

# THE FAROE ISLANDS IN THE ARCTIC



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# THE FAROE ISLANDS IN THE ARCTIC

The Arctic is undergoing major changes. The political and economic significance of the Arctic in the international arena is ever growing. For this very reason the Arctic is also under greater influence from global trends than ever before.

One key reason is that there are few other regions in the world where the climate is changing as fast as in the Arctic, and the clear and tangible consequences are felt more keenly with every passing day. As an Arctic country the Faroe Islands, alongside the other countries in the region, have a special role in working together to limit climate change, while also securing a robust knowledge-based foundation to make the necessary adaptations.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE FAROESE ARCTIC POLICY IS:

- > to define the Faroe Islands as a partner in the Arctic,
- > to strengthen the role of the Faroe Islands in the Arctic Council,
- > to lay the foundations for decision-making processes that help foster development, knowledge and progress in the Faroe Islands and throughout the Arctic.

The people and natural environment of the Arctic are at the core of the policy. The economic and cultural basis for existence in the Faroe Islands is similar to that of the other Arctic countries. We live in and off nature, particularly the ocean. By strengthening the basis of existence for those of us who live in the Arctic, we reinforce the resilience of the entire Arctic region. It is therefore paramount to take into account that people live in the Arctic, and that the peoples of the Arctic are best placed to make decisions about their own future and development. It is crucial that we see the

opportunities in the challenges that lie ahead, while, as ever, keeping sustainability as our guiding principle.

The Arctic policy sets the course for foreign policy in relation to the Arctic and defines the objectives which the Faroe Islands strive to achieve in regional organisations, as well as more broadly in international fora. In tandem, the policy highlights measures that can be prioritised and implemented on the part of the Faroe Islands as a contribution to reaching the goals that are of importance for development in the Arctic, and for us who live in the region.

## THIS POLICY IS COMPOSED OF EIGHT THEMATIC AREAS:

- > Stability and Security
- > International Cooperation
- > Environment, Nature and Climate
- > Research, Knowledge Advancement and Education
- > Preparedness and Response
- > Living Marine Resources
- > Economic Opportunities and Sustainable Development
- > Culture and Society

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## THE FAROE ISLANDS IN THE ARCTIC

- > The Faroese continental shelf extends north of the Arctic Circle and migrating fish stocks travel north towards the Arctic Ocean. As such, the Faroe Islands are entitled to manage and utilise resources and make claims within the Polar Circle.
- > The Faroe Islands have been an active partner in Arctic cooperation since its inception as environmental collaboration in the early 1990s. In 1996 the Arctic Council was established and the Faroe Islands have taken part in a joint delegation with Denmark and Greenland since.
- > Faroese authorities, researchers and other Faroese stakeholders have played an active role in the Arctic Council. Moreover, the Faroe Islands are party to three agreements between the countries in the Arctic Council two on preparedness and response and one on research.
- > In addition to the Arctic as a geographical area, the Arctic is a geopolitical arena, which frames and sets the stage for inter-governmental cooperation in several areas that are of strategic importance to the Faroe Islands and the rest of the world. It serves Faroese interests to remain a visible and active part of this arena.



## THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR FAROESE ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARCTIC:

The UN Sustainable Development Goals are a natural framework for Arctic policy. The 17 goals, which taken as a whole form a progressive global vision for a sustainable future, dovetail with the priorities, values and objectives the Faroe Islands pursue in the international context, also in relation to Arctic affairs.

### OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE TO THE FAROE ISLANDS AND THE ARCTIC ARE SDGS:

- 7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
- 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
- 13 Climate Action,
- 14 Life below Water
- 15 Life on Land
- 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- 17 Partnerships for the Goals

# SECURITY AND STABILITY IN A MORE UNCERTAIN WORLD

The Faroe Islands work to ensure that security and stability continue to prevail in the Arctic.

Democracy, human rights and transparency are the absolute guiding lights of the Faroe Islands in all inter-governmental contexts, including in the Arctic. Cooperation between countries must be rooted in the international rule of law, as well as mutual recognition and respect.

The chief objective to maintain low tension among the countries in the Arctic region is under pressure following the Russian attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The Arctic Council has paused all its activities in light of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. All Arctic countries will be NATO members, except Russia, with Finland and Sweden joining. This opens up valuable cooperation opportunities between the allies, who should continue to have as their main goal to preserve the Arctic as a region of low tension.

The Faroe Islands support measures that reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, as well as efforts to mitigate unintended escalation. At the same time, the geopolitical shift requires the countries in the Arctic to take into account a more uncertain security reality, in which Russia appears to be challenging the status quo. This is evident for example in Russia's new maritime doctrine, in which the Arctic is discussed as an area of decisive importance for Russia's security, and an area of both economic and military competition between nations.

