## The Arctic Council and Gender Equality – a milestone report on Gender Equality in the Arctic published.

A milestone *Pan-Arctic Report: Gender Equality in the Arctic* has just been published and is available online at [arcticgenderequality.network](https://arcticgenderequality.network/phase-3/pan-arctic-report). The report was published in tandem with the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting held in Reykjavík 19. – 20. May. Gender equality has been one of Iceland´s priorities during its Arctic Council Chairmanship 2019-2021, under the theme People and Communities. The report is a part of an international project under the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Group on [Gender Equality in the Arctic](https://arcticgenderequality.network/) (GEA).

The report was submitted and accepted during the ministerial meeting and included in the Ministerial Declaration as well as the new Strategic Plan, also accepted during the meeting. The declaration, dubbed the Reykjavík Declaration 2021: On the occasion of the Twelfth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, **emphasizes** „the importance of gender equality and respect for diversity for sustainable development in the Arctic and welcome the *Pan-Arctic Report, Gender Equality in the Arctic, Phase 3*, **encourage** the mainstreaming of gender-based analysis in the work of the Arctic Council and **call for** further action to advance gender equality in the Arctic“. This marks an important milestone as equality is considered a prerequisite of sustainable development in a future Arctic.

The report provides an overview of gender-related issues in the Arctic, including Law & Governance; Security; Gender and Environment; Migration and Mobility; Indigeneity, Gender, Violence, and Reconciliation; and Empowerment and Fate Control. It contributes to identifying gaps in knowledge when it comes to gender in the region and provides three recommendations specifically for the Arctic Council in addition to almost 70 policy relevant highlights.

Key findings include the need for mainstreaming and gender-based analysis as necessary strategies for promoting and ensuring gender equality, including in social and economic development, and the need for better gender, sex and ethnically disaggregated data. Consistent and comparable data is the very foundation for understanding realities and inequalities across regions, countries, sectors, genders, and peoples. It is crucial for meaningful research and providing policymakers and decisionmakers with the knowledge and capacity to develop well-informed policies. The highlights are relevant for multiple audiences, including Arctic states, the Arctic Council and its working groups, policy makers, private industry, the research community, and the public.

The report was developed by 10 lead authors and approximately 80 contributing authors, from over 15 states, including all Arctic States. In the spirit of the GEA project, a vital component of developing the report was the engagement process and significant efforts were made to ensure inclusion and transparency during the process by actively soliciting feedback from peers and interested parties. A special emphasis was on the partnership with Permanent Participants and other Indigenous representatives, both through our Partners, the Editorial Committee, the Youth Advisory Group, the SDWG Social, Economic and Cultural Expert Group, and through contributions to chapters from Indigenous experts, including from the Saami Council, the Aleut International Association, and the Arctic Athabascan Council, as well as the Paktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

The GEA project is an international collaborative project dating back to 2013. Lead and co-leads include Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Canada, the United States, the Saami Council and the Aleut International Association but as it is a highly collaborative project it includes many other additional partners. Initiated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Iceland, in collaboration with the Directorate for Equality in Iceland and the Stefansson Arctic Institute the project has been led by the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network under the leadership of Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Director and the GEA Team. The project has continued to flourish through its international collaboration and partners.

From the beginning, the purpose and objective of GEA has been to raise visibility and understanding of the importance of gender issues in the Arctic, to identify priorities and concrete strategies for increased diversity and gender balance in policy- and decision-making processes, and to provide information to facilitate sustainable policy making for the future.

Phase I of the project (GEA I) was the international conference Gender Equality in the Arctic—Current Realities, Future Challenges, which took place in Akureyri in October 2014. It resulted in an eponymous conference report published in 2015 by the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Following the success of GEA I, Phase II (GEA II) was launched in 2017. GEA II involved building a network of experts in the field and creating a website for the purpose of: promoting and expanding the dialogue on gender equality in the Arctic, providing a formal network of groups and experts interested in the topic, encouraging cooperation with and amongst existing networks, and providing an online platform for material and events relevant to Arctic Gender Equality.

Phase III of the Gender Equality in the Arctic project (GEA III) was launched in 2019 and includes a regular newsletter - [GEA Times](https://arcticgenderequality.network/gea-times) - in addition to various other networking and dissemination activities through online media and events and expanding its database of gender related material. However, the focus has primarily been on the report pulling together material, information, and expertise to provide an overview on gender-related issues in the Arctic.

A launch event was hosted on May 14th by the Wilson Center’s Polar Institute with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Iceland, the Icelandic Arctic Council Chairmanship, the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network, the Stefansson Arctic Institute, the Directorate of Equality in Iceland, and the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth.  The Minister for Foreign Affairs in Iceland, Mr. Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson was the keynote speaker. Recording of the event is available on the [Wilson Center webpage](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/gender-equality-arctic-phase-iii-report-launch).

The project partners are extremely grateful for all the support received from various funding sources without which this project would not have seen the light of day. The project was sponsored by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Icelandic Gender Equality Fund, the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, Sweden, Finland, and Norway, the Faroe Islands Ministry of Culture and Foreign Affairs; the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Government of Canada; the United States Department of State, the National Science Foundation; the Prime Minister’s Office in Iceland; and the Stefansson Arctic Institute. Co-sponsored by: The University of Akureyri; the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College; the Polar Institute and Wilson Center; and the UArctic and its Institute for Arctic Policy.

Gender equality in the Arctic is highly relevant to the agenda and role of the Arctic Council and its Sustainable Development Working Group, which have emphasised gender equality in previous projects and initiatives. The importance of issues of gender and diversity has become increasingly evident, the latest example being Iceland’s emphasis on gender issues during its Council Chairmanship. Preparations for phase IV of the project are already underway. All information pertaining to the project and a pdf version of the report and executive summary are available on the project website [arcticgenderequality.network](https://arcticgenderequality.network/phase-3/pan-arctic-report).

*For further information contact Embla Eir Oddsdóttir, Director of the Icelandic Arctic Cooperation Network and Lead GEA,* *embla@arcticiceland.is**; +354 864 5979.*