Ministry of Education and Research

Strategy

Strategy for Research and Higher Education in Svalbard

Svalbard – top of the world for knowledge of global significance

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Svalbard – top of the world for knowledge of global significance

Brásvellbreen with meltwater river. (detail)
Photo: Samuel Martínez Llobet / NPI

UNIS students extracting ice core samples for analysis of salinity and temperature in sea ice.
Photo: Dris Abdennour / UNIS

Contents

Cover: Iceberg in Kongsfjorden and Sveafjellet. (detail)
Photo: Stein Tronstad / NPI

The EISCAT radar station seen from Breinosa. (detail)
Photo: Ingrid Ballari / UNIS

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

In this strategy, the Government sets out objectives and overarching principles and frameworks for research and higher education in Svalbard, as set out in Meld. St. 26 (2023–2024) Report to the Storting (white paper) *Svalbard* (the Svalbard White Paper) and Meld. St. 14 (2024–2025) Report to the Storting (white paper) *Secure knowledge in an uncertain world*. All research and higher education activities throughout Svalbard shall take place within the framework of current Svalbard policy and in accordance with established academic norms, values and principles. This strategy is an update of the *Strategy for Research and Higher Education in Svalbard* from 2018 and replaces it. Since 2018, the security policy landscape has changed, and Svalbard has undergone significant developments, including societal transition, increased activity and field operations, as well as the impacts of climate change. This makes it necessary to update the strategy.

The purpose of the strategy is to further develop Svalbard as an international research arena of world-class quality, with clear Norwegian research management, and to develop knowledge and expertise at a high international level. Svalbard is important for research and higher education, and for international cooperation in projects and networks that use Svalbard as a research platform. There is considerable value in bringing together researchers from different disciplines and countries to collaborate for the purpose of generating new knowledge that is crucial for addressing global societal challenges.

Norwegian authorities will continue to facilitate Norwegian and international research and environmental monitoring in Svalbard and have high scientific ambitions for these activities. At the same time, in order to safeguard the vulnerable environment, the strategy is based on viewing Svalbard as a limited resource, including as a research arena. This requires coordinated research activity and sharing of infrastructure, data and results. Developments in the security policy environment also have implications for how we cooperate with other countries and organise research activities in Svalbard. Research security and responsible international knowledge cooperation mean that open research must be balanced against security considerations at all levels of the knowledge sector.

To strengthen Norwegian research management, the Government has established a Svalbard Research Office (see section 4.1.1). The Research Office has primary responsibility for following up and implementing the *Strategy for Research and Higher Education in Svalbard*. The purpose of the office is to exercise clear Norwegian research management by facilitating high-quality research, coordinating research to reduce the overall impact on nature, and maintaining an overview of research activity. The Svalbard Research Office consists

of resources from the Norwegian Polar Institute and the Research Council of Norway. The Office shall serve as a resource for research actors and provide information on framework conditions and relevant regulations that actors must comply with in their research activities. The Svalbard Research Office shall have a comprehensive overview of research activity, forming the basis for relevant authorities to carry out targeted supervision and inspections to ensure compliance with regulations.

In light of the increasing activity in the archipelago, the principles and frameworks set out in this strategy will contribute to more efficient use of resources, reduced environmental impact, strengthened Norwegian research management and national control.

Top: Polar bear monitoring. Weighing a polar bear. Photo: Jon Aars / NPI.

Left: Two Arctic fox pups. Photo: Charlotte Hallerud / NPI

1.2 Background and scope

Since the 1960s, Norwegian authorities have actively facilitated Norwegian and international research and environmental monitoring in Svalbard. Svalbard receives visits from researchers from both Norway and abroad. The main share of activity is based in Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund. Ny-Ålesund Research Station is central to research in Svalbard, and Norway has made significant investments in buildings, facilities and infrastructure related to the station.