We might therefore expect increased military activity, for defensive rather than aggressive purposes in our region as a response from the NATO countries. In this context it is vital that the Faroe Islands take part in processes and decision-making relating to defence policy measures in the High North.

Security and defence are, pursuant to the Home Rule Act (*Heimastýrirlógin*), shared competences. In accordance with the Act on Transfer of Competences (*Yvirtøkulógin*), they cannot at present be devolved to the Faroe Islands. The precondition is therefore sound cooperation with the Danish Government, NATO and the other NATO member countries in the region.

NATO's new 2030 Strategy Concept document mentions the High North as a focus area for the first time. In this regard it emphasises the importance of freedom of navigation for this region.

It is important that the Faroe Islands communicate and cooperate with the other allies in the Arctic, and the North Atlantic in general, in order to contribute to maintaining security and stability. In this context the USA has a special role, as does the UK, Canada and the other Nordic countries, who all play key roles in relation to the security policy situation in the region.



# INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Faroe Islands are a liberal democracy with the rule of law and human rights as fundamental pillars.

The Faroe Islands are therefore a proponent of international cooperation on the basis of rules-based systems anchored in international law. This is what ensures improved opportunities for smaller countries to pursue their interests alongside larger more powerful countries in international affairs. This is increasingly important, with the growing interest in the Arctic.

International cooperation through organisation and collaboration between countries is of vital importance to meet the many challenges facing the international community, both in the Arctic and the world at large.

In order for Faroe Islands to contribute to international cooperation, we must participate in relevant organisations and collaborate directly with other countries. This is equally true of Arctic cooperation as many other international fora, where the Faroe Islands can have an influence and present our perspectives. The competence for almost all of the areas of cooperation in the Arctic Council have been transferred to the Faroese authorities. These are important areas for advancing sustainable development in the Faroe Islands and in the Arctic as a whole, and the reason why the Faroe Islands aim to have an independent voice in all relevant areas of cooperation and organisations.

The Arctic Council is the primary forum for intergovernmental cooperation in the Arctic. The members of the Arctic Council work in close collaboration with observers and other organisations to promote cooperation

in the Arctic. The Faroe Islands are actively engaged in the Arctic Council, participating in the Kingdom of Denmark delegation alongside Greenland and Denmark.

The Arctic Council's mandate does not include matters of security or defence, and the Arctic Council's activities have been paused in light of Russia's war on Ukraine.

The Nordic cooperation is important in the Arctic context. The Faroe Islands prioritise Nordic cooperation and play an active role in most areas. The framework for cooperation presents multiple opportunities for development, including in the Arctic context.

The West Nordic parliamentary cooperation between the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland has been active for several years and has a unique role in strengthening the cooperation between the West Nordic countries, as well as identifying shared interests and challenges.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the foundation for some of the most important matters in international affairs, and thus strategically valuable for the Faroe Islands. UNCLOS sets out contracting parties' rights and obligations, including delimitation and jurisdiction of coastal states, freedom of navigation, environment and pollution, as well natural resources in the ocean and continental shelf. UNCLOS is therefore a guiding tool with regards to cooperation and development in an Arctic context.





International cooperation on sustainable management of fish stocks in the north has the highest priority for the Faroe Islands, both through multilateral coastal states consultations, bilateral agreements, and regional fisheries management organisations, particularly the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) whose convention area extends to the North Pole. The Faroe Islands are seeking independent membership in NEAFC.

Through associate membership, the Faroe Islands prioritises an active participation in the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

In addition to participation in international organisations, it is important that the Faroe Islands continue to strengthen relations with the other countries in the Arctic area, particularly Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Denmark, United States of America and Canada. It is also important to continuously develop relations with countries with a particular interest in the Arctic area, including the United Kingdom, Scotland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, China, and EU member states, as well as the EU as an organisation.



# ENVIRONMENT, NATURE AND CLIMATE

Climate change is the most serious challenge of our time, that can only be met with coordinated global efforts.

Climate change is especially evident in the Arctic region and is happening faster here than anywhere else in the world. It affects people, living conditions, biodiversity, nature and the environment, and the very conditions for living and working in the Arctic are therefore also changing.

The Faroe Islands are making targeted efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote the green energy transition and protect biodiversity. This must be reflected in our priorities in international cooperation, particularly in the Arctic.

In order to ensure that both the Arctic and we, who live here in the region, are as well prepared as possible to adapt to a changing reality, the Faroe Islands prioritise research and knowledge development that can help map the extent of climate change, the rate at which it is happening, and how exactly it affects the region.

Faroese research has for many years contributed to building knowledge about nature, the environment and climate conditions in the Arctic, not least with regard to the ocean.

