The Norwegian Government's Arctic Policy

People, opportunities and Norwegian interests in the Arctic

Abstract





Preface

Norway's Arctic policy revolves around security, stability and interest-based international cooperation. For us, foreign and domestic policy converge in the Arctic.

Climate change presents unprecedented global challenges with a particularly strong impact in the Arctic, but this is also accompanied by widespread opportunities for reform and adaptation to a new reality. However, international cooperation is under pressure and protectionism is on the rise. And now, and for some time to come, the multi-layered crisis caused by the corona pandemic will have an impact on all areas of social, economic and political cooperation – in the Arctic as well.

This white paper gives broad consideration to domestic policy issues in the Arctic. North Norway accounts for 35 % of Norway's mainland territory, and 9 % of Norway's population lives north of the Arctic Circle. Responsible economic growth and future-oriented jobs in the north are therefore a matter of national interest. Considering Norway's geopolitical location, this also has strategic significance beyond the demographics. Further developing North Norway as a strong, dynamic and highly competent region is the best way to safeguard Norwegian interests in the Arctic.

Since the early 1970s, urbanisation has led to a relative population decrease in the north compared to the rest of the country, and the last few years have seen a net population decline in North Norway. Dealing with this, and possibly reversing it, will require abandoning traditional approaches that have failed to deliver and seeking new solutions instead.

Resilient towns and municipalities, sustainable business development, infrastructure, competence-building and security are vital to succeed in maintaining a strong region. Sami culture is a valuable part of our national historical heritage in the north and an important component in our Arctic policy. These factors are important to the future and opportunities for young people north of the Arctic Circle. Input from the youth panel established in connection with this white paper is reflected throughout the document.

While the growing international interest in the Arctic creates new opportunities for Norwegian cooperation, it also presents a number of challenges. The Norwegian Government will continue to emphasise the importance of the rule of law and strong multilateral structures. There is a well-functioning legal regime in place in the Arctic. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the fundamental framework, for instance as regards environmental protection, research, the delimitation of the outer limits of the continental shelf, and shipping. Norway supports cooperation with non-Arctic states based on respect for international law and within the framework of existing cooperation structures.

NATO is the cornerstone of Norway's security and our defence and deterrence policy is based on effective national defence and the guarantee of Allied reinforcements in the event of war or crisis.

The white paper underlines the importance of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation with our neighbours and partners in the Arctic. The Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Northern Dimension and the EU's cross-border programmes provide a solid architecture for dialogue and practical cooperation.

The impacts of climate change in the Arctic are affecting countries both in and outside the region. The UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement provide the overall direction for Norway's Arctic policy. We must find a good balance between the exploitation and protection of living marine resources. As maritime nations, the Arctic states have a special responsibility to take action to ensure healthy and productive oceans.

A successful Arctic policy will depend on experience, understanding and facts, and this white paper is based on over a hundred conversations with relevant stakeholders. The Arctic remains Norway's most important area of strategic responsibility, and the Government will work to maintain its established security policy, promote observant diplomacy and cultivate a strong, innovative and sustainable North Norway. Our political choices in the north will be founded on presence, vigilance and knowledge.

Erna Solberg,
Prime Minister

Ine Eriksen Søreide,
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Linda Hofstad Helleland,
Minister of Regional Development and Digitalisation

Iselin Nybø,
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People, opportunities



1. Introduction

1.1 Overarching goals

Norway's Arctic policy focuses on the international picture, relations with neighbouring countries in the Barents region, the northernmost regions of Finland, Norway and Sweden (known in Nordic countries as the North Calotte), and the development of North Norway. Further developing North Norway as a strong, dynamic and highly competent region is the best way to safeguard Norwegian interests in the Arctic. The region is rich in natural resources that contribute to economic growth for the country as a whole, and the economy and social development of this region are therefore a matter of national importance.

THE OVERARCHING GOALS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IN THE ARCTIC ARE:

- Peace, stability and predictability
- International cooperation and the international legal order
- Integrated, ecosystem-based management
- Increased job creation and value creation
- Closer cooperation between the business sector and knowledge institutions
- Effective welfare schemes and ensuring that North Norway is an attractive place to live

Norway's Arctic policy is based on a long tradition of safeguarding Norway's interests in the north through broad-based international cooperation. The Arctic will continue to be Norway's most important area of strategic responsibility. The Government will maintain its engagement in broad-based, proactive international cooperation in the north and in global arenas where the Arctic is discussed. This includes facilitating cross-border local and regional cooperation in the north.

Some 9 % of Norway's population lives north of the Arctic Circle, a greater proportion than in any other country in the world. North Norway accounts for 35 % of Norway's mainland territory. The region is home to some of Norway's leading academic and research institutions in areas such as marine research, fisheries and natural resource management, climate change and environmental research, Arctic innovation and sustainable ocean-based industries. For many Norwegians, the Arctic provides both a home and a livelihood.

The white paper does not provide a list of all political initiatives or measures that could conceivably be relevant for or in the Arctic. The Government's aims and ambitions in the white paper will therefore also be followed up in future sectoral and budgetary processes.

The input on which the white paper is based has largely been obtained through dialogue with counties, municipalities, the Sámediggi (Sami parliament) and key stakeholders from the business sector, and various organisations and knowledge institutions in the north. A dedicated youth panel, set up in connection with the preparation of the white paper, has provided a report with recommendations. All these partners have given their perspectives on key challenges and opportunities in the north.

1.2 Definitions

The Arctic: In the white paper, 'the Arctic' refers to the sea and land areas between the North Pole and the Arctic Circle. This is the most common definition of the Arctic



(for practical reasons, we have chosen to follow the county boundary and have included the whole of Nordland county in our definition). Within the Arctic, there are large differences in terms of population density, business activities, and access to the open sea.

The High North: The term 'High North' has its origins in the policy initiatives that were implemented under the two previous white papers on this region and a number of related strategy documents. In geographical terms, the 'High North' refers to the land and sea areas between southern Helgeland in the south to the Greenland Sea in the west and the Pechora Sea (the southeastern corner of the Barents Sea) in the east. This term has mainly been used in a geopolitical context and is closely associated with efforts to safeguard Norwegian interests through various initiatives and cross-border cooperation in the North Calotte region and the Barents region as a whole.

North Norway: Traditionally, Norway's northernmost region has not been referred to as the Arctic, but it is now established practice to refer to North Norway as part of both the Arctic and the High North. Due to the Gulf Stream, the climatic conditions in the Norwegian part of the Arctic, including temperature and ice cover, differ widely from those in other parts of the region.

In the white paper, Svalbard is mentioned in cases where this has relevance for our capabilities on the mainland,

for example in the areas of polar and ocean research, meteorology and emergency preparedness. The Government's Svalbard policy is set out in a separate white paper.

1.3 The main features of Norway's Arctic policy in the years ahead

Maintaining a consistent and predictable approach: In light of the increasingly complex foreign and security policy situation in the north, it is essential for us to maintain a consistent and predictable approach and a strong and credible defence in cooperation with our allies and partners. The significance of security and defence in the Arctic is increasing, and strengthening Norway's defence capability in the north is a priority for the Government. A substantial part of the Norwegian Armed Forces' operational structure is located in the region. Norway has a long tradition of successfully balancing its various interests in the north.

Highlighting the benefits of cooperation: The growing international interest in the Arctic has led to a greater tendency to focus predominantly on the various competing interests, while cooperation forums that have functioned well for decades are being overlooked or described as outdated. The Government will encourage Norwegian knowledge institutions to continue to play a part in ensuring that the international debate about the Arctic is based on facts and sound analyses, not on myths. In this way, Norwegian research and knowledge communities can participate in the efforts to promote Norwegian interests in the north.

Promoting respect for international law: The Arctic is sometimes portrayed as an unregulated or even lawless region. The impacts of the melting of the Arctic ice on countries outside the region are cited by some as a reason to view developments in the Arctic as a shared global concern ('what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic'). This is being used as an argument for giving non-Arctic states a general right to participate in the management of the Arctic. The rights, interests and options available to non-Arctic states vary depending on what they are seeking to achieve in the different areas of jurisdiction. There is consensus among the members of the Arctic Council that international law applies in the Arctic.



Arctic Frontiers is one of the most important international platforms for promoting Norway's positions on Arctic issues. Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide in discussion with US Senator for Alaska Lisa Murkowski, BBC journalist Stephen Sackur, President of the Sámediggi Aili Keskitalo, former Finnish Finance Minister Katri Kulmuni and Director of the Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research Tore Furevik.