Research activity also takes place in Barentsburg and Hornsund. In addition, the fjords and marine areas around Svalbard are used for research and educational purposes, and Longyearbyen is often the starting point for major research expeditions into the Arctic Ocean.

The Svalbard Science Centre in Longyearbyen houses the University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS) and a variety of other institutions. It is a dynamic and influential centre for research, higher education, science communication and information. In Svalbard, the history of higher education is shorter than that of research. UNIS was established in 1993 and is a university centre conducting research and education in Arctic disciplines. UNIS shall be the sole provider of higher education in Svalbard. In collaboration with Norwegian universities, UNIS offers research-based higher education at all levels to students from around the world. UNIS has access to Svea for field-based education and research.

The growing interest in research places a burden on nature and infrastructure, which are limited resources in Svalbard. This highlights the need for an even better overview of developments in research activity in Svalbard and for control to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with current frameworks and principles.

Polar bear hazard. Applies to all of Svalbard. (detail)
Photo: Jean Negrel / NPI

Preserving Svalbard's unique natural wilderness has long been one of the overriding objectives of Svalbard policy. About 68 per cent of land areas and 88 per cent of territorial waters are protected by designation as nature reserves and national parks. It is important to preserve Svalbard's unique natural environment as a reference area for research.

The objectives, overarching principles and frameworks set out in this strategy apply to Svalbard as a whole, including activities at Ny-Ålesund Research Station. This strategy pertains to land-based activities as well as activities in territorial waters. Research projects that concern marine areas only, fall outside the strategy's purview. To ensure good framework conditions for activities at Ny-Ålesund Research Station, a separate research strategy has also been developed for Ny-Ålesund within the framework of this overarching strategy. The Norwegian Polar Institute manages Ny-Ålesund Research Station and follows up the strategy locally.

2 Objectives for research and higher education in Svalbard

The Government's objectives for research and higher education in Svalbard are set out in Meld. St. 26 (2023-2024) Report to the Storting (white paper) *Svalbard* (the Svalbard White Paper):

- Research and higher education shall be key elements of Norwegian activity in Svalbard in the years to come.
- Svalbard shall be further developed as a platform for international research, higher education and environmental monitoring. The archipelago's infrastructure and unique research possibilities shall be exploited even better than they are at present. The infrastructure must be supplemented with measures that further strengthen Svalbard's position in international knowledge development.
- Norway shall be a key actor in the development of knowledge in and about Svalbard, not just a facilitator. A professional leading role must be ensured, in particular through the professional standing and quality of Norwegian polar research.
- All activity shall be in accordance with an overriding consideration of the environment. Research and higher education in climate and the environment are natural focus areas, and the research itself relies on ensuring that the area remains as unaffected as possible by local impact.

Previous page: Drifting sea ice at the entrance to Ekmanfjorden. Photo: Niels Fuchs / UNIS

3 Norwegian research management

– overall framework and principles for research and higher education in Svalbard

Norwegian research management is exercised by maintaining an overview, regulating and coordinating research activities in order to reduce the overall burden on the natural environment in Svalbard. This is crucial to succeeding in further developing Svalbard as a world-class research arena. Based on the objectives described in Chapter 2, and in order to operationalise these objectives and Norwegian research management, overarching principles and frameworks for research and higher education in Svalbard have been established. These principles and frameworks are consistent with international research standards and are elaborated below.

3.1 Building on Svalbard's natural advantages

Research activities and educational programmes shall be based on the natural advantages offered by Svalbard's location, meaning that climate, nature and the environment shall be priority areas for education and research activities. Activities shall be of such a nature that they can only, or best be carried out in Svalbard. Scientific studies that collect data relevant to the management of Svalbard, including the conservation of biodiversity, are high-priority areas.