> **Temperature rise in the Arctic region must be significantly reduced.** This is of direct importance for ice melt rates in the Arctic region, which in turn affects terrestrial and marine fauna and flora far across countries and oceans, not least in and around the Faroe Islands. Faroese climate policy has therefore been updated with measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with international targets to reduce global temperature rises. The Faroe Islands seek to prioritise climate cooperation under the Arctic Council and to influence international processes seeking progress in the area of climate

change. The Faroe Islands participate actively in Arctic, Nordic and international climate cooperation.

Significant steps have been taken to develop green energy in the Faroe Islands in recent years and major investments are continually being made in sustainable energy production. In addition to hydroelectricity, wind power and solar power, ground-breaking trials are underway to develop technology for the production of tidal energy. The Faroese power grid is well suited to pilot projects, for example focussing on production optimisation. **There are several areas in the field of energy where the Faroe Islands can contribute to developing best practice solutions applicable in other remote or small power grids, not least in the Arctic.**

**The target is that by 2030 all energy consumption on land in the Faroe Islands must come from renewables.**

The Faroe Islands are also closely watching trends in the international market in the development of energy saving solutions and alternative fuels for ships and other modes of transport.

In May 2022 the Faroese Parliament adopted a new Energy and Climate Policy, which aims to accelerate the green transition in the Faroe Islands and reduce greenhouse gas emission by 30 per cent in 2030 compared to 2010. The Energy and Climate Policy contains an action plan with a set schedule, outlining 25 concrete measures to be implemented over the coming years



- > **The biological diversity of the Arctic region must be well managed and responsibly conserved.** Recurrent stock estimate exercises must continue and be expanded to other living resources, in addition to commercial fish species and cetaceans. Especially sensitive areas or animal and plant species must be suitably protected, as needed. A coordinated approach between the national scientific institutions and people with local knowledge in the field of nature and the environment on land and in the ocean must constitute the foundation for a dedicated effort to gather and organise a robust knowledge base on our natural diversity, on land as well as in the ocean. This would enable the expansion and development of economic opportunities on a sustainable basis and without endangering nature.
- > Biological diversity will be identified, described, recorded, collected and used as a basis for administrative and political decision-making when granting permission or license to take measures that will impact the land or sea.
- > This knowledge will be harnessed as a significant contribution to the conservation and management of our biological diversity in the domestic, Arctic, Nordic and international contexts.

**Emissions of harmful substances must be reduced,** be these substances with ozone-depleting, cumulative, endocrine-disruptive or other negative characteristics for humans, animals, plants or ecosystems on land or in the ocean. Harmful substances travel long-distances with ocean currents and air currents around the globe and pollute the environment in the Arctic, including the Faroe Islands. The negative impacts of these pollutants can be seen in flora and fauna and to a certain extent also in the people of the Arctic. Soot particulate emissions also accelerate ice melt in the Arctic.

- > The ocean must not be a rubbish dump. The Faroese waste handling system will be updated during 2022-23 to ensure that more waste is reused and recycled in a sustainable circular economy. The Faroe Islands will also focus on reducing marine pollution at sea from fisheries and other maritime activities.
- > Monitoring of polluting activities on land and at sea must be prioritised. Study results must also be publicly accessible and used broadly in environmental management and relevant cross-border cooperation.

**The Faroe Islands will work to ensure** that researchers, administrators and others with special knowledge of nature and the environment join forces to further develop knowledge about nature and the environment. These will also contribute to and gain inspiration from Arctic, Nordic and international cooperation. Institutions specialising in the field should invite international colleagues and laypersons with specialist knowledge to join in short and long-term subject-specific cooperation, also when organising relevant research or projects. Specialist institutions should also encourage public interest in participating in measures that enhance and expand knowledge in the area of nature and the environment.

- > Specialist institutions should arrange cooperation between experts and laypersons to improve and increase knowledge in the field of nature and the environment.
- > These institutions include the Meteorological Institute, Environment Agency, Faroe Marine Research Institute, Faroese Geological Survey, Faroese Food and Veterinary Authority, University of the Faroe Islands, as well as relevant commercial actors.
- > Interdisciplinary cooperation and research should be prioritised, both in the Faroe Islands and in the international context.



Alongside the other Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands have also endorsed the Nordic Vision 2030, which aims for the Nordic Countries to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. A significant component of this vision is that the countries adhere to the Declaration on Nordic Carbon Neutrality and set ambitious targets in line with the Paris Agreement.



# RESEARCH, KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND EDUCATION

Research is a recurring strand in most policy areas related to the Arctic and therefore a central element for Faroese Arctic policy.

This section mainly focuses on the framework for research, knowledge development and education, while in the other thematic chapters more concrete targets and priorities are discussed for each separate area.

Knowledge based on research and science is a critical precondition for making appropriate decisions regarding nature and the environment in the Arctic; decisions which can ensure sustainable development and foster growth in the region.

