness in the Constitution's text and more aware of the general role of language form. Because of their increased awareness, Stortinget gave language corrections the status of constitutional amendments (in 2006) and approved writing new constitutional amendment proposals in modern language (in 2008). The first open hearing in the Constitutional Committee (on 1 March 2012) was held specifically to hear expert opinions concerning the constitutional

amendment proposal for complete renovation of the Constitution's language form. On 21 May 2012, the Constitution's language form was explicitly debated when Stortinget agreed to require complete renovation into both *bokmål* and *nynorsk*. The constitutional amendment proposals of 28 September 2012, which presents two such renovated editions, and the intense debates on the language reform in the months before its adoption on 6 May 2014, reflects an increased sensitivity to the Constitution's language.

Debates on constitutional amendment proposals in Stortinget's chamber are characterized by greater consensus and fewer voices than are debates concerning commonplace legislative work. This consensus may stem from veneration of the Constitution as well as from discursive features and procedural praxis. Yet by renovating the Constitution's language, Stortinget has now taken steps toward making the Constitution more accessible to the MPs and the people alike. And in its new language forms, the Constitution may appear more modern and more relevant to public debates. In the long term, Stortinget's language renovations may thus have prepared the ground for more debate and less consensus on the Constitution's contents. For the advanced Norwegian democracy and the Constitution itself, this development can only be a good thing.

## References and Notes

[1] Karen Gammelgaard and Eirik Holmøyvik contributed to this chapter. Quotes from parliamentary documents and discussions were translated by the author.

[2] Between 1906 and 2008, Stortinget did not discuss complete renovation of the Constitution's language form, but only corrected language errors. After the constitutional amendment proposal *Grunnlovsforslag nr. 16 [2007–2008]*, considered by Stortinget first in Mars 2012, there has been submitted only the Liberal Party's general proposal (*Representantforslag 87 S [2010–2011]*) for a complete renovation of the Constitution (including both the language and the content). This general proposal was rejected by all other parties after a very brief consideration in April 2011.

[3] In addition to contributing to public debate on the Constitution's language form, professors Hylland and Vinje have also been involved directly in writing constitutional amendment proposals. However, because they are not MPs, they do not have the right to formally make constitutional amendment proposals.

[4] Voting on constitutional amendment proposals proceeds by roll call vote. The president reads out the MPs' names alphabetically by district, and each MP has to answer yes or no to the proposal.

[5] Parliamentary chambers in Europe have no standard solution as to the decoration of the wall behind the presidium. To use only neighboring Denmark and Sweden as examples, the Danish Folketinget and the Swedish Riksdagen have modern neutral large textile works behind the chambers' presidium. Many other chambers have the state emblems behind the presidium.

[6] This proposal was debated at the same meeting as the change in Article 100 on the freedom of expression (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 21 [2003–2004]*). The change in Article 100 was approved after two speeches (concerning committee work on this proposal, see Kalleberg in this volume).

[7] "Linguistically adjusted" articles were also the so-called sleeping articles that "may continue to sleep—however in a newer nightgown" (*Grunnlovsforslag nr. 16 [2007–2008]*).

[8] Other committees in Stortinget sometimes hold open hearings to gather information on topics of particular importance. During three months, from March to June 2011, thirty-nine open hearings were held in the other committees in Stortinget.

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