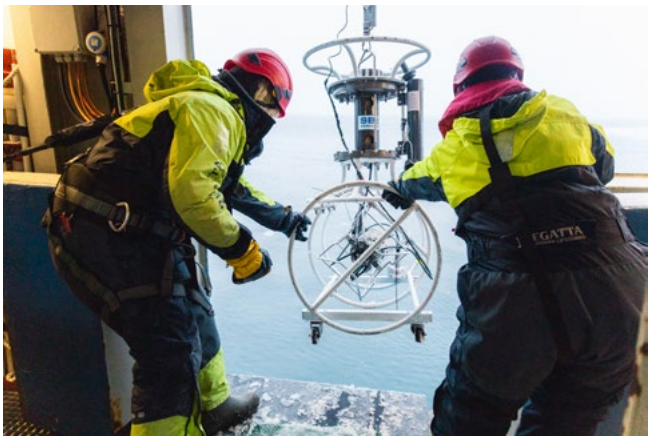
A calving glacier. Photo: Geir Wing Gabrielsen / NPI

Access to and use of publicly owned infrastructure is reserved for research and educational activities that build on the natural advantages of Svalbard's location, and such activities will be given priority if allocation is required. This type of research is also prioritised with regard to leasing buildings and infrastructure at Ny-Ålesund Research Station. In addition to research and higher education within climate, nature and the environment, Svalbard's location also provides an opportune setting for, for example, space research, geology, field safety disciplines, cultural heritage and Arctic technology. All research activities shall be consistent with Norwegian security interests, in line with current policies on research security and responsible international knowledge cooperation.

Previous page: The Amundsen Villa in Ny-Ålesund. (detail)
Photo: Trine Lise Sviggum Helgerud / NPI

3.2 High scientific ambitions

Research environments in Svalbard shall have high scientific ambitions for their research and strive for quality through international cooperation. Research must be suitable for delivering significant contributions to international knowledge development and for contributing to a shared knowledge base for solving key societal tasks and addressing global challenges.



Fieldwork studying the inflow of warm Atlantic water. Photo: Dris Abdennour / UNIS

A large share of the research conducted in Svalbard is thematically limited to the archipelago and the surrounding marine areas. This research is very important and highly relevant as a basis for knowledge-based environmental management in the vulnerable areas in and around Svalbard. Efforts should also be made to place some of this research in a broader pan-Arctic or global context to increase its relevance. Academic activities should complement each other as much as possible in order to ensure a strong and coherent research effort, for example through major interdisciplinary initiatives.

3.3 UNIS – the sole provider of higher education in Svalbard

Norway facilitates higher education in Arctic disciplines at the University Centre in Svalbard AS (UNIS), in cooperation with universities on the mainland. UNIS shall be the sole provider of higher education in Svalbard. This means that no other higher education programmes or courses will be facilitated in Svalbard outside of UNIS. The educational programmes at UNIS shall provide students at universities and university colleges with Arctic expertise and contribute to recruitment to polar research. To realise the potential of UNIS, cooperation between UNIS and mainland universities shall be further developed. The objective is to ensure that half of the students come from Norwegian institutions.

Students learning about periglacial icing in front of Drønbreen. Photo: Nil Rodes / UNIS

3.4 Overriding consideration for the environment – field activities subject to application

All research and educational activities shall take into account the need to minimise the footprint and overall impact on the environment. This can be achieved by coordinating activities and sharing of infrastructure, data and results from fieldwork. Research data shall be made available and shared in line with internationally recognised principles. Whenever possible, remote measurement and automated data collection should also be used to reduce environmental impacts.

Collection of snow samples, Holtedahlfonna. Photo: Stein Tronstad / NPI

All activities must comply with the environmental regulations applicable in Svalbard. As a general rule, most field activities require a permit from the Governor of Svalbard. In the exercise of authority under environmental legislation, research and education will be assessed on the basis of the cumulative impact on natural and cultural environments (see also section 4.2.4). For activities in territorial waters, permission from other authorities may be required, including the Directorate of Fisheries and the Norwegian Offshore Directorate.