**Cross-border cooperation on research, knowledge advancement and education in the Arctic context and research on the Arctic in general should benefit the peoples in the region.**

In 2017 the Faroe Islands signed an international agreement under the auspices of the Arctic Council to strengthen research cooperation in the Arctic.

The Faroe Islands have been active in international research partnerships in and about the Arctic for many years. Much relevant knowledge and large volumes of data exist in the Faroe Islands, which could constitute a valuable contribution to continuing research and knowledge advancement in the Arctic. Of special interest are areas such as maritime research, public health and monitoring concentrations of certain substances in the air, ocean and flora and fauna.

**The Faroe Islands seek to reinforce cooperation and coordination between research and knowledge institutions in the Faroe Islands and relevant international and individual research and knowledge institutions abroad.**

In doing so the Faroe Islands will strive to become a centre of excellence. In order to achieve this objective it is important to:

- > Collect, organise and regularly update information on all projects relevant to the Arctic.
- > Draw up an overview of all sources and databases containing research data from the Faroe Islands of Arctic relevance. Procedures for data quality assurance will be reinforced and data monitoring, data collection and data handling will be organised more clearly.
- > Publicise opportunities and conditions for research, education and studies in the Faroe Islands.

**The Faroe Islands will take part in cross-border cooperation on research and education, and also prioritise research projects that foster cooperation between researchers in the Faroe Islands and in other countries.**

The newly appointed Faroese Council for Research, Development and Innovation was established to advise the Faroese Government and industry on overarching policy and vision in the areas of research, development and innovation. The Council will also draw up objectives for these areas, both in the Faroe



Islands and for international cooperation, as well as advise on how research, development and innovation can benefit society through both the public and private sector.

**The new Council therefore plays a key role when the Faroe Islands map out strategic priorities in the area of research and will contribute to the Faroe Islands being an active partner in international research.**

Amongst the many areas in research and knowledge advancement which the Faroe Islands will prioritise in relation to the Arctic are:

- > Oceanography and living marine resources
- > Meteorology
- > Development in fields such as technology, communications and energy
- > Climate change impacts
- > Public health
- > Social sciences, in areas such as economics, labour market relations, integration and equality.

The Faroe Islands are working to take active part in education cooperation on the Arctic region and to prepare graduates with relevant

degrees and competences, who can work in the region and contribute to further sustainable development.

The Faroe Islands must establish frameworks that make it attractive for international researchers and students to come to the Faroe Islands to work and study for shorter and longer periods.

- > Knowledge institutions should play a greater role in these efforts.

### **OCEAN RESEARCH ON THE AGENDA: THE OCEAN DECADE 2021-2030**

The Ocean Decade is the Vision of the IOC, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, to establish a shared framework for oceanography, which can support countries in their efforts to meet the SDGs.

**As an ocean nation and coastal nation in the Arctic Region, heavily dependent on the sea, the Faroe Islands fully support the Ocean Decade vision and will work within the field of oceanography for clean, sustainable and resilient oceans.** The Faroe Islands will contribute to the generation of new data, information and knowledge, which is needed to realise the aims of the Ocean Decade vision.



## THE OCEAN CURRENTS AROUND THE FAROE ISLANDS ARE DECISIVE FOR ARCTIC ECOSYSTEMS

Roughly 90 per cent of temperate Atlantic seawater that enters the Arctic region in the East Atlantic flows around the Faroe Islands on its journey north. In addition, roughly 1/3 of the cold seawater that emanates from the Arctic flows out through two deep channels that run past the Faroe Islands. Since the early 1990s the Faroe Islands have been monitoring the hydrographic conditions, flow and thermal exchanges of Arctic inflow, as well as the hydrographic conditions and flow of deep ocean seawater flowing out of the Arctic and further south. The flow of heat and nutrients into the Atlantic Arctic region is of critical importance to the climate and marine ecosystems there. The Faroe Islands also actively participate in international research on the ocean environment in Atlantic Arctic seawater.

The Faroe Islands also participate actively in monitoring ecosystems in the southern segment of the Atlantic Arctic marine area. This is done through monitoring, both national and in international collaborations since the early 1990s. In addition, the Faroe Islands participate actively in international research on ecosystems in these marine areas. One key focus is the study of the large migratory pelagic stocks of herring, blue whiting and mackerel, which have their feeding grounds in the Northeast Atlantic. The Faroe Islands are an active partner in international cooperation with neighbouring nations on marine science and fisheries management.

## HORIZON EUROPE

An agreement between the Faroe Islands and the EU on the association and participation of the Faroe Islands in the latest iteration of the EU research cooperation framework Horizon Europe was signed in 2022. In addition to research partnerships, this Agreement also allows for the development of separate agreements on education cooperation under the Erasmus+ programme and cultural cooperation under the umbrella of Creative Europe. As a framework agenda Horizon Europe prioritises interdisciplinary solutions and international cooperation and functions as a support mechanism for free research, researcher mobility, strategic research and innovation.