PHOTO: ARCTIC FRONTIERS

Taking a broad-based approach to climate change and the environment in the Arctic: The rapid warming of the Arctic is endangering Arctic species and ecosystems that are dependent on ice and snow, and also poses a threat to local communities and the way of life and culture of indigenous peoples. The rising temperature in the Arctic is primarily due to the increase in global greenhouse gas emissions, not to human activity in the region. This underscores the importance of the Paris Agreement and the need for follow-up and implementation. The Government will take steps to restructure the Norwegian economy and facilitate Norway's transformation into a low-carbon society by the middle of this century, and will continue to assist other countries in their efforts to cut emissions.

Working towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals: The SDGs provide the overall direction for Norway's Arctic policy. In addition, North Norway has both resources and expertise of relevance to the EU's European Green Deal,

including in the areas of blue-green technology and green transformation. This will be important for businesses and employment levels both in Norway and in other European countries in the years ahead. The Government's ocean policy focuses on global leadership, clean and productive oceans, business development, knowledge and technology, and sound management.

Promoting job creation and value creation are overarching goals of Norway's domestic Arctic policy. However, this white paper is being presented in the midst of a global health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The crisis is putting pressure on public finances, but has also highlighted the need to accelerate the process of restructuring the economy.

The Government will promote closer cooperation between the business community and the higher education sector, with a view to creating attractive jobs in the north. In this context, it is important to expand cooperation with the other Nordic countries, which rank high internationally in research and innovation-based business development.



The Norwegian Coast Guard has tasks relating to acute pollution preparedness and response, and search and rescue. The Coast Guard also plays an important role in exercising Norwegian sovereignty and authority both in coastal areas and in Norway's large Arctic sea areas.
PHOTO: NORWEGIAN COAST GUARD



Europe is a major market for the Norwegian aquaculture and fisheries sector, and virtually the entire industry in North Norway has stressed the vital importance of the EEA Agreement for ensuring food security and access to the European market for Norwegian seafood.

Norway must address fundamental challenges relating to continuing population decline in North Norway. New solutions are needed, as is a strong focus on fostering viable communities in the north. The Government will promote the development of environmentally-friendly towns and cities across the country that provide a good quality of life for people and good conditions for businesses. With this in mind, the Government has initiated work on a national strategy for small cities and urban centres.

Promoting and supporting the development of a diverse cultural and sports sector has always been a key element of the efforts to ensure that North Norway is an attractive place to live. Raising awareness of the history of North Norway as part of our national cultural heritage, from antiquity to thousand-year-old, coastal trading routes to the Second World War and the post-war reconstruction years, is an important part of this work.

Being at the forefront of technological development: Technological development continues to be a key goal of Norway's Arctic policy, and is vital for reaching all our goals in the north. Norway is well placed to make use of new



Sami culture is a valuable part of our national historical heritage. In this picture prime minister Erna Solberg meets representatives of indigenous peoples at the High North Dialogue conference in Bodø.

PHOTO: HIGH NORTH NEWS

technologies in areas where we already have cutting-edge expertise, such as health, energy, petroleum, maritime and marine industries, and the public sector. In North Norway, better access to data on the oceans, space, climate change and health will open up new opportunities for promoting the sustainable use of natural resources and increasing value creation.

Preserving the identity and culture of national indigenous communities: Indigenous issues are a priority in Norway's Arctic policy. Sami culture is a valuable part of our national historical heritage. In recent years, Sami art and culture have received growing attention and recognition both nationally and internationally. The Government will explore new ways of strengthening Sami culture, cultural industries and tourism, in consultation with the Sámediggi. This may have positive spin-off effects on job creation and value creation across the country. As an indigenous people, the Sami have a right to be consulted in matters that could affect them directly.

Promoting Kven/Norwegian Finn identity and culture: The Kvens/Norwegian Finns have long ties to Norway and have left their mark on the historical development of the Arctic. Today, Kven organisations and communities are working to revitalise Kven language and culture. The Kven language is recognised as a minority language in Norway. The Government will facilitate the preservation of the Kven language and Kven/Norwegian Finn culture and society.



2. The international legal framework

International law applies in the Arctic just as it does elsewhere in the world. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea constitutes the basic international legal framework for all maritime activity, including in the Arctic. In order to achieve the Arctic states' common goal of maintaining stability and predictability in the region, it is essential that all states respect international law.

Most global treaties and instruments apply in the Arctic. National sovreignty is undisputed in almost all areas of the Arctic. Only a few sea areas are beyond national jurisdiction. The Arctic is a peaceful region in which states display a willingness to cooperate and to resolve contentious issues in accordance with the principles of international law.

2.1 The Law of the Sea

The Ilulissat Declaration adopted in 2008 by the five coastal states around the central Arctic Ocean – Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the US – confirmed that the Law of the Sea provides the framework for managing activities in the Arctic Ocean. This ministerial declaration played an important role in clarifying the international legal framework in the Arctic, for instance as regards environmental protection, research, the delimitation of the outer limits of the continental shelf, and shipping. The coastal states reaffirmed their commitment to the orderly settlement of possible overlapping claims to maritime areas. The fact that the Law of the Sea applies in the central Arctic

Ocean provides a basis for orderly, predictable relations between the coastal states.

In the decades ahead, a reduction in the ice cover may make fishing activities possible in the central Arctic Ocean. In October 2018, the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean was signed by the five coastal states surrounding the central Arctic Ocean and five distant water fishing nations and entities – the EU, China, Iceland, Japan and South Korea. The agreement does not prohibit fishing in the international part of the Arctic Ocean, but the parties undertake not to permit their vessels to fish in that area until international conservation and management measures have been established.

A number of global agreements relating to fisheries, shipping and the marine environment specify rights and duties in all maritime areas. These also apply in the Arctic. The 1995 United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement sets out detailed rules on fisheries management beyond the 200-mile zones. It also sets out principles for the conservation and management of fish stocks, such as the precautionary approach. The agreement attaches importance to subregional and regional mechanisms for cooperation on fisheries management in international waters.

The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (the OSPAR Convention), which was adopted in 1992, provides a comprehensive framework for protection of the marine environment, including in parts of the Arctic.

Negotiations are ongoing in the UN on a new international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. This agreement will also be relevant for the Arctic. The process aims to strengthen the framework for international marine management by establishing rules for the use of area-based management tools, including marine protected areas and environmental impact assessments. Norway is working to ensure that the agreement is based on the existing Law of the Sea architecture, and that it complements other sectorial and regional mechanisms such as those of the international Maritime Organization (IMO), the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the OSPAR Commission, the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) and the Arctic Council.



A number of global agreements relating to fisheries, shipping and the marine environment specify rights and duties in all maritime areas. These also apply in the Arctic, where coast guard cooperation is an important factor.

PHOTO: THOMAS NILSEN, THE BARENTS OBSERVER

2.2 Norway's sea areas

Norway's 200-mile zones

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Norway has sovereign rights to explore, exploit, conserve and manage living and non-living natural resources in a zone extending up to 200 nautical miles from its baselines.

Norway established a 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone off the mainland coast in 1976. In 1977, in accordance with the Act of 17 December 1976 relating to the Economic Zone of Norway, a fisheries protection zone was established around Svalbard. The fisheries zone around Jan Mayen was established in 1980.

The Norwegian continental shelf

Norway exercises sovereign rights over its continental shelf for the purposes of exploring and exploiting natural resources. No one may exploit petroleum or mineral deposits or sedentary species on the Norwegian continental shelf without Norway's consent.

The Norwegian continental shelf extends at least as far as 200 nautical miles from the mainland, Svalbard and Jan Mayen. In the Banana Hole, the Loophole and the area north of Svalbard, the Norwegian continental shelf extends beyond 200 nautical miles. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in New York confirmed this in its recommendation in 2009.

Maritime delimitation

In cases where a state's exclusive economic zone and/or the continental shelf overlaps with those of another state, delimitation agreements are needed. In the Arctic, Norway has entered into delimitation agreements with Iceland, Denmark (Greenland) and Russia. Norway has also signed agreements with Iceland and Denmark (the Faroe Islands) on the delimitation of the continental shelf in the Banana Hole.

In 1980, following extensive negotiations, an agreement was concluded with Iceland on the establishment of a Conciliation Commission on the Continental Shelf area between Iceland and Jan Mayen. The subsequent delimitation agreement was signed in 1981.