3.5 Using established communities and research stations

Research in Svalbard shall primarily be conducted from established local communities and research stations. This applies to research activities in all local communities. This means, among other things, that permanent research activities based on cabins on state-owned land should not be carried out, except where this forms part of Norwegian authorities' environmental management and research in Svalbard.

The Science Centre in Longyearbyen. Photo: Trine Lise Sviggum Helgerud / NPI

Research activities in protected areas of the archipelago shall, as a general rule, be limited to what cannot take place elsewhere. The restrictive practice with regard to permits and requirements under the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act for activities that interfere with the nature and landscape outside the planning areas[1] will be continued. This means that it cannot be

[1] Planning areas in Svalbard as defined in *the Regulation of 28 June 2002 No. 650* on impact assessments and delimitation of planning areas in Svalbard.

expected that permits will be granted to establish new research stations or other major permanent research infrastructure outside the planning areas.

The Ny-Ålesund Research Station.
Photo: Trine Lise Sviggum Helgerud / NPI

Within planning areas, there is a strain on existing infrastructure. In both Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund, the management of land and property, and the establishment and use of buildings for research and education purposes, shall comply with land-use plans and regulations, the state's landowner management, as well as the principles and frameworks for higher education and research. This implies that research activities in Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund shall, as a general rule, be conducted within the framework of the Svalbard Science Centre or through research cooperation at the Ny-Ålesund Research Station.

3.6 Good logistics support, security management and safety training

Climate change is having major consequences on Svalbard, and these changes will lead to more frequent events with heavier precipitation, thawing of permafrost, more frequent and larger floods, increased erosion, more frequent snow, slush, soil and flood avalanches as well as landslides. More challenging weather conditions and reduced ice cover may make travel more difficult and reduce accessibility. Fieldwork, both on land and at sea, may involve significant risk. Conducting field activities require a high level of safety management, safety training, and logistical support for both students and researchers. All institutions conducting research and educational activities in the field are responsible for ensuring that their researchers and students have the appropriate competence and access to necessary logistical support. All field activities must comply with the Field Operation Safety Regulation in Svalbard.[2]

Safety training.
Photo: Ingrid Ballari Nilssen / UNIS

Field safety.
Photo: Johanna Schramm / UNIS

[2] Regulation relating to safety in the field etc. in Svalbard (Field Operation Safety Regulation) of 6 June 2025.

Glacier course in Ny-Ålesund.
Photo: Stein Tronstad / NPI

3.7 Coordination and mutual access to infrastructure

To ensure that the archipelago's research infrastructure is utilised even more effectively than today, there is a need for increased cooperation, sharing and mutual access to research infrastructure. All parties that manage research infrastructure in Svalbard should, as far as possible, provide each other with mutual access to equipment, vessels, laboratories etc.

It should not be expected that permissions will be granted for the establishment of new research stations or other major, permanent research infrastructure outside the designated planning areas. Any major and permanent research infrastructure within the planning areas must comply with land-use plan, complement existing infrastructure, support prioritized scientific areas, and be coordinated through the Svalbard Research Office and relevant coordination mechanisms. In Longyearbyen, as a general rule, no new areas will be announced for lease or allocated for new activities that place additional pressure on the infrastructure, in line with the Svalbard White Paper. In the Ny-Ålesund planning area, any new major research infrastructure must be developed within the framework of the research strategy for Ny-Ålesund Research Station.

Plankton net on the aft deck.
Photo: Olaf Schneider / NPI

The Zeppelin Observatory.
Photo: Max König / NPI

3.8 Sharing of project information and coordination of field activities

Research communities shall share information about planned field projects and coordinate activities as far as possible to avoid duplication of work and the resulting additional strain on the environment, as well as to ensure more efficient use of field equipment and research vessels. Improved information sharing can also facilitate the establishment of academic cooperation with other relevant actors.

Active participation in relevant academic cooperation forums is expected. All research actors in Svalbard must register research projects in the Research in Svalbard (RiS) database (see also section 4.2.1).