Cooperation between the Faroe Islands and the European Union on research and development is a pillar of the Faroese role in international research partnerships. The EU has in recent years demonstrated a growing interest in the Arctic, and Horizon Europe is therefore a significant framework for research and knowledge advancement in the Arctic context.

Research and innovation has been a key component of the cooperation between the Faroe Islands and the EU since the Faroe Islands first became an associate member of the EU cooperation programme in 2010.



# PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Maritime traffic in the High North and Arctic will increase as the ice melts and new routes open up.

This entails new and greater opportunities for fisheries, maritime supply industries and the tourist sector. This trend will over time not only position the Faroe Islands as an even more strategic hub for maritime traffic, but also increase the risk of maritime accidents with the potential of polluting surrounding waters.

**Increased maritime traffic in the area heightens the urgency of international cooperation on air-sea rescue and pollution preparedness and response.** The area is vast, the routes remote, and preparedness resources limited. The strongest preparedness instruments are information and prevention, as well as clearly defined conditions for maritime traffic in Faroese and Arctic waters.

The Faroe Islands actively participates in cooperation and is represented, alongside Greenland and Denmark, in both Emergency Prevention and Preparedness Response Working Group and Arctic Coast Guard Forum, which are part of the international cooperation on preparedness and rescue in the Arctic.

The Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic was signed in 2011 and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic was signed in 2013.

**The Faroe Islands will prioritise the further development of oil and chemical spill preparedness and response in Faroese waters.**

If the Faroe Islands are to protect our own interests, and Arctic interests, national preparedness must be afforded higher priority. This is a precondition for the participation of Faroese authorities in Arctic preparedness and response cooperation on equal footing with other countries. Arctic and Nordic preparedness and response cooperation is based on each country taking an organised approach to preparedness and having a preparedness and response structure in place capable of joining in cross-border cooperation at the level of practical measures and technological planning.

- > Oil and chemical spill preparedness and response will be prioritised
- > The Faroese national preparedness and response coordination participates actively in Arctic and Nordic preparedness and response cooperation and serves Faroese interests in the Arctic MOSPA agreement and the Nordic Copenhagen Agreement.

**The Faroe Islands have assumed competence for nautical charts of Faroese waters.** These charts are updated regularly and will, over time, provide even greater detail with precise depth contours near land where depth decreases rapidly and in marine areas where commercial activity arises. This improves nautical safety and is one of many measures that prevent accidents at sea. It is also desirable that the nautical information on port entry and exit routes, harbour atlases and services, information on pilots and other particulars are

updated and notified to ships and boats, which may require such information.

- > Ships and boats must be encouraged to notify any identified discrepancies between nautical chart data and actual conditions, so that the nautical chart authority may update and correct the nautical charts.
- > The Faroese nautical chart authority must update nautical data of significance for the nautical safety of ships and boats entering and leaving Faroese ports.

With more precise weather forecasts in the area under Faroese responsibility, the newly established Faroese meteorological institute, Veðurstovan, will also play a role in sailing in the High North.

**The Faroe Islands want** shipping routes to be established for vessels over a certain size and vessels carrying hazardous freight, which do not intend to enter Faroese ports and can therefore sail around the islands rather than between them. This is one of many measures to prevent accidents in Faroese territorial waters and between the islands. Pursuant to the SOLAS Convention, IMO has a mandate to approve applications, thereby establishing shipping routes in order to “improve the safety of navigation in converging areas and in areas where the density of traffic is great or where freedom of movement of shipping is inhibited by restricted sea room, the existence of obstructions to navigation, limited depths or unfavourable meteorological conditions.” Environmental considerations can also be applied to establish shipping routes.

- > An application will be submitted to IMO requesting the establishment of shipping routes circumventing the Faroe Islands, so that vessels, which do not have any business in Faroese ports, are routed around the archipelago.
- > Call systems and AIS tracking shall ensure that vessels comply with the shipping lanes established.

The Faroe Islands support and promote increased international cooperation on safety at sea in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) where the Faroe Islands are associate member. In 2017 the IMO Polar Code entered into force. It lays down a series of requirements for vessels and crews sailing and working in the Polar regions. Since 2019 IMO has had observer status in the Arctic Council, providing direct cooperation opportunities between IMO and the countries in the Arctic Council.

**The Faroe Islands will** reinforce vessel controls to enable verification to a greater extent of whether vessels truly meet Faroese and international standards governing the emission of pollutants, safety and legal fisheries. In addition to digital control systems, any vessel that carries out activities pursuant to Faroese legislation in international waters around the Faroe Islands or enters Faroese port should be subject to onboard inspections.