Negotiations with Denmark on delimitation of the area between Jan Mayen and Greenland were conducted from 1980 to 1988, when Denmark brought the case before the International Court of Justice. The Court began the process of delimitation by drawing a provisional median line that basically divided the disputed area down the middle, but then adjusted this to take account of the marked difference in the lengths of the coasts of Greenland and Jan Mayen. The result was that Norway received 57 % of the disputed area, while Denmark received 43 %. The subsequent agreement on maritime delimitation was signed in 1995.



Andøya Space provides a wide variety of services and technologies, including launch service for sounding rockets, long duration balloons, payload engineering services and scientific and ground-based instrumentation.

PHOTO: TROND ABRAHAMSEN, ANDØYA SPACE

In 1997, the delimitation of a small sea area between Jan Mayen, Greenland and Iceland was agreed, following negotiations between the parties. With this, the entire extent of the fisheries zone around Jan Mayen was settled.

In 2006, an agreement was concluded between Norway and Denmark together with the Home Rule Government of Greenland on the delimitation of the continental shelf and the fisheries zones in the area between Greenland and Svalbard.

In October 2019, Norway signed two agreements, with Iceland and Denmark/the Faroe Islands respectively, on delimitation of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles in the southern part of the Banana Hole.

The maritime boundary with Russia in the Varangerfjord area was agreed between Norway and the Soviet Union

in 1957. With effect from 2004, the breadth of Norway's territorial sea was extended from 4 to 12 nautical miles and a contiguous zone extending to 24 nautical miles was established. In 2007, Norway and Russia reached agreement on a 73 kilometre-long delimitation line in the Varangerfjord area.

In 2010, after extensive negotiations over a period of 40 years, Norway and Russia signed the Treaty on Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean. The Treaty entered into force in July 2011. In addition to establishing the delimitation line, the agreement contains provisions that ensure the continuation of the close Norwegian-Russian fisheries cooperation, as well as provisions concerning cooperation on the exploitation of any transboundary hydrocarbon deposits.

2.3 Norway's land borders in the north

New border agreement with Russia

The Norwegian-Russian land border extends from the Varangerfjord to the Krokfjellet border point, where the Norwegian-Russian, the Norwegian-Finnish and the Finnish-Russian borders meet. The border was reviewed in the period 2009–2018, and a new border agreement that provides a detailed and updated description of the border based on modern technology entered into force on 8 February 2019.

Cross-border reindeer husbandry

When the 1972 Reindeer Grazing Convention between Norway and Sweden expired in 2005, a codicil to the 1751 border treaty with Sweden once again provided the legal basis for regulating cross-border reindeer husbandry. A new reindeer grazing convention was negotiated between Norway and Sweden in 2009, and was signed by the relevant ministers. Since then, ratification of the convention has been under consideration. A new reindeer fence convention between Norway and Finland entered into force on 1 January 2017.

Nordic Sami Convention

Sweden, Finland and Norway reached agreement on a text for a Nordic Sami Convention in 2016. The overall objective of the convention is to strengthen the rights of the Sami people so that they can safeguard and develop their culture, language and way of life, unhindered as far as possible by national borders. The Sami parliaments in the three countries provided input and were involved throughout the process right up until the negotiations were concluded. The Sami Parliamentary Council has since expressed a desire to make certain revisions to the text. The Government's view is that the convention text is satisfactory as it stands. The Government is therefore not proposing to reopen the negotiations. The Government is ready to work to move this matter forwards towards signing and ratification, and has invited the Sámediggi to give its support to the draft, countersigned convention text, so that this work can begin.



3. Norwegian foreign and security policy in the Arctic

3.1 The strategic importance of the Arctic

The stability of the Arctic has long remained relatively unaffected by conflicts in other areas of the world. However, current global trends are leading to growing international interest in the region and a greater focus on Norway's strategic location. The changing security policy landscape in recent years and the melting of the ice in the Arctic Ocean are also playing a part. Nor can the possibility be ruled out that increased tensions in other places will affect the situation in the Arctic.

Cooperation in the Arctic functions smoothly in many important areas. However, there have been some challenging developments relating to the defence and security policy situation. This is primarily due to Russia's military

modernisation and increased activity in the north. The general deterioration in Russia's relationship with NATO and Western countries as a result of Russia's annexation of Crimea and involvement in eastern Ukraine is also a contributing factor.

Russia has expanded its civilian and military infrastructure in the Arctic. It has developed new military capabilities that strengthen its response capacity and enhanced its ability to strike targets over longer distances and with greater precision. In addition, Russia is demonstrating an ability to make use of a broader range of instruments. In particular, the new generation of strategic submarines, new missile programmes and the revival of the bastion defence concept aimed at protecting Russia's strategic capabilities as far as the Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) Gap could have major implications for NATO's ability to keep the sea routes over the North Atlantic open. This is important to allow for Allied reinforcement of Europe in the event of a crisis.

Russia's military build-up and military modernisation pose a challenge to the security of Norway and other Allied countries. As a result, the US and other Allies are showing a growing interest in increasing their presence in the north in order to monitor developments in the Russian part of the region. Recently, US strategic bomber aircraft have been carrying out regular flights over the Barents Sea, and in 2020, US Navy and UK Royal Navy surface vessels conducted operations in the area for the first time since the 1980s. Allied activity and presence, including in the Arctic, is welcomed by Norway. Norway's security and defence policy is based on the guarantee of support from Allied countries in the event of war or crisis. This support requires knowledge of the region and of what is needed to operate here. It is therefore essential that Norwegian and Allied forces train and conduct exercises both in and outside Norway. At the same time, it is important to ensure that any military activity is carried out in a way that promotes security and stability in the region. Norway



On the left: The AlaskaNor project seeks to increase knowledge about opportunities for blue growth in Alaska and North Norway. It is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nordland County Council. On the right: Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum has collaborated with the Anchorage Museum in Alaska for years. Here from the opening of the exhibition 'View From Up Here', which focuses on the lives of people in the Arctic.
PHOTO: HIGH NORTH CENTER, NORD UNIVERSITY (PHOTO ON THE LEFT), NORDNORSK KUNSTMUSEUM (PHOTO ON THE RIGHT)

therefore considers it important to do its part to reduce tensions by ensuring predictability and transparency with regard to such activity.

As a result of climate change and the melting of the ice in the Arctic Ocean, the northern coastlines of Russia, Canada and the US are gradually losing some of the natural protection provided until recently by year-round ice. This could lead to changes in threat assessments and thus military-strategic thinking. The melting of the ice also paves the way for an increase in commercial activity in the Arctic. The extent and implications of this activity will have to be assessed on an ongoing basis. A significant increase in commercial activity will not necessarily in itself have a negative impact on the security and military situation in the region.

When it comes to shipping in the Arctic, the picture that is emerging is twofold: the volume of transit traffic between Asia and Europe along the Northeast Passage will remain low for the foreseeable future, whereas destination traffic will rise. Russian and Chinese ambitions to transport more



The Government will maintain investments in the Norwegian Armed Forces and is strengthening emergency preparedness and Norway's defence capability in the north. Joint military exercises with Allies are important for our security.

PHOTO: NORWEGIAN ARMED FORCES

goods through the Northeast Passage have led to renewed international attention to the potential advantages and disadvantages of using this route as opposed to traditional trade routes. Russia has also taken steps to regulate foreign shipping traffic. Any discussion of the development of the Northeast Passage will need to consider the political, legal, economic and environmental aspects.

3.2 Norwegian security policy

Maintaining a balance between deterrence and reassurance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and subsequently Russia, has been a key component of Norwegian security policy for decades. Norway's defence and deterrence policy is based on the maintenance of an effective national defence and the guarantee of Allied reinforcements in the event of war or crisis. Our guidelines for foreign military activity on Norwegian territory and other policies of reassurance vis-à-vis Russia serve to enhance predictability and reduce tensions. These well-established principles of our security policy will remain unchanged, but are adjusted as needed to take account of developments in the security situation.

The role played by the Norwegian Armed Forces in exercising sovereignty and authority and providing situational awareness in the north is an important element of the Government's Arctic policy. We are strengthening our presence in the Arctic by investing in strategic capabilities, most notably F-35 fighter jets, P-8 maritime patrol aircraft and new submarines. These capabilities will enhance our ability to achieve situational awareness and exercise sovereignty in peacetime and will strengthen our defence in times of war.