Top: Monitoring of Svalbard reindeer. Photo: Trine Lise Sviggum Helgerud / NPI.

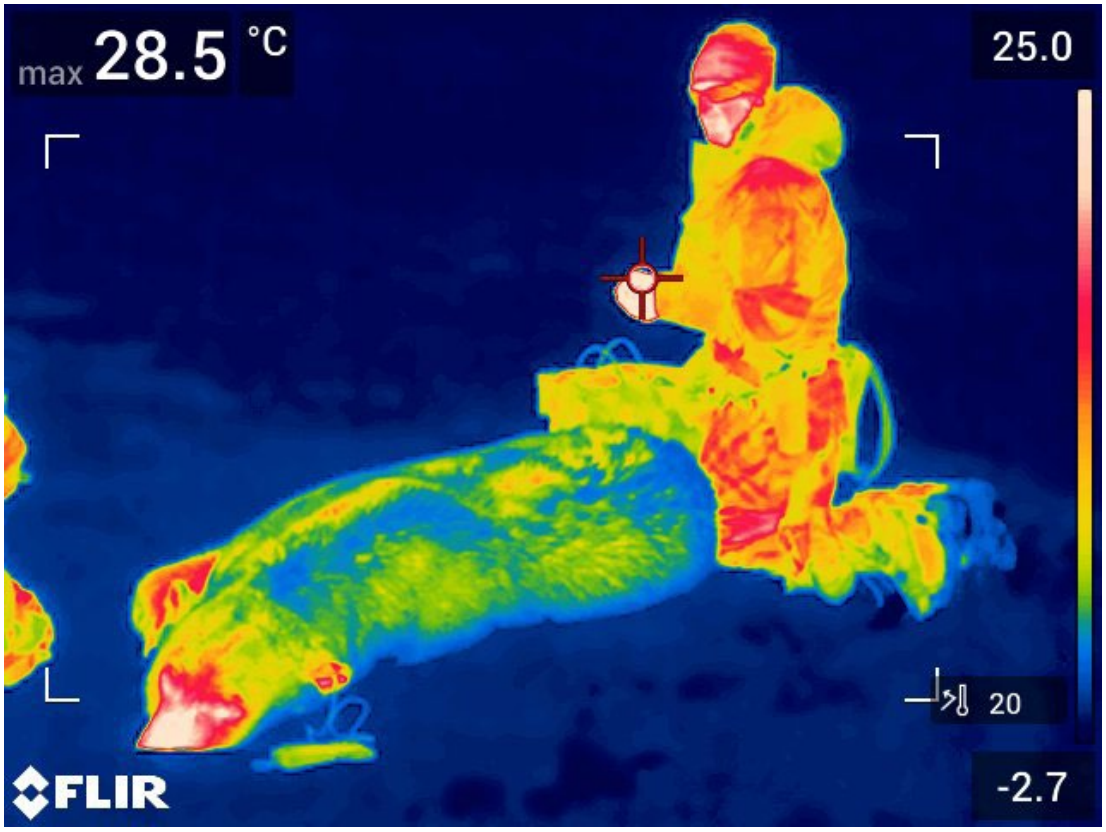
Left: Seabird monitoring in Kongsfjorden. Photo: Dagmara Wojtanowicz / NPI

3.9 Sharing of research results and data

Research results and data must be made openly available and published in accordance with the FAIR principles[3], enabling wider use and contribute to the advancement of the research frontier. Data sharing is important because there is often a need to combine different datasets, which is particularly important for understanding complex climate and ecosystem dynamics. In addition, it is important to avoid duplication and redundant activity, as data collection is very costly and often involves interventions, field activity, and wear on vulnerable natural areas.