- > Digital monitoring and checks of systems, emissions, as well as permits and licenses pursuant to international and Faroese legislation will be tightened.
- > Onboard vessel inspections will be prioritised by the Faroese Maritime Authority and VØRN (MRCC Tórshavn) in order to ensure that notified conditions correspond to actual conditions on board.

# LIVING MARINE RESOURCES

Living marine resources are a mainstay of the economy in large areas of the Arctic region. For the Faroe Islands fisheries are of critical economic and social significance.

**The Faroe Islands therefore strive to ensure that all marine resources are harvested on a sustainable basis and that catches are fully utilised.** In intergovernmental cooperation in the High North the Faroe Islands are a key partner in the management of some of the world's largest migratory stocks.

Fisheries in the Arctic context constitute a framework for countless opportunities for sustainable economic growth, and cooperation on research and knowledge about life in the ocean. The objective of cross-border fisheries cooperation must be to manage fisheries sustainably while ensuring that due consideration is given to safeguarding the marine environment and life in the ocean.

**The Faroe Islands therefore cooperates actively to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing,** including through NEAFC and NAFO.

Faroese vessels have for decades fished in some of the world's northernmost fishing grounds and these fisheries have played an important role in the development of Faroese society. The Faroe Islands must therefore act as a unifying and proactive partner with regards to potential new fishing grounds in the Arctic Ocean.

In 2018 the Faroe Islands, together with the EU, Greenland, Iceland, Japan, Canada, China, Norway, Russia and the US signed an Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in International Waters in the Central Arctic Ocean. The Agreement is initially in force for 16 years. The contracting parties cooperate on a joint agenda for scientific research and monitoring, and the Faroe Islands take an active part in this work. This approach is of significance should circumstances in time allow for organised and sustainable fisheries in international waters in the Central Arctic Ocean. Under such circumstances, the Faroe Islands



will take on an active role in establishing a regional fisheries management organisation to manage fisheries in the region or work towards the inclusion of such management under one of the existing fisheries management organisations in which the Faroe Islands are a member.

- > The Faroe Islands have a clear and active role in multi-lateral consultations regarding the management of any future fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, so that any new rights are secured in an equitable manner and potential future fisheries are based on the best available science.
- > The Faroe Islands prioritise following the work of ICES in the Arctic region and play an active role in any activities which may pave the way for future fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, to the extent that these are within the framework of the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in International Waters in the Central Arctic Ocean.

As an independent coastal state the Faroe Islands currently exploit migratory fish stocks which may, given the changes the oceans are

undergoing, be present in the Central Arctic Ocean in the future. The Faroe Islands therefore insist on maintaining our independent role in coastal state negotiations regarding migratory stocks, and will play an active role in ensuring that the rights to these resources follow the stocks, should their migration change.

- > The Faroe Islands prioritise research efforts in the Arctic region, including the Central Arctic Ocean, and work to foster specialisation and knowledge that is relevant to activities in the Arctic.
- > The Faroe Islands recognise the rights of others to harvest their marine resources, as well as being committed to finding lasting solutions between coastal states on the management of shared fish stocks in the High North.

The Faroe Islands continue to assert our right to harvest living marine resources around Svalbard. This right is set out in the 1920 Svalbard Agreement, which includes the obligations Norway has towards the other parties.

Marine Mammals are utilised for food and other products in all of the Arctic countries, including in the Faroe Islands, where pilot whales and other cetaceans have been caught since the first settlement.

Traditional means of food production from local resources are an important supplement to the livelihoods of Faroe Islanders, as is also the case in many communities all around the Circumpolar North.

In the Faroe Islands it is considered both economically and environmentally responsible to make the most of local natural resources, and to maintain the knowledge required to make use of what nature provides in a harsh oceanic environment.

Pilot whales and other small whales represent one of few local sources of meat in the Faroe Islands, and they have over the centuries have enabled the Faroe Islands as an island nation to maintain a relatively high degree of self-sufficiency in food production.

With a shared commitment to the sustainable utilisation of marine mammals, the Faroe Islands together with Norway, Iceland, and Greenland founded the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) in 1992. NAMMCO provides a forum for regional cooperation on the conservation, sustainable use and scientific study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. NAMMCO is an IGO observer in the Arctic Council.



# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Flourishing living conditions in the Arctic are reliant on a diversity of economic opportunities and jobs, which encourage people to move to and thrive in the region.

**Now that the Arctic Region is in undergoing change it is crucial that challenges be translated into opportunities.** Faroese businesses are active around the globe and are progressive, innovative and foster development. This is especially true when it comes to developing distinct solutions to the circumstances of an island nation and finding uniquely Faroese solutions which can also be well suited to meet demands on much larger markets. It is necessary to encourage foreign investment in local solutions that ensure safe and sustainable development and growth in the future.