Allied exercises and training activity in the north are a sign of solidarity between the Allied countries. Norway attaches importance to enhancing the ability of the Norwegian Armed Forces to plan and carry out joint operations with Allied forces in the north, while at the same time maintaining and strengthening Norway's national presence and activity in the region. Important elements of this work include ensuring that Allied countries have access to suitable areas for carrying out training and exercises in the north, promoting cooperation between Allied and Norwegian forces, and providing other support to visiting Allied forces. At the same time, it is important to seek to set clear parameters for Allied military activity in areas close to Norway in order to avoid any escalation in tensions. Continuous assessments are needed to balance these two considerations, and our approach will have to be adapted to the changing security environment.

In the increasingly complex security threat landscape that is emerging, state and non-state actors alike are using a wide array of instruments to carry out targeted, hostile campaigns, which involve both military and civilian actions. Our ability to withstand complex threats depends on good coordination and exchange of information across sectors. In addition to maintaining a good understanding of international factors that affect Norway, it is important to monitor how these factors are manifesting themselves in Norway, including in the north. The Norwegian Police Security Service has primary responsibility for following



up threats at the national level, focusing on actors that may pose a threat in Norway. The Norwegian National Security Authority plays a particularly important role in developing measures to safeguard Norway’s national security interests. Norway makes use of a wide range of instruments in its efforts to safeguard national security.

3.3 NATO

NATO is the cornerstone of Norway’s security, and the Alliance’s area of responsibility extends right up to the North Pole. Good situational awareness in the Arctic is vital for NATO to fulfil its responsibility for collective defence in this area too, in the event of a crisis or war. The Alliance’s new Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area provides a constructive framework for this. Norway has worked for many years to increase NATO’s focus on the North Atlantic and to highlight the importance of the maritime dimension and transatlantic reinforcements for Allied security. This will continue to be a priority in the years ahead.

In addition, Norway has been at the forefront of efforts to strengthen NATO’s command structure and enhance the Alliance’s capacity to plan and lead collective defence operations, including in our neighbouring areas. Particularly important in this context is NATO’s new Atlantic Command, established on the US east coast in Norfolk, Virginia, which among other things will have responsibility for protecting the sea lanes across the North Atlantic. The Joint Force Command Norfolk (JFCNF) is closely integrated with the US Second Fleet and shares the same command and staff structure. This further enhances cooperation and coordination and strengthens the ability of the command structure to fulfil its tasks. The development of NATO Graduated Response Plans for the reinforcement of Iceland, Norway and the northern sea areas is also an important element in safeguarding Norway’s security in the north.

3.4 The US

The US is Norway’s closest ally. In recent years, the US has shown a growing interest in the security policy aspects of developments in the Arctic. This is illustrated by US participation in various types of exercises. It is therefore important that Norway facilitates US participation in relevant activities.

Multilateral cooperation under the Arctic Council with the US and other permanent members will continue to be crucial. It is encouraging that the US clearly gives priority to this arena, as indicated by its active participation in the Council’s working groups. Norway cooperates closely with the US on current maritime issues in the Arctic, for example the process under the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to introduce a ban on the use of heavy fuel oil in the Arctic.

Norway has regular dialogue at senior official level with various parts of the US administration. There are frequent exchanges of visits between our two countries and study trips to Norway by key US Arctic stakeholder groups. Several delegations from the US Congress have visited the Norwegian part of the Arctic in recent years.

A number of universities and research institutions in Norway have long-term, dynamic collaborative projects with US research institutions and administrative agencies. Norway and the US also cooperate at the local level in the Arctic Mayors’ Forum, which brings together mayors from Arctic municipalities. There is close bilateral cooperation between indigenous communities in Norway and the US.

3.5 Russia

Over the past 30 years, Norway has developed broad-based cooperation with Russia in the north in areas such as fisheries, research, the environment, search and rescue, nuclear safety and security, health, education, business, energy and not least culture, people-to-people contacts and indigenous issues. The four bilateral commissions in the areas of economic cooperation, fisheries management, nuclear safety, and environmental protection deal with many issues relating to the Arctic.

However, as a result of Russia's violations of international law in Ukraine, Norway has suspended bilateral military cooperation, with the exception of cooperation in areas of particular importance to maritime safety, airspace security and stability in the north. The direct lines of communication between the Norwegian Joint Headquarters and Russia's Northern Fleet, cooperation between Norwegian and Russian coast guards and border guards, search-and-rescue cooperation, and the mechanisms under the Incidents at Sea (INCSEA) Agreement have been maintained. In recent years, Norway and Russia have carried out negotiations on an additional protocol to the INCSEA Agreement. Since 2019 there has been a channel of communication in place between senior defence officials in Oslo and Moscow to help prevent misunderstandings and undesirable incidents in connection with military activity. In the current situation, it is particularly important to further develop contact of this kind in the area of defence.

Fisheries cooperation in the Barents Sea is perhaps the best example of practical, mutually beneficial Norwegian-Russian cooperation and has been critical in ensuring sustainable management of the fish stocks in our northern sea areas. Norwegian-Russian cooperation on nuclear safety and security, which takes place under the Norwegian-Russian Commission for Nuclear Safety, has helped to make our part of the world safer for over 25 years. Norway attaches great importance to cooperation with Russia on environmental protection. The most important framework for this is the Joint Norwegian-Russian Commission on Environmental Protection.



Relations with Russia are an important element of Norwegian foreign policy. Practical bilateral cooperation with Russia is being continued in areas of common interest. The commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Eastern Finnmark in Kirkenes on 25 October 2019.
PHOTO: NORWEGIAN BARENTS SECRETARIAT

In 2018, as a follow-up to the maritime delimitation treaty between Norway and Russia, an agreement was signed as part of the energy dialogue between the two countries on the collection of seismic data up to and along the delimitation line on the continental shelf in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean. The agreement entered into force on 21 August 2019.

3.6 The Nordic region

Our Nordic neighbours play an active and constructive role in regional cooperation forums such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Council of Baltic Sea States, and the Northern Dimension. Even though there may be differing approaches and priorities, all the Nordic countries consider it important to pursue a knowledge-based Arctic policy.

Increasing knowledge development and expanding exchange of experience with our closest neighbours in the north will promote development throughout the northernmost regions of Finland, Norway and Sweden (known in Nordic countries as the North Calotte). There are more cross-border services encompassing three or more countries in the Nordic region than in any other area of Europe. The European Commission has presented recommendations for easing border obstacles between the northern regions of Sweden, Finland and Norway. Top priority will be given to improving transport along the east-west axis, strengthening labour market integration and further developing common digital public services.

Nordic defence and security policy cooperation in the north

Due to the geographical proximity to Russia, developments in the Arctic and the Baltic Sea should be viewed in a common strategic context. In 2018, under Norway's chairmanship of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO), a new ambitious vision, Vision 2025, was adopted setting out 16 specific targets for 2025. This was followed up by the subsequent Danish and Finnish chairmanships. Vision 2025 sets out the Nordic countries' intention to enhance defence cooperation 'in peace, crisis and conflict'.

Nordic participation in the NATO exercise Trident Juncture in 2018 was substantial. The Norwegian Army's Brigade Nord took part in the Northern Wind exercise in northern Sweden in 2019, and as part of a cross-border training scheme, Norwegian fighter jets carry out regular training missions with Swedish and Finnish planes over the North Calotte from bases in Bodø, Luleå and Rovaniemi. This joint training activity has been further developed into the major Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE), which has become one of Europe's largest air power exercises. Allied countries also take part.

In autumn 2020, Norway, Sweden and Finland signed a statement of intent on enhanced operational cooperation. The agreement is intended to facilitate cooperation on operations planning between the three countries with a view to coordinating operations in the North Calotte.

3.7 The Barents cooperation

The Barents cooperation occupies a central place in Norway's Arctic policy in light of the role it plays for Norway's northernmost counties, the Sámediggi (Sami parliament) and a range of stakeholders in various fields and sectors. What makes the Barents cooperation effective is the combination of intergovernmental and interregional cooperation, under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council respectively. The value of the Barents cooperation lies to a large extent in its stable focus on relatively uncontroversial issues, which ensures predictability and promotes good relations between stakeholders in a number of fields. The members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council – Norway, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and the EU – have maintained the constructive atmosphere in the Council in recent years as well.

Norway's Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in the period 2019–2021 has provided an opportunity for Norway to revitalise the cooperation and set the agenda for issues relating to the Barents region. Norway has identified health, people-to-people contact, and knowledge as priority areas for its Chairmanship, and has helped to strengthen the cooperation through its work in these areas.

