



**Ari Trausti
GUÐMUNDSSON**
Chairman of the
Icelandic Parliamentary
Committee
for the Conference of
Parliamentarians in the
Arctic Region,
Vice-chair of the
Committee of
Environment and
Transport
The Parliament of
Iceland (ALTHINGI)

e-mail:
aritrausti@althingi.is

LEGAL AND MUNICIPAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ICELAND

DOI: 10.25801/SRC.2020.67.35.003 | УДК 339

ABSTRACT: the paper explains the legal framework of the state and municipalities for a sustainable economic, social and environmental development in the Iceland Arctic policy and mention some of the results. Key issues in the Arctic policy have been sustainability, gender equality, scientific cooperation, connectivity, reduction of carbon emissions, environmental protection and green energy, focus on social welfare and emphasis on indigenous peoples rights and culture as well as strong support for the Arctic Council.

KEY WORDS: sustainable development, Arctic policy, Althingi.

**ГУДМУНДСОН
АРИ ТРАУСТИ**
Председатель
Исландского
парламентского
комитета
Конференции
парламентариев
Арктического региона,
заместитель
председателя
Комитета по
окружающей среде и
транспорту
Парламента Исландии
(Альтинг)

e-mail:
aritrausti@althingi.is

ПРАВОВЫЕ И МУНИЦИПАЛЬНЫЕ ОСНОВЫ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ В ИСЛАНДИИ

АННОТАЦИЯ: в докладе рассматриваются основные вопросы арктической политики Исландии, это обеспечение устойчивого развития, гендерное равенство, научная кооперация, а также связность и доступность территории, сокращение выбросов углекислого газа, защита окружающей среды и низкоуглеродная энергетика. В фокусе арктической политики Исландии также социальное благополучие населения, права коренных малочисленных народов и международное сотрудничество в Арктике. Особое внимание уделяется вопросам совместной работы парламента Исландии и муниципалитетов в интересах устойчивого развития, это позволяет говорить о результативности планов по реализации арктической политики страны.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: устойчивое развитие, Альтинг, арктическая политика.

Through interaction between the Icelandic government and Althingi (the Parliament), an Arctic policy was made public in 2011. It is now being revised and will hopefully be passed though Parliament in 2021. Key issues in the Arctic policy have been sustainability, gender equality, scientific cooperation, connectivity, reduction of carbon emissions, environmental protection and green energy, focus on social welfare and emphasis on indigenous peoples rights and culture as well as strong support for the Arctic Council where dialogue and cooperation is in the forefront. These key policy issues have guided us in in our work within the Arctic Council, the Nordic Council, the Conference of Parliamentarians in the

Arctic Regions, Northern Dimension and Northern Forum to name some of the important forums. These principles and answers to new challenges will guide us in the parliamentary work for a new Arctic policy resolution. I mention all of this because domestic politics in Iceland do reflect these issues and policy.

Thank you for inviting members of the Icelandic Parliament and for the opportunity to address this online Parliamentary Session of the The Northern Forum. I will use my time to briefly explain the legal framework of the state and municipalities for a sustainable economic, social and environmental development and mention some of the results.

The laws concerning this development come into being through a process that involves the Icelandic government, past and present, and the Parliament with its eight standing committees that discuss and revise every legislation bill or proposal put forward to the Parliament. There are almost 70 municipalities in Iceland, ranging from Reykjavik with well over 130,000 inhabitants to very small ones, with 50 to 100 inhabitants. They elect each a council, every four years, and have formed a country-wide union of representatives as well as smaller regional support councils. Municipalities are asked to attend, with representatives, parliamentary committee meetings whenever legislative bills or proposals concerning municipal matters are being discussed. A government online-forum is also open to the public for comments on bills, proposals, policies et cetera. Most of bills and resolution proposals are put forward by the acting government and composed within the ministries. At that stage consulting dialogue between representatives of municipalities and ministerial specialists commonly takes place. Annually, a number of bills and proposals is also instated by individual members of Parliament or by a group, from either parties that form the acting government or from the opposition, sometimes even by members of both wings.

The primary basic law of municipal functions and duties has been revised many times over. This year the main emphasis was on merging of municipalities. The aim is to enlarge municipalities in each region of Iceland, thus facilitating them to be more able to take care of the many tasks that they have gradually taken over, wholly or partly, from the state. Every merge requires voting by the inhabitants. Tasks include health care, primary and secondary education, social care and regional planning, to mention some. A special state fund functions to support the municipalities in accordance to their population. Other laws include legislature for health and welfare, telecommunication, digitalization, roads, traffic and transport, harbours, air transport, energy, tourism, various economic activity, innovation and more. The present government has strengthened the foundations for its law-making by issuing well-defined policies and action plans for branches like healthcare, innovation, climate change, food production and food safety, energy and the shift to green energy, and for aviation and tourism. The basis for some of the policies is evident: Sustainability of our activities and mitigation of, and adaption to, climate changes. One of the most important targets is a carbon-neutral Iceland by 2040.

Now, let's look more closely at what the legal frame-

work and political decisions have resulted in. I'll mention only a few of examples.

Within one to two years, optical fibres will cover 98% of inhabited areas. The state supports up to 40% reduction of domestic air fares for local residents, living farther away from Reykjavik than 200 km. State funds for innovation have been increased and the forming of branch clusters promoted, for example within fisheries, the energy sector and agriculture. Eight small research centres and six university work centres have been opened in medium-sized towns outside of the capital area and at the five universities. A new plan for strengthening the electrical grid has been instigated, facing increased energy risks due to heavier weather conditions, by using electrical cables instead of overhead lines. A part of the fish quotas has been issued, and now revised, to small-vessel coastal fishermen. Funding for increased geothermal greenhouse production has increased. A new nation-wide plan for handling waste is in the making, based on recycling of both biological and reusable waste as well as faster reduction of plastic waste. A domestic recycling plant for plastics has been enlarged. Coastal sea transport has been increased to lessen the heavy road transport, the first electrical coastal ferry is in operation and an additional sea transport link to Europe at the south coast opened up. Various state funding has been increased to help landowners, associations and municipalities to better cope with heavy tourist traffic in the name of sustainability. The loss of up to 90% of the tourist traffic in Iceland, because of the covid-19 epidemic, has not halted these improvements. On the contrary, increased overall state funding is one of the countermeasures taken to mitigate the economic and social effects of the virus. Finally, I'll mention tax reduction to enhance sales of electrical cars and other measures that aim to facilitate the use of for example hydrogen, alcohol, methane and biodiesel in various transport vehicles on land, and also at sea.

Mr. Chair, my fellow participants. My closing remarks revolve around two basic foundations in the strive for the best living conditions and prosperity in the Arctic. First, I state that cooperation on all levels, domestic and international, as well as peace, is imperative in all our work. Secondly, we must join hands across borders to reduce carbon emissions and bind carbon in wooded areas, by reclaiming damaged soils and wetlands, in order to prevent the steadily increasing damage to our surroundings from attaining a catastrophic state. I have a solid hope that we will succeed. Thank you all.