## TOURISM

The Faroe Islands cooperate on sustainable tourism development in the Arctic. The Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland have for many years cooperated in the North Atlantic Tourism Association to foster tourism development in this vast Arctic region. With new navigation routes and considerably improved opportunities for aviation in the Arctic, there is a basis for even greater growth in tourism.

Competition between countries, airports and port cities could quickly place enormous pressure on the tourist industry. The Arctic is an expensive and challenging area to travel to and if development is to be environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, it is imperative that cooperation, agreements, and balanced frameworks in the Arctic ensure a high standard in every link.

In this regard it is also crucial to establish standards for the tourist industry and foster the conditions needed to ensure sustainability and a positive contribution by the tourist industry to economic development and the positive reputation of the Arctic as a travel destination.

Business tourism could grow to constitute a significant contribution to the overall tourist industry in the Faroe Islands.

## AQUACULTURE

The world's population is growing and governments, researchers, and industry in all corners of the globe are looking for new sustainable solutions to ensure that everyone has enough food on their plate. **In the ocean there are enormous, unharnessed opportunities to farm fish and seaweed for human consumption and harness what is not directly used for food to produce proteins and other high-quality derivatives.** world class and have been best-in-class for years with the highest yields and low mortality. **Faroese experience and know-how can also benefit other countries that are starting to develop their aquaculture industry.**

Faroese seaweed farming companies are also at the vanguard. Seaweed cultivation as an industry is still relatively new, but the results so far have attracted attention from around the globe. In research, development and best practice solutions ground-breaking Faroese seaweed farming is poised to lead the way in expanding an innovative industry in the Arctic.

The clean Arctic seawater is a guarantee for the finest quality. **The seaweed industry is growing, and both the Faroe Islands and the Arctic region are well placed to become a commercial and knowledge hub for seaweed cultivation and value-added seaweed products.**

## RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

Cooperation between the research sector and aquaculture industry is of paramount importance for harnessing the wealth of opportunities in aquaculture. Of particular relevance is Fiskaaling, which has the stated objective of generating knowledge for sustainable aquaculture. This is a vision of continued sustainable development in aquaculture. With full respect for the ecosystems in fjords and the ocean, and due regard for other industries and society, it is possible to reap considerably greater and lasting returns from aquaculture.

Faroese industry and Faroese research and innovation environment are in a position to jointly enrich any Arctic cooperation on aquaculture and, more broadly, on the sustainable harnessing of the ocean. **Alongside Faroese industry, Faroese institutions and collaborations such as Fiskaaling, Faroe Marine Research Institute, Environment Agency, Faroese Food and Veterinary Authority, Deildin fyri arbeiðis- og almannaheilsu (Department of Occupational and Public Health) and iNOVA, can jointly offer the Faroe Islands in the Arctic and to the world as a knowledge hub for sustainable growth from the ocean.**

## GEAR AND TECHNOLOGY FOR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Faroese companies produce advanced gear and technology for the maritime industry, fisheries and aquaculture, which are in use around the globe. These companies have managed to quickly adapt to changed and more stringent requirements, and produce world-class equipment, gear, and technology, such as trawl doors, trawls and aquaculture nets and aquaculture

cages, as well as high tech solutions for steering instruments and equipment used in production and transport.

## CONSTRUCTION

Some Faroese companies have experience undertaking construction projects in the Arctic. Their experience working in tough Faroese weather conditions, coupled with the highly educated and flexible Faroese workforce, is eminently suited to the challenges of the Arctic. This is an area that Faroese companies with the above advantage could explore, should a need present itself.

## ICT

Industrial development today requires skills in information and communication technology at the highest level. The prime resources in the ICT sector are knowledge, creativity, and experience, and it is therefore crucial for these industries that we have an education system that is at the forefront in every aspect and at every level.

The Faroese ICT sector participates actively in developing Talgildu Føroyum, the National Digitalisation Programme of the Faroe Islands, which provides the people and industry of the Faroe Islands with access to a series of public and private services. Faroese telecommunications solutions have also for many years been supplied to both ships and the offshore industry. **The Faroe Islands have experience and concrete solutions to offer other small and remote societies and industry sectors in both technological social development and telecommunications.**

Satellite and space technology are of steadily growing importance, and in the Arctic context space and satellite technology could play a significant role in several areas including digitalisation, monitoring, and research. The Faroe Islands are monitoring these trends, with the view to identifying opportunities for collaboration.

**The Faroe Islands wish to promote increased Arctic cooperation, including jointly developing ICT skills and creating the best possible conditions for entrepreneurs and for growth in the ICT industry.**

Skúlanet is a joint administration and service system, which will develop and run a single efficient and safe ICT network for the entire educational system in the Faroe Islands.