3.8 Arctic Council

Close, constructive cooperation has been established in the Arctic Council between the eight member states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the US) and the six indigenous peoples' organisations that are represented on the Council. The Arctic Council's mandate primarily covers issues relating to climate change, the environment and sustainable economic development. It does not cover security policy. For this reason, the Arctic



Networking projects and visits by guest artists strengthen international cooperation and open up opportunities for artists in the north. The Riddu Riđđu Festival in Kåfjord is Europe's leading cultural arena and meeting place for new voices in the area of indigenous arts and culture. The festival helps to build skills, increases the appeal of the region as a place for young people to live, and has positive spin-off effects for the local business sector.

PHOTO: NORWEGIAN BARENTS SECRETARIAT

Council has been largely unaffected by the changing global security landscape.

The work of the Arctic Council has been strengthened considerably over the years. The assessments produced by the Arctic Council's working groups on climate change and pollutants in the Arctic in particular have gained broad recognition and have been an important contribution to the efforts to develop international environmental conventions. The emphasis on dialogue and openness in the political contact between the members states of the Arctic Council is one of the Council's key strengths. It is in the interests of the member states to maintain this dialogue, also in cases where opinions differ.

The Council's work is carried out under its working groups. Indigenous peoples represent an important voice on the Arctic Council, through the participation of the six indigenous peoples' organisations.

3.9 The EU

Norway and the EU share a number of key interests in the Arctic such as maintaining peace and stability, and promoting sustainable development, research and respect for international law. The EU is an important partner for Norway in fisheries, research and environmental cooperation in the Arctic. The EEA Agreement provides a vital framework for facilitating exports from North Norway and access to labour in important manufacturing and service industries, and is thus also of crucial importance for job and value creation in North Norway.

Norway maintains a close dialogue with the EU on the Arctic and actively seeks to ensure that the EU's policy is based as far as possible on knowledge and facts about conditions in the north. We also give priority to dialogue with Finland, Denmark, Sweden, which as Arctic EU member states are in a unique position to provide substantive input to the EU's Arctic policy.

The Government has decided that Norway will participate in the EU's programmes for regional territorial cooperation (Interreg) in the period 2021–2027. The Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme encompasses the whole of the Nordic Arctic, and representatives from northwestern Russia and parts of Canada participate as observers. The programme is an important instrument in the EU's Arctic policy. Horizon Europe, the EU framework programme for research and innovation, is one of the most important funding mechanisms for Arctic research. Erasmus+, the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, provides a framework for much of the cooperation in the field of education in the Arctic. Norway will be participating in both these programmes in the period 2021–2027.

The Northern Dimension

The Northern Dimension was established in 1999 at the initiative of Finland to forge closer links between the EU and regional cooperation forums in the Arctic. The EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia participate as four equal partners.

Practical cooperation takes place under four partnerships focusing on the following areas: environment; public health and social well-being; transport and logistics; and culture. The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership has yielded tangible results, and Norway has provided substantial funding for projects on nuclear safety. Since 2014, political dialogue under the Northern Dimension has been limited as a result of the deterioration in relations between the EU and Russia following the Ukraine crisis, but activities under the partnerships have been maintained. The Government will continue to promote dialogue and practical cooperation under the Northern Dimension.

3.10 China

China has increased its focus on the Arctic in recent years and published its first Arctic strategy in 2018. China was granted observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013. Norway supports cooperation with China and other non-Arctic states based on respect for international law and within the framework of existing cooperation structures. Norway also supports Chinese participation in the Arctic Council's working groups, particularly those dealing with climate and environmental issues. It is important that major emitters such as China play a part in finding solutions to these problems. There is a long tradition of dialogue between Norwegian and Chinese polar research groups. The Government considers it important to ensure that Norway pursues a clear and consistent policy towards China in the Arctic as elsewhere. It is important to ensure a nuanced, fact-based debate on China's role in the Arctic.

3.11 Indigenous peoples

Four million people currently live in the circumpolar Arctic. Around 10 % are indigenous peoples. Between 40 and 90 indigenous languages are spoken in the Arctic, depending on the method used to classify languages and dialects. The



traditional Sami homelands, Sápmi, extend across areas in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. As an indigenous people in all four nations, the Sami people's activities, their parliaments, organisations and institutions extend across the borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

Indigenous groups participate actively in the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council. The Saami Council is one of six indigenous peoples' organisations that has been granted permanent participant status in the Arctic Council. In the Barents cooperation, Sami representatives play a key role in the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples. The Government maintains a close dialogue with the Sámediggi (Sami parliament) and with Sami organisations and institutions on participation in the Arctic Council, the Barents cooperation and other forums, as well as at bilateral level.

It is important that indigenous and local communities are able to participate meaningfully in international climate change efforts, to demonstrate what they have to contribute and highlight the importance of traditional knowledge and their own efforts to address climate change. The Sámediggi is consulted as part of the Norwegian preparations for the international climate negotiations, and is often represented on the Norwegian delegation. The Sámediggi played an active role in the establishment of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

POLICY MEASURES INCLUDE:

- continue to pursue a policy that promotes security, stability and interest-based cooperation in the Arctic;
- highlight the fact that North Norway is home to a substantial part of Norway's population and has an important role to play in terms of ensuring job and value creation at the national level;
- continue to promote a knowledge-based international debate on the Arctic, for example through cooperation and dialogue with the other Arctic states;
- maintain and develop cooperation with US military forces and those of other Allied countries on carrying out training and exercises in the north, as a crucial part of the efforts to ensure the defence of Norway;
- facilitate and seek to exercise influence on the Allied military activity carried out in the Arctic;
- support cross-border bilateral cooperation with Russia in the north;
- support cross-border cooperation and the easing of border obstacles in the North Calotte region through dialogue with the northernmost counties and municipalities and the Sámediggi (Sami parliament);
- continue to support the Barents cooperation and project activity together with regional stakeholders to ensure effective coordination of Norwegian efforts and participation;
- continue efforts to further encourage international interest in the cultural scene in North Norway;
- work to ensure that the Arctic Council remains the most important intergovernmental body for cooperation in the region, that the Council's mandate remains unchanged and that the Norwegian Chairmanship in the period 2023–2025 helps to strengthen the Council's work;
- within the framework of the Arctic Council, strengthen Arctic cooperation on ocean issues and climate change, and promote sustainable business development in the Arctic that combines conservation and sustainable use to the benefit of both individuals and local communities;
- support the work of the Arctic Council's working groups, which produce in-depth knowledge about the natural environment and sustainable development in the Arctic;
- maintain Norway's dialogue with the EU and key member states on the EU's Arctic policy;
- follow up and participate in the efforts to implement the European Green Deal – the EU's plan to make the EU's economy sustainable, which is also important for Norway. Highlight the relevance of the Arctic to the targets and measures set out in the European Green Deal and help increase the value of Norwegian exports;
- maintain Norway's participation in the EU's Interreg programme (Interreg VI 2021–2027), including the Kolarctic, the Interreg Nord (Sweden-Finland-Norway) and the Northern Periphery and Arctic programmes;
- promote and strengthen international cooperation on indigenous issues and put forward Norway's views in relevant forums.



4. Climate and environment in the Arctic

4.1 Climate change is creating new challenges in the Arctic

The Arctic is warming at more than twice the global average rate, and major impacts are becoming apparent: the extent of the sea ice is shrinking, snow and glaciers are melting, the permafrost is thawing, precipitation patterns are changing and wildfires are becoming more frequent.