Laboratory work UNIS. Photo: UNIS

Svalbard shall be a leading area for open publishing and data sharing, in line with the principle that research cooperation shall be as open as possible and as closed as necessary, as set out in White Paper No. 14 (2024–2025) *Secure knowledge in an uncertain world*. As a general rule, the sharing of data and results will be a prerequisite for the use of publicly owned infrastructure.



Infrared image used to measure the body temperature of a polar bear. Photo: Jon Aars / NPI

[3] FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable.

The logistics warehouse in the Science Centre, Longyearbyen. Photo: Jan Roald / NPI

4 Actors and policy instruments

Several actors have roles in implementing the strategy and manage policy instruments relevant to achieving the established objectives.

4.1 Actors

4.1.1 Svalbard Research Office

The Svalbard Research Office has the primary responsibility for implementing and following up the *Strategy for Research and Higher Education in Svalbard*. The Office consists of resources from the Norwegian Polar Institute and the Research Council of Norway. Its purpose is to exercise clear Norwegian research management by facilitating high-quality research, coordinating research to reduce the overall burden on nature, and maintaining an overview of the research activities.

The Svalbard Research Office shall be a clear first point of contact for all researchers in Svalbard and have a coordinating and advisory role for research actors and authorities. This includes facilitating high-quality research and research cooperation and serving as a resource for research environments in Svalbard. The Office shall maintain an overview of developments in research activity in Svalbard and communicate Norwegian framework conditions and research policy for Svalbard. Furthermore, the Office shall contribute to coordinated research activity and sharing of infrastructure, data and results. The Svalbard Research Office shall have a comprehensive overview of research activity, providing a basis for relevant authorities to conduct targeted supervision and inspections to ensure compliance with strategies and regulations. The Office's work shall also be seen in connection with the implementation of the research strategy in Ny-Ålesund. The Svalbard Research Office is located in the Science Centre in Longyearbyen.

4.1.2 Norwegian Polar Institute

The Norwegian Polar Institute operates the Svalbard Research Office together with the Research Council of Norway, manages Ny-Ålesund Research Station, and is the central governmental institution for mapping, environmental monitoring and management-oriented research in polar areas. The Institute serves as a professional and strategic adviser to the Governor of Svalbard, the environmental directorates and central government authorities on polar matters. The Norwegian Polar Institute is a member of the Interministerial Polar Committee.

4.1.3 Research Council of Norway

The Research Council of Norway operates the Svalbard Research Office together with the Norwegian Polar Institute. The Research Council's main tasks are exercising Norwegian research management through research funding, giving advice to the authorities, quality assurance and dissemination of research. The Research Council manages policy instruments aimed at financing Norwegian Svalbard research and strengthening research cooperation nationally and internationally. The Research Council administers grant schemes for cooperation and fieldwork in Svalbard (see section 4.2.3) and is responsible for the Svalbard Science Advisory Forum (SSAF) and the RiS database.

A bearded seal on an ice floe.
Photo: Geir Gotaas / NPI

The Auroral Observatory at UNIS
Photo: Ingrid Ballari / UNIS

4.1.4 University Centre in Svalbard AS (UNIS)

The University Centre in Svalbard AS (UNIS) is a unique centre for university studies and research in Svalbard. UNIS shall be the sole provider of higher education in Svalbard.

In cooperation with mainland universities, UNIS offers education in Arctic disciplines at bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels to both Norwegian and international students. UNIS currently conducts research and education in five academic fields: Arctic biology, Arctic geology, Arctic geophysics, Arctic safety, and Arctic technology. Educational offerings shall be based on this research and, as a general rule, be field- or expedition-based. UNIS also provides safety training through the Arctic Safety Centre.

4.1.5 Governor of Svalbard

The Governor of Svalbard (Sysselmesteren) is the highest authority in Svalbard and administers Norwegian law applicable in the archipelago. The Governor, among other things, issues permits under environmental regulations and the field safety regulations for field activities, upon application when required.