Skúkanet will solve the complex ICT challenges faced by the educational institutions, boosting cooperation between these through well-functioning and safe ITC system. The key words are safety, synergy, standardisation, and the benefits of large-scale operation.

## SHIPPING

The Faroe Islands today have a diverse merchant fleet, shipping companies and crews, who work in all corners of the world, as well as good comprehensive services for the maritime industry. The Faroe Islands International Ship Register (FAS) has developed into a recognised and competitive ship register, meaning that many preconditions are in place for the Faroe Islands to position itself as an attractive Arctic service and port hub to the maritime industry.



## BURÐARDYGT VINNULÍV

### **Burðardygt Vinnulív (Sustainable Business)**

is an organisation of twelve Faroese companies with the objective of developing more sustainable processes for companies with a special view to three concrete challenges: climate change, the health of the ocean, and loss of biodiversity. Through cooperation the organisation works to contribute to achieving UN SDGs 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life below Water), and 15 (Life on Land) faster and with greater impact than the companies could have achieved separately. In January 2021 the

companies committed to working together for at least three years in order to develop a strategic method, which identifies the risks and opportunities arising from these challenges. The five main objectives are to: become wiser and more capable, develop sustainable processes through a strategic long-term plan, cooperate, participate, and not least inspire others to also prioritise these goals.



# Vakstrarforum

**Vakstrarforum (Growth Forum)** was an initiative launched in February 2021 with the aim of encouraging added value in a number of important sectors, traditional industries and alternative industries of the future in a sustainable way.

In addition to the Prime Minister and other relevant government ministers, Vakstrarforum included members with expertise in different industry sectors, the labour market, research, innovation, energy, and sustainability.

Vakstrarforum has now completed its work, which has resulted in six reports, focussed on the ocean, ICT, business tourism, maritime service industry, education and the labour market, and a greener Faroes. The six reports include a total of 164 specific recommendations for sustainable growth initiatives in the Faroes.



# CULTURE AND SOCIETY

## Culture shapes both identity and social development in the Arctic.

Culture shapes both identity and social development in the Arctic. Greater respect for the diversity of cultures around the Arctic and stronger cross-border cultural exchange can play a key role in the well-being and growth in Arctic communities. **Culture, heritage, the arts and creative industries should be given high priority in the Arctic context.**

When countries have a shared understanding of the importance of culture and arts for a well-functioning democracy, and when collaboration in the cultural sector is active and dynamic, this also stimulates collaboration in other areas. Education and educational exchange programmes, from primary education to university education, also play an important role in this context.

The November 2021 declaration by the Nordic Ministers of Culture pointed out that arts and culture are a basis for sustainable development, and an important aspect in the promotion of international environmental and climate change cooperation. This fundamental role of culture is equally emphasised by UNESCO, where the Faroe Islands are associate member. The Faroe Islands are working towards inclusion in the EU cultural programme Creative Europe. The Faroe Islands would support the establishment of a circumpolar forum for cultural exchange.





## 17 objectives

- The Faroe Islands work to ensure that security and stability continue to prevail in the Arctic.
- The Arctic Council is the primary forum for intergovernmental cooperation in the Arctic.
- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the foundation for some of the most important matters in international affairs, and thus strategically valuable for the Faroe Islands in the context of the Arctic.
- Temperature rise in the Arctic region must be significantly reduced.
- The biological diversity of the Arctic region must be well managed and responsibly conserved.
- Emissions of harmful substances must be reduced.
- Cross-border cooperation on research, knowledge advancement and education in the Arctic context and research on the Arctic in general should benefit the peoples in the region.
- The Faroe Islands seek to reinforce cooperation and coordination between research and knowledge institutions in the Faroe Islands and relevant international and individual research and knowledge institutions abroad.
- The Faroe Islands will contribute to the generation of new data, information and knowledge, which is needed to realise the aims of the Ocean Decade vision.
- The Faroe Islands will prioritise the further development of oil and chemical spill preparedness and response in Faroese waters.
- The Faroe Islands therefore strive to ensure that all marine resources are harvested on a sustainable basis and that catches are fully utilised.
- The Faroe Islands therefore cooperates actively to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.
- The Faroe Islands prioritise research efforts in the Arctic region, including the Central Arctic Ocean, and work to foster specialisation and knowledge that is relevant to activities in the Arctic.
- Businesses and industry have an important role in using innovation to translate challenges into opportunities as the Arctic is undergoing change.
- The Faroe Islands will continue to be an international leader in aquaculture, maritime services and high-tech solutions to ocean related activities.
- The Faroe Islands wish to promote increased Arctic cooperation, including jointly developing ICT skills and creating the best possible conditions for entrepreneurs and for growth in the ICT industry.
- Culture, heritage, the arts and creative industries should be given high priority in the Arctic context.