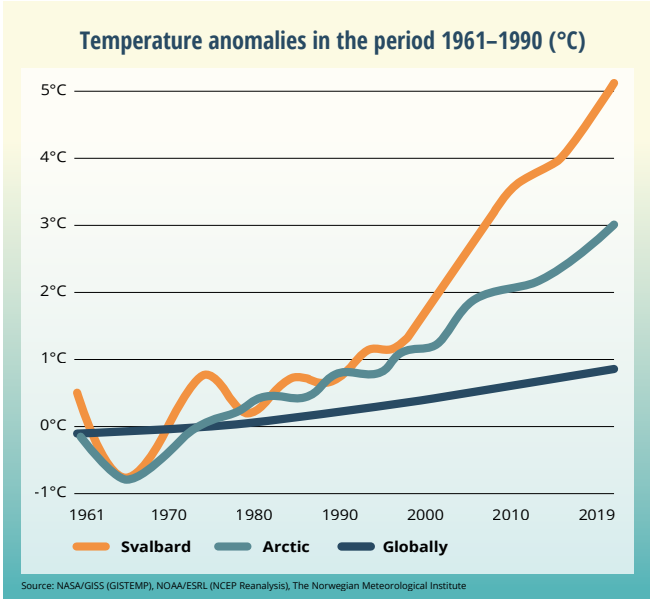
All these processes are resulting in rapid change in Arctic ecosystems and the loss of suitable habitat for Arctic species. Some areas in the far north of mainland Norway may warm by more than 6 oC by 2100 relative to the period 1971–2000. The severity of the impacts of climate change on North Norway will depend on society's adaptive capacity, in other words its capacity to reduce vulnerability through

adaptation to climate change. Climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts will need to be carried out in parallel. To avoid losing the Arctic as we know it today, it is vitally important that the world succeeds in achieving the long-term temperature target of the Paris Agreement. The Government will take steps to ensure that Norway's greenhouse gas emissions are reduced in line with national targets and international commitments. Norway's target for 2030 under the Paris Agreement is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 % and towards 55 % by 2030 compared with the 1990 level. Norway is cooperating with the EU to achieve this target. The Government intends to transform Norway into a low-emission society by 2050, where greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced by 90–95 %.

The Arctic states account for 10 % of global emissions of black carbon, but these emissions are causing 30 % of the warming effect of black carbon in the Arctic. Norway is cooperating with the other Arctic states on reducing black carbon emissions, and has played a leading role in the Arctic Council's work on short-lived climate forcers. Norway has already implemented a number of measures to reduce its own black carbon emissions, which are now lower than those of the large Arctic states, both in total and measured per capita. The Arctic Council's collective goal for black carbon emissions does not specify national targets for each country, but Norway is well on the way to reducing its black carbon emissions by more than 25 % by 2025.

4.2 Warmer and more acidic oceans

There is hardly a habitat type on Earth that is changing as rapidly as the Arctic sea ice. The water temperature has been rising particularly fast in the Barents Sea, and the sea ice is retreating. Arctic species from ice algae to polar bears are being displaced northwards. Changes in the ocean environment are being intensified by ocean acidification, which is caused by seawater becoming more acidic when it absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The northern seas are particularly vulnerable to ocean acidification because water can absorb more CO2 at lower temperatures. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), these changes pose a threat to Arctic fisheries and may have implications both for economies and societies in the region and for global supplies of fish and seafood.



4.3 Loss of biodiversity

Human activity in combination with climate change is putting growing pressure on the natural environment in North Norway. Unless emissions are cut rapidly, many species and ecosystems may disappear from large parts of the Arctic. Some Arctic species are at risk of extinction. This applies particularly to ice-dependent species such as the polar bear and ringed seal. As yet, few alien species have been found in the Arctic, but the spread of alien species is expected to increase as the climate warms and human activity increases in the region.



The impacts of climate change are by far the greatest threat to biodiversity in the north. Without rapid cuts in emissions, many species and ecosystems may gradually disappear from large areas of the Arctic. Here, a tern chick being fed.

PHOTO: GEIR WING GABRIELSEN, NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

4.4 Marine litter and the spread of microplastics

Marine litter and the spread of microplastics is a growing environmental problem in the Arctic. Globally, the largest sources of marine litter are countries that do not have satisfactory waste management systems, but ocean-based activities appear to be one of the main sources in the Arctic. Investigations have shown that fishing gear that drifts ashore in Svalbard originates from both Norwegian and foreign vessels in the Barents Sea. Plastic waste and microplastics are also transported to the Arctic from other parts of the world with ocean currents.

At regional level, Norway is playing a leading role in the Arctic Council's work on an action plan to combat marine litter and microplastics in the Arctic. Following an initiative by Norway, active Norwegian-Russian cooperation on marine litter has been established. Norway has provided funding to establish cooperation between research and knowledge institutions, the business sector (including the fishing industry) and the authorities.

4.5 Global agreements on hazardous substances have had a positive effect in the Arctic

Local sources of pollution in the Arctic are small compared with those in other regions, but there are considerable inputs of long-range transboundary pollution from elsewhere with ocean currents, the atmosphere and rivers. One result has been the accumulation of pollutants such as mercury and PCBs in apex predators in food chains. Despite this, the Arctic is still one of the least polluted areas of the world.

The Arctic Council's assessments of pollution show that levels of many hazardous substances in the Arctic are declining, but in some cases there is cause for concern. There are still high levels of pollutants such as mercury and PCBs in species such as polar bear, beluga, orca and a number of seabird species. Moreover, new substances are constantly being developed and taken into use. Some of them have properties that allow them to be transported over long distances in the atmosphere and with ocean currents, so that they could potentially harm people and animals in the Arctic.

4.6 Integrated approach to management of the natural environment in North Norway

An integrated approach to management of the natural environment in North Norway is a vital basis for maintaining satisfactory ecological status and trends and for combining sound environmental management with other public interests and user interests. The Government will develop a framework for integrated environmental management plans for Norwegian nature. Area-based protection under the Nature Diversity Act is an important instrument for safeguarding the most valuable habitats and ecosystems. Protected areas must be used in ways that both reinforce their conservation value and provide a basis for value creation. Establishing nature reserves, national parks and other protected areas safeguards the conservation



Efforts to combat marine litter are a high priority for the Government, and funding and activities in this area have increased significantly in recent years.
PHOTO: ANN KRISTIN BALTO, NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

value of these areas at both national and international level. In all, 15 % of the land area of the two northernmost counties, Nordland and Troms og Finnmark, is protected. There are 18 national parks in North Norway. In addition, national parks and large nature reserves cover 65 % of the land area of Svalbard. They have been established to safeguard the large areas of largely undisturbed Arctic environment on the archipelago.

4.7 Integrated ocean management in Norwegian waters

The purpose of Norway's integrated ocean management plans is to provide a framework for value creation through sustainable use while maintaining the high environmental value of Norway's marine areas. In spring 2020, the Government presented the white paper *Norway's integrated ocean management plans for the Barents Sea–Lofoten area; the Norwegian Sea; and the North Sea and Skagerrak* (Meld. St. 20 (2019–2020)). The white paper redefines the way the boundary of the marginal ice zone as a particularly valuable and vulnerable area is delimited, which is also used in the framework for petroleum activities in this area. Another measure is that the areas where no exploration drilling will be permitted in the breeding season for seabirds have been extended to 100 km from the baseline off the coast of Troms og Finnmark county. This change will be reconsidered when the review of all the particularly valuable and vulnerable areas has been completed. Restrictions on when exploration drilling is permitted in a zone between 65 km and 100 km from the baseline around Bjørnøya were introduced in connection with the 24th licensing round, and have been maintained in the white paper on the ocean management plans. The rest of the framework for petroleum activities in the Barents Sea–Lofoten area and the Norwegian Sea has been retained.





Research and development institutions in North Norway provide strategically important knowledge about climate change and the environment in the Arctic. This knowledge plays a vital role in ensuring sound environmental and natural resource management, effective social development planning, adequate climate change adaptation and emergency preparedness in the north. PHOTO: AKVAPLAN-NIVA, NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE FOR AIR RESEARCH (NILU) AND HELGE M. MARKUSSEN, FRAM CENTRE.

POLICY MEASURES INCLUDE:

- ensure sound, integrated management of all activity in the Norwegian part of the Arctic, in order to maximise value creation within an environmentally sustainable framework;
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with national targets and international commitments, and continue initiatives that play a part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Arctic;
- develop a more integrated knowledge base for ecosystem-based management of the natural environment in North Norway;
- continue to monitor climate change and ocean acidification in Arctic seas;
- work to ensure climate-resilient management of living marine resources and marine biodiversity;
- continue work on the establishment of marine protected areas;
- improve weather forecasts, emergency preparedness and predictions of extreme weather events by establishing a radar station on the Finnmarksvidda plateau;
- further develop the knowledge base for climate change adaptation in ocean industries and ocean-dependent sectors of society;
- as part of work on the ocean management plans, conduct a risk analysis for the management plan areas of direct and indirect effects of climate change on marine ecosystems and other relevant factors under different emission scenarios;
- play a leading role in environmental cooperation under the Arctic Council, in the bilateral environmental cooperation with Russia and in global efforts to limit greenhouse gas emissions and releases of hazardous substances that pose an environmental threat in the Arctic;
- continue the Arctic cooperation on a network of protected areas and ecosystem-based management under the Arctic Council, and the Norwegian-Russian cooperation on the scientific basis for ecosystem-based management of the Barents Sea;
- support the collective goal of the Arctic Council on reduction of black carbon emissions in the Arctic;
- play a leading role in the Arctic Council's work on an action plan to combat marine litter and microplastics in the Arctic.