4.2 Policy instruments

4.2.1 Registration and overview

Research in Svalbard database (RiS)

The Research in Svalbard database (RiS) is a searchable overview of planned and ongoing research projects in Svalbard. The database is administered by the Research Council of Norway. All research projects throughout Svalbard shall be registered in RiS. This is, among other things, a prerequisite for obtaining permits for field activities from the Governor of Svalbard or for applying for project funding from the Research Council. The same applies to all projects involving stays in Ny-Ålesund. It is necessary to ensure that projects are consistent with the frameworks and principles set out in the research strategy. The Svalbard Research Office follows up registrations that deviate from these.

Glaciological fieldwork by Kongsfjorden.
Photo: Dagmara Wojtanowicz / NPI

Svalbard reindeer and ptarmigan.
Photo: Nicolas Lecomte / NPI

4.2.2 Cooperation forums

Svalbard Science Advisory Forum (SSAF)

The Research Council of Norway is responsible for the Svalbard Science Advisory Forum (SSAF). The Forum shall contribute to increased cooperation, coordination and information sharing regarding research activities in Svalbard and provide input and advice to the Svalbard Research Office. SSAF shall also strengthen cooperation between Norwegian and international individual researchers and research institutions in order to promote knowledge development and research quality in Svalbard.

Svalbard Integrated Arctic Observing System (SIOS)

Studies of the northern lights in Ny-Ålesund using laser.
Photo: Christelle Guesnon / NPI

The Svalbard Integrated Arctic Observing System (SIOS) is a Norwegian-initiated international partnership for sharing research infrastructure and data relevant to Earth System Research in Svalbard. SIOS members include both Norwegian and international research institutions and research funding organisations. The partnership is mainly funded by the Research Council of Norway and membership fees. SIOS is an important contribution to Norwegian research management and coordination and shall contribute to the comprehensive overview of research activities that the Svalbard Research Office is to maintain.

The aim is that SIOS shall contribute to make Svalbard an internationally leading platform for sharing of data, infrastructure and results. The Government encourages all institutions with research infrastructure relevant to Earth System Science in Svalbard to participate in SIOS.

4.2.3 Funding schemes

The Research Council of Norway is a significant funder of Norwegian polar research and promotes research quality both through its own policy instruments and through participation in international cooperation. The Arctic Field Grant (AFG) and the Svalbard Strategic Grant (SSG) are funding schemes tailored to promote and recruit to Svalbard research. AFG funding shall primarily cover costs related to fieldwork in Svalbard and recruit and stimulate increased Norwegian research activity at Ny-Ålesund Research Station. SSG is a policy instrument aimed at promoting coordination, cooperation and data sharing among researchers with relevance to Svalbard.

Monitoring of great skua, Bjørnøya. Photo: Ann Kristin Balto / NPI

4.2.4 Regulations

All research activities in Svalbard shall comply with Norwegian legislation. This includes regulations related to the environment and field safety, as well as regulations related to national security, such as the Security Act, the Export Control Act and the Sanctions Act, with associated regulations and restrictive measures.

The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act regulates, among other things, travel, interventions and pollution. There are strict rules for motorised travel in Svalbard, for example by snowmobile and helicopter. In planning areas, the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act and associated regulations set the framework for land-use planning. All activities shall be consistent with land use and provisions established in approved plans.

