

## **The Research Council of Norway: Research strategy for the arctic and northern regions**

**Broad-based political agreement has led to a new stronger and more cohesive initiative for the Northern Areas. This will enable Norway to cope with ongoing changes at the global level and to successfully best use the abundant resources found in these areas. Research can provide the key to understanding how to develop communities and the industrial sector in the north in a sound and sustainable manner.**

The Research Council's vision is that Norway in 2020:

- is a leading research nation in the northern areas;
- is a highly respected manager of the resources in the north;
- and that the northern region is known for its dynamic, diversified industrial and R&D sector.

In terms of size, Norway is second only to Russia in Europe, taking into account its vast land and sea areas that extend into the Arctic. No other country has such a large proportion of its history, population and economic activity rooted in the north. The Government has defined the northern areas as “Norway's key area of strategic focus in the years to come.”

### **Changes at the global level**

Development efforts in the north will be shaped by the prospects for comprehensive petroleum activity, stabilisation of relations between Norway and Russia, and the impacts of global warming. Changes at the global level will have an impact on the environment, on the ability to exploit resources and expand the commercial sector as well as on the North-Norwegian and indigenous communities in the Arctic areas.

### **Petroleum and a lot more**

Development of the northern areas must be sustainable, and must be carried out in cooperation with – and with the endorsement of – the international community. Binding international agreements and good political relations with other countries that have interests in the north, in particular Russia, the USA, Canada, EU and some important EU member states, will be needed.

Political interest in the northern areas has traditionally been linked to the possibility of finding oil and gas reserves. However, both the Bondevik II and the Stoltenberg II governments have explicitly stated that a broader, more cohesive policy is called for in order to safeguard Norwegian interests, realise the many opportunities that the northern areas have to offer and ensure the protection of vulnerable natural surroundings and an endangered way of life.

### **Research and industrial development**

One of the central objectives set out in the government white paper on research is to increase research-based innovation within trade and industry. This represents a challenge for Norway as a whole and for Northern Norway in particular.

The industrial sector must seek, support and perform more research to promote innovation and value creation if development in the north is to be successful. At the

same time, it is important that the local research institutions provide relevant services to businesses. This is essential both to exploiting the potential of the region's resources and to ensuring stable settlement patterns, with diversified opportunities.

### **What do we want to achieve?**

The goal of the Research Council is to fully realise the unique potential of the northern areas for research and industry. In order to achieve this, a three-point strategy has been implemented:

- The northern areas initiative will be reinforced by a national initiative to promote knowledge.
- The competence infrastructure of the north will be enhanced.
- The Research Council will promote research cooperation with Russia and other countries that have interests and activities in the Arctic region.

### **Perspectives and priority areas**

The Research Council seeks to encourage the widest possible range of research activities, but will give special focus to research that promotes progressive industrial and social development. Five priority areas have been defined:

1. **Petroleum activity in the north:** How can Norway best exploit petroleum resources and ensure stable social development while minimising the impact on the environment and marine resources?
2. **The environment and marine resources:** How can Norway best safeguard the environment and utilise the abundant marine biological resources?
3. **Innovation and industrial development:** How can research contribute to industrial development and promote greater research activity in the north?
4. **Living conditions in the north:** How can research in critical areas help to improve living conditions in the north?
5. **Foreign policy and the Arctic dimension:** How can Norway turn the Arctic into a region for cooperation and development?

These priority areas are all justified on the grounds that greater knowledge is needed for society to achieve its objectives. In addition, the Research Council will give priority to:

6. **Exploiting the unique research potential of the northern areas.**

The five first priority areas overlap and mutually influence one another, with several important cross-cutting perspectives.

*Climate change* has an impact on all sectors of society, influencing the environment as well as the industrial base. At the same time, the northern areas provide a unique arena for studying environmental and climatic changes at the global level.

*The interests and rights of indigenous peoples* set key parameters for how the northern areas should be developed and how resources should be exploited. The northern areas offer a wide array of opportunities to study multi-cultural and multilingual communities. Perspectives relating to indigenous peoples must be incorporated into all the relevant priority areas.

*Industrial development* will be the ultimate result of several of the priority efforts. This applies especially to efforts in petroleum research and research on marine resources.

### **International research cooperation**

International research cooperation helps to raise the calibre of research. Moreover, Norway has an obligation to contribute to the international knowledge pool. In the north, the Research Council will give priority to cooperation with Russia, the USA, Canada and Denmark, the EU and key EU countries. Nordic cooperation is also important in this context, as is cooperation with other countries that are carrying out research activity in the north.

Svalbard provides the most important platform for Norwegian Arctic research, and has come to serve as an important venue for an increasing number of foreign research institutions as well. The Research Council will work to promote more targeted institutional cooperation on Svalbard, and invites other nations to make use of the infrastructure and facilities that are already in place.

### **Strategic instruments**

The Research Council's initiative for the northern areas spans a wide range of subjects and disciplines. Focus on the northern areas will be increased in existing research programmes and activities, and new activities will be introduced where this is deemed necessary.

### **The Research Council seeks to:**

Enhance the knowledge infrastructure of the north. Industry-relevant research and the industrial sector must have more open lines of communication. Contacts must be established between the individual companies, the local research institutions, and cutting edge expertise at home and abroad. Existing high-level research groups must be given access to adequate infrastructure and funding.

Obtain the best possible knowledge for public administrators, communities and trade and industry. Norway needs to have the best possible knowledge in order to do the best possible job of exploiting and managing the resources in the north. The Research Council will work to mobilise the best researchers in Norway, and through them, gain access to leading researchers from around the world.

Strengthen international research cooperation. Norway will promote the Arctic as an international arena for research. International research cooperation sets the stage for cooperation in areas such as resource management, industrial development and welfare within the region.

The Research Council invites researchers, companies and investors to take part in Norway's northern areas initiative. Processes affecting the Arctic region are important in the context of global problems, and Norway encourages the international research community to work together to deal with these crucial issues.