5. Social development in the north

In order to promote sustainable communities in North Norway, it is essential that young people and young adults invest their futures in the region. In connection with the preparation of the white paper, the Government set up a youth panel to provide input and recommendations for developing Norway's Arctic policy for the future. The panel's report made it clear that, among other things, young people want to be included more widely in international cooperation in the Arctic and that steps must be taken to integrate the Sami people's way of life as a natural part of Norwegian identity and culture. The youth panel also highlighted the need to enhance the



framework for education and skills development in the outlying districts and to improve conditions for young entrepreneurs in the north, including ensuring better access to capital.

The Government supports a number of international networks and programmes that facilitate cross-border cooperation between young people in the north, for example within the framework of the Barents cooperation and through EU programmes such as Interreg Europe and Erasmus+.

The Government promotes the development of environmentally friendly towns and cities across the country that provide a good quality of life for people and good conditions for businesses. Viable cities and urban centres have important functions, attract people and businesses and promote regional balance. Compact cities and towns with pleasant physical surroundings, a vibrant centre, a wide range of good housing options and access to a broad selection of goods and services and cultural and leisure activities are important for several reasons. An attractive regional centre can enhance access to labour throughout the region as a whole.

Sami language and culture

The Sami language is part of Norway's national cultural heritage. The Sami Act stipulates that the Sami and Norwegian languages have equal status in Norway. Sami art and culture encompass voices and experiences that are an important part of Norway's national narrative. These cultural expressions are of great value to society as a whole and to the ongoing effort to revitalise Sami language and culture. Sami institutions, artists and cultural practitioners play a vital role in disseminating Sami art, culture, cultural heritage and history in Norway, across national borders in Sápmi (the homelands of the Sami people) and at the international level.

Kven language and culture

The Kven language is recognised as a minority language in Norway, and it is also protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which Norway ratified in 1993. Today, there are few active users of the Kven language, and it is regarded as endangered. However, steps are being taken to revitalise Kven as a language. In January 2018, the Government presented a targeted plan for these efforts for the period 2017–2021.

History and identity

The efforts of researchers and writers in recent years have helped to expand national understanding of the important role that North Norway played during the five years of German occupation during the Second World War. In 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union across a broad front. The northern areas of Norway were a priority in Hitler's strategic planning. At the height of the German occupation, the occupying forces in North Norway numbered around 150 000. For a short period during the German retreat, this number rose to approxi-



Tromsø is an important growth centre in the north. The city is Norway's Arctic capital and is home to the Fram Centre, UiT - The Arctic University of Norway, the secretariats of the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council, Arctic Frontiers and the Arctic Mayors' Forum.

PHOTO: AUDUN RIKARDSEN

mately 330 000. The youth panel set up in connection with the preparation of the white paper on Arctic policy highlighted in particular the importance of promoting deeper, more widespread knowledge about the impacts of the war in the north, pointing out how crucial this is to young people's understanding of their history and identity.

POLICY MEASURES INCLUDE:

- further develop opportunities for cross-border contact and cooperation between young people, for example within the framework of the Barents cooperation and EU programmes such as Interreg Europe and Erasmus+;
- provide up to NOK 100 million, over the period 2022–2024, to Bodø, in its capacity as the European Capital of Culture in 2024;
- draw up a strategy for small cities and urban centres;
- support regional cooperation between the business sector, counties and municipalities and universities and university colleges to promote the development of flexible study programmes;
- assess the extent to which a lack of housing makes it difficult for employers in the outlying districts to recruit labour;
- support the efforts of the County Governors of Nordland and of Troms and Finnmark to facilitate more systematic cooperation between the municipalities in North Norway, in order to provide high-quality services to the population and promote business development;
- engage in consultations with the Sámediggi (Sami parliament) with the aim of mapping existing expertise on Sami language and culture and assessing the need to further develop knowledge in this area;
- explore measures that can adequately provide reindeer herders with the assistance they need to deal with the authorities and the interests of developers;
- draw up new guidelines for development planning in reindeer husbandry areas, including the need to carry out impact assessments to identify any impacts on reindeer husbandry;
- present a bill amending the Sami Act to incorporate a separate chapter on consultations, with the purpose of promoting more effective consultations between the public authorities and the Sámediggi or other affected Sami interest groups.



6. Value creation and competence development

In the period 2008–2018, economic growth in the counties in North Norway was higher than growth in the mainland economy as a whole. The Government will work to create a framework that enables companies in North Norway to further realise their potential in the years ahead across a wide range of industries: ocean-based industries, the maritime sector, petroleum, green power-intensive manufacturing, mineral extraction, agriculture, tourism, space infrastructure and the services sector.

There is potential for substantial value creation, both onshore and offshore, and to increase positive spin-off effects by encouraging cooperation at various stages of the value chain. The EEA Agreement has played a crucial role in terms of facilitating exports from North Norway and thus also in terms of job creation and welfare.

Oil and gas activities and development projects on the continental shelf will open up major opportunities for companies and the industry on the mainland. These activi-

'We have to create jobs and produce end-use goods locally, where the industries are located. The region's resources must benefit those of us who live here.'

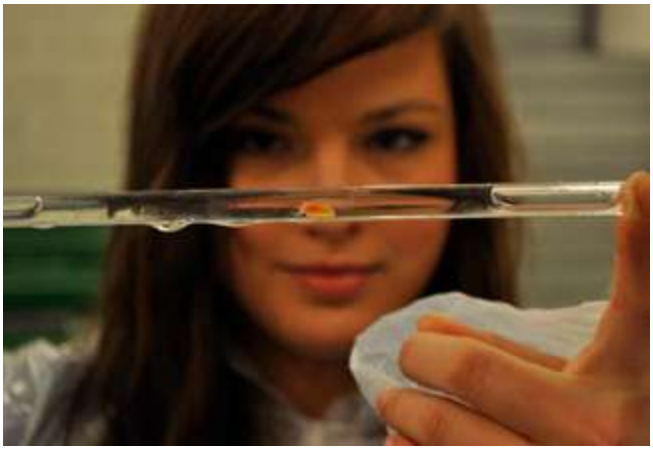
– Youth panel for the white paper on Arctic policy

ties will also promote the development of a knowledge-based industrial structure in North Norway. The Johan Castberg field in the Barents Sea, which is currently under development, will further strengthen the industry in the region and lead to the creation of new jobs. The planning phase for developing other discoveries in the Barents Sea, including the Wisting discovery, is well under way. Final investment decisions on these development projects will promote further growth in this sector.

North Norway has a long tradition of sound and sustainable resource management and business activity. Promoting climate-friendly, sustainable production of goods and services will be a key element of business development in all sectors. The Government will continue to facilitate innovation, entrepreneurship and start-ups in the north and will promote a well-functioning capital market.

Ensuring access to labour with the necessary skills and expertise will be a key challenge in securing further growth in the business sector in North Norway. In order to realise growth in the north, it will be important to forge closer links between the business sector, the research community and knowledge institutions.





A recently hatched salmon larva still carrying part of its yolk sac. This is an important source of food in the early days of larval life, and remains attached to the larva until the contents have been absorbed. From Sundsfjord Smolt AS, Gildeskål, Nordland.

PHOTO: ARNE SKLETT LARSEN

The share of exports from North Norway is higher than the national average. In the time ahead, the level of activity in export-oriented industries in the north, such as the seafood industry and the processing industry, will largely depend on developments in the global economy and the supply and demand situation in various markets. In autumn 2020, the Government presented an export action plan that sets out measures to support the Norwegian business sector during and after the coronavirus crisis and aims to increase the number of competitive industries that are able to export goods and services in demand in global markets.

The coronavirus pandemic has entailed major setbacks and poses extra challenges for the business sector in North Norway as elsewhere in the country. However, this does not affect the future potential for sustainable growth and job creation in the region's business sector. In the time ahead, it will be vital to learn, adapt and lay the foundation for continued green and sustainable growth.