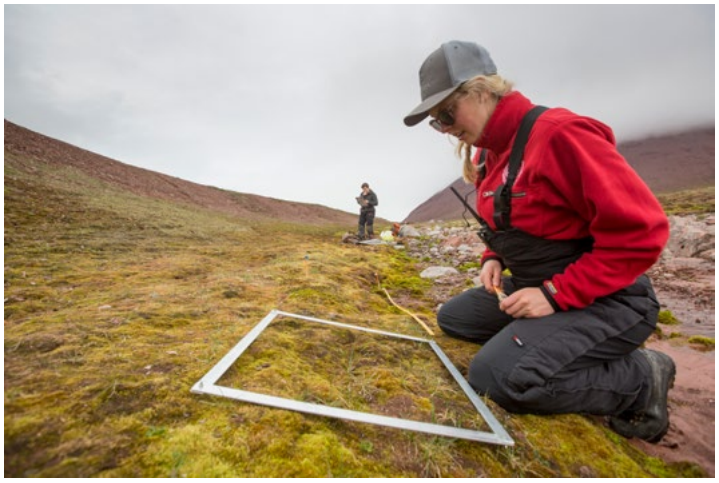
The Regulations relating to safety in field aims to ensure that safety and emergency preparedness are properly safeguarded. Research and educational activities outside designated travel areas[4] require permission from the Governor of Svalbard.

With regard to the environmental consequences of research activities, there may be cases were, in the exercise of authority under the law, activities must be prioritised based on the principle in the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act that any activity in Svalbard shall be assessed on the basis of the cumulative environmental burden. Considerations relating to participant safety and rescue capacity may also require field activities to be adapted to a level that reduces

Remains of Arnold Pike's house built in 1888, Virgohamna. Photo: Harald Faste Aas / NPI

[4] See definition in the Regulations relating to safety in field etc. in Svalbard of 6 June 2025 No. 940 section 3 (g).

the risk of incidents. Such assessments are carried out by the individual authorities responsible for administering the relevant regulations.



Vegetation monitoring. Photo: Lawrence Hislop / NPI

Research and educational activities must also comply with considerations of national security, as set out in Meld. St. 14 (2024–2025) Report to the Storting (white paper) *Secure knowledge in an uncertain world*. The balance between openness and due caution is a challenge that the entire knowledge sector must address. The Government has therefore developed national guidelines for responsible international cooperation as a web-based resource/tool for Norwegian higher education and research institutions.

4.2.5 Land owner management

The Norwegian state, represented by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, owns and manages a total of 98.75 per cent of the land in Svalbard. All use of state-owned land in the archipelago requires either a ground lease agreement or permission from the Ministry.

Through land ownership, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries has the ability to facilitate or restrict the use of state-owned land for activities requiring access to land. In Longyearbyen, as a general rule, no new areas will be announced for lease or new plots allocated for new activities that place pressure on infrastructure. For already leased areas, the type of activity must be consistent with the purpose stated in existing ground lease agreements.

As a contracting party to ground lease agreements, the Ministry may ensure that state-owned property is not used for purposes beyond those permitted under the agreements. The Ministry's policy instrument for facilitating or regulating activity is general in nature and does not distinguish between research-related and other types of activity.

Longyearbyen. Photo: Ingrid Ballari Nilssen / UNIS

Fieldwork, zooplankton research.
Photo: Allison Bailey / NPI

5 Consequences if the strategy is not followed

Laws and regulations governing activities in Svalbard must be complied with by all parties wishing to conduct research in Svalbard. Each individual research actor is responsible for ensuring that activities are consistent with registered activities in the Research in Svalbard (RiS) database, the frameworks and principles set out in the strategy, and other relevant regulations applicable to research activities in Svalbard. This includes, among other things, environmental regulations, field safety requirements and considerations of research security. The Svalbard Research Office has overarching responsibility for implementing and following up the *Strategy for Research and Higher Education in Svalbard*. Regulations are enforced by relevant authorities.

If research actors do not operate in accordance with the frameworks and principles set out in this strategy, this may have consequences for their access to Norwegian research resources in Svalbard. This means that their research activities will not be facilitated, including access to publicly owned research infrastructure. There may be cases where in the exercise of authority under the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act, activities must be prioritised on the basis of the Act's principle that any activity in Svalbard shall be assessed in light of the cumulative environmental burden.

Svalbard Flora – Purple Saxifrage. Photo: Helle Goldman / NPI

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Students on a field excursion at Vallåkrabreen in Rindersbukta. Photo: Nil Rodes / UNIS