POLICY MEASURES INCLUDE:

- work to create a framework that enables the business sector in North Norway to further realise its potential for sustainable value creation in the years ahead;
- work to ensure that the maritime industry in the north becomes an important hub for sustainable blue growth in North Norway;
- promote increased value creation in the seafood industry in North Norway;
- improve resource control as a key component in sustainable management of fish stocks and to ensure equal conditions of competition in the fisheries sector;
- promote green innovation, entrepreneurship and new start-ups in North Norway;
- continue to give priority to marine research because research and knowledge are crucial for ensuring sustainable management of fisheries and other marine resources;
- facilitate profitable production of oil and gas, for example by maintaining predictable framework conditions for the petroleum industry and continuing the regular licensing rounds on the Norwegian continental shelf, in order to give the industry access to new exploration areas;
- maintain petroleum-related research and competence development in and focusing on the Arctic under the existing framework and instruments;
- consider opening new sea areas off the coast of Helgeland in Nordland county for offshore wind power development;
- carry out a thorough review of the Mineral Resources Act with a view to strengthening the framework for sustainable and profitable mineral exploitation in the future, including an assessment of issues relating to Sami rights and interests;
- facilitate exploration and extraction of minerals from the seabed and carry out an opening process for mineral extraction on the Norwegian continental shelf under the Seabed Minerals Act;
- promote increased value creation in the agricultural sector in North Norway using production methods that are adapted to the natural conditions;
- promote the development of Sami industries, including ecologically, economically and culturally sustainable reindeer husbandry ;
- follow up the conditional pledge of funding for the establishment of Andøya Space Port, a launch site for small satellites at Andøya Space Center;
- assess the need for better national and cross-sectoral facilitation for small satellites, in part to meet user needs in the Arctic and at sea;
- maintain Norway's participation in the EU Space Programme for the coming 2021–2027 period, which encompasses participation in all the flagship programmes: Galileo and EGNOS (satellite navigation), Copernicus (earth observation), GOVSATCOM (satellite communications) and Space Situational Awareness (SSA);
- take steps to ensure that Norwegian actors can participate in, and compete for contracts under, the Copernicus programme, with a view to improving Arctic climate and environmental modelling, and thus also the basis for decision-making to be used by the environmental authorities;
- strengthen cooperation between the Norwegian Armed Forces, the business sector and the research and development institutions in North Norway, including assessing the potential for a defence industry cluster;
- encourage cooperation on recruitment and talent development across institutions and sectors with a view to increasing access to relevant skills and knowledge in North Norway;
- set up an investment fund with both public and private capital to be managed from North Norway; the Government will determine the fund's focus and budgetary framework in the revised budget for 2021;
- draw up a report on the early-stage capital market in North Norway and evaluate the measures that have been implemented to increase access to capital once the investment fund is in place and has begun to take effect;
- support the establishment of an Arctic Investment Platform;
- facilitate closer cooperation between employers, the business sector and higher education to meet society's need for skills and knowledge and to promote targeted student education programmes.



7. Infrastructure, transport and communications

There are long distances between communities and economic centres in North Norway, and the region has a relatively small population. Despite this, the level of business activity is high, and there is a significant potential for economic growth. However, high transport costs for the business sector and the population and unpredictable weather conditions during the winter may pose obstacles to business development and discourage people from settling in North Norway. Measures that aim to develop and improve the quality of infrastructure must be prioritised, weighted and considered on the basis of a range of factors, not just the socio-economic benefits.

The Government gives priority to involving and maintaining a dialogue with the counties in North Norway, which



Bøkfjord Bridge between Kirkenes and Murmansk is the result of decades of cooperation between the Norwegian and Russian road authorities and is a good example of Norway's Arctic policy in practice and of successful collaboration between neighbours in the border areas.

PHOTO: NORWEGIAN PUBLIC ROADS ADMINISTRATION

are responsible for the county road network and for public transport, for example in connection with processes such as the preparation of the National Transport Plan. The same applies vis-à-vis the Sámediggi (Sami parliament) in cases where transport infrastructure projects have implications for traditional Sami areas and Sami living conditions. The Government will continue to work to limit any negative impacts on the environment or on Sami interests when planning and implementing infrastructure projects.

Reliable energy supplies are essential for maintaining almost all critical societal functions. North Norway generally has a reliable, secure energy supply and the region has abundant access to renewable energy resources. These resources are spread over vast areas, and a long-distance transmission grid is needed to deliver power to the places where it is used.

Due to the long distances and low population density in the region, access to adequate, secure electronic communications networks (broadband and mobile) is crucial for job creation in urban centres and outlying areas in North Norway. The Government's efforts to improve digital infrastructure will help to enhance value creation and increase mobility for people and businesses in the north.

POLICY MEASURES INCLUDE:

- prepare a conceptual appraisal report on future transport solutions covering all aspects of the transport system in North Norway, including an assessment of the proposed new stretch of railway from Fauske to Tromsø (Nord-Norgebanen);
- continue to provide substantial funding for the development of the road network in North Norway, including the county road network;
- consider measures to support the testing and phasing in of low- and zero-emission aircraft;
- in connection with the work on the National Transport Plan, consider appropriate projects, for example relating to fishing ports, in line with the state's responsibility for improvements in navigable waters under the new Act relating to ports and navigable waters;
- continue efforts to strengthen preparedness and response to acute pollution in the Arctic;
- further develop the Norwegian Centre for Oil Spill Preparedness and Marine Environment with facilities both in Lofoten and Vesterålen, including the test centre for oil spill response technology at Fiskebøl (Lofoten), and consider measures to concentrate the centre's activities on marine litter;
- in connection with the licensing process for wind power projects, work to increase local and regional involvement and give greater consideration to reindeer husbandry interests;
- consider introducing a universal service obligation for broadband;
- ensure that all municipalities in Finnmark have a designated area with more robust and secure electronic communications.



8. Civil protection

Long distances, difficult climatic conditions, and extended periods of darkness present unique challenges when it comes to preventing and responding to undesirable incidents in the north. The Government will facilitate coordination and cooperation between different sectors and levels of the government administration and across borders in the north.

Today, most maritime traffic in the Arctic passes through sea areas that fall under Norwegian search and rescue (SAR) jurisdiction. The fishing fleet is operating further north, cruise traffic has increased considerably, and new shipping routes are being considered as the ice melts. In addition, expedition voyages with small and medium-sized passenger ships carrying from 12 to 300 passengers have

become more popular. The rise in maritime activity could increase the frequency of accidents. Against this backdrop, the Government has appointed a committee to consider SAR-related challenges arising from the growth in cruise traffic in Norwegian waters.

Helicopter search and rescue capacity in the Arctic will also be strengthened through various temporary and permanent measures. Coverage for communications services is poor in remote sea areas in the north where weather conditions are severe. Satellite-based coverage decreases north of 72°N (just south of Bjørnøya) and is limited and unstable north of 75°N. Radio communications systems also have limited range in the sea areas in the far north. Reliable, easy-to-use communications systems are crucial when incidents occur.

The governmental preparedness and response system for acute pollution is designed to prevent and limit environmental damage in the event of oil spills and other pollution incidents. However, there are long distances between potential discharge points and resources such as depots, personnel, repair facilities, airports and sites where recovered oil and waste can be deposited. Varying ice conditions also mean that material and vessels for dealing with oil spills must satisfy special requirements. Greater attention is also being directed to North Norway in the efforts to promote food security. The extensive cross-border cooperation on public health preparedness and response will be maintained.



Maintaining an effective preparedness and response system for acute pollution such as oil spills is an important priority for the Government. Great importance is attached to international cooperation on emergency preparedness and response. From Exercise Barents 2019.

PHOTO: THOMAS NILSEN

POLICY MEASURES INCLUDE:

- further expand Norway's leading role in international cooperation relating to maritime security and environmental protection in the Arctic;
- consider the need to improve the framework for the testing of maritime equipment and the need for joint exercises in which vessels train for operations in Arctic waters, including SAR operations;
- improve emergency communications in northern waters by expanding high-frequency (HF) radio communications coverage and monitoring call and distress channels from coastal radio stations, also using HF;
- establish broadband capacity for both civilian and military users in the Arctic, starting in 2023;
- phase in the new SAR helicopters, which will significantly strengthen SAR capacity;
- work towards the establishment of a new rescue helicopter base in Tromsø that will enhance SAR helicopter capacity in the north;
- further develop cooperation on addressing common SAR challenges in the Arctic under agreements relating to international SAR cooperation in the northern sea areas;
- follow up Norway's responsibility to organise the joint emergency response exercise Barents Rescue in 2022, involving the countries of the Barents region, in accordance with the agreement between Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden;
- continue the annual SAR exercises between Norway and Russia in the outer parts of the Varanger Fjord in order to strengthen SAR preparedness and mutual assistance in the event of an accident in the Barents Sea.



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