



ATVINNUÞRÓUNARFÉLAG  
EYJAFJARÐAR

## Region in transition

-The case of Akureyri region-

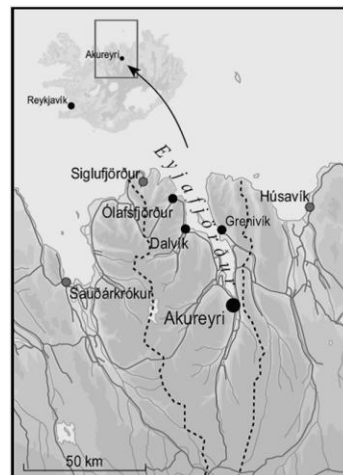
Stefanía Steinsdóttir

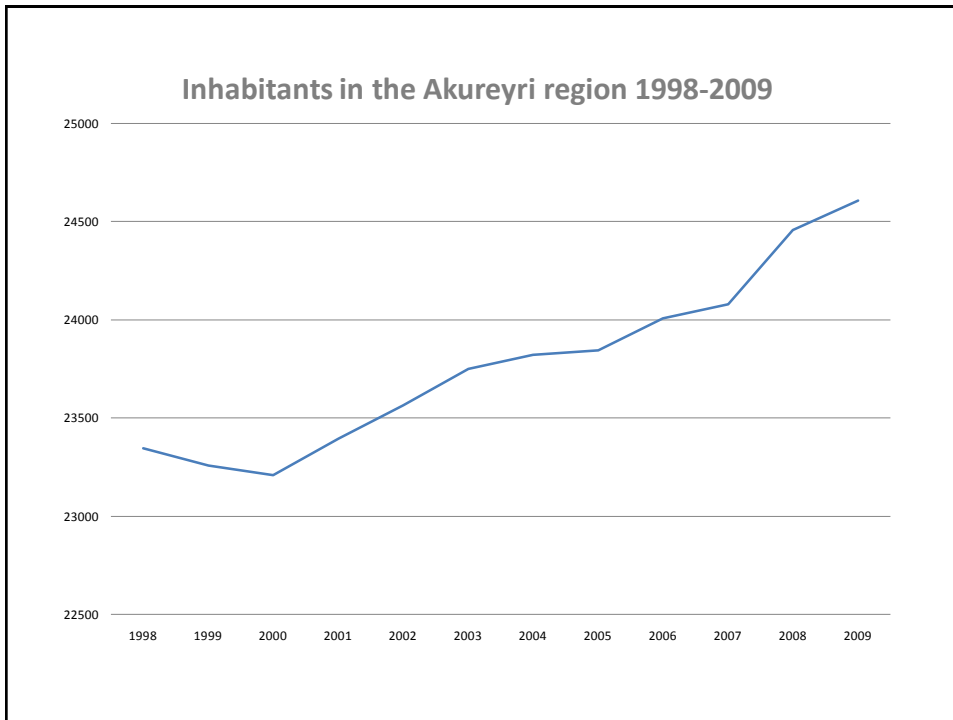
Project manager

Akureyri region Business Agency

## Akureyri, "the capital of Northern Iceland" and surrounding region

- The largest and most populated area in Iceland outside the capital Reykjavík
- Located in the centre of Northern Iceland
- Akureyri region is located at the largest fjord in Iceland, Eyjafjörður
- 9 municipalities with total of 24.500 inhabitants
- Akureyri city is the largest with 17.500 inhabitants.





## Akureyri Region Business Agency (AFE)

- Owned and operated by the Akureyri region municipalities
- Partly financed through the Institute for Regional Development in Iceland (Byggðastofnun)
- It's role is to increase the region's competitiveness, quality of life and overall attractiveness
- AFE assists local companies in analyzing and finding new markets and opportunities
- AFE's mission is to find potential investors into the Akureyri region



## Region in transition

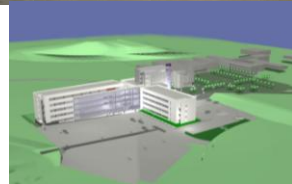
- During the 20<sup>th</sup> century Akureyri was termed “the manufacturing town” of Iceland
- Major changes in the local economy stem from the establishment of the University of Akureyri in 1987.
- Found its competitive edge in education and diverse services of the knowledge economy of today.
- The University of Akureyri has since 1987 grown very rapidly and is an important sector for the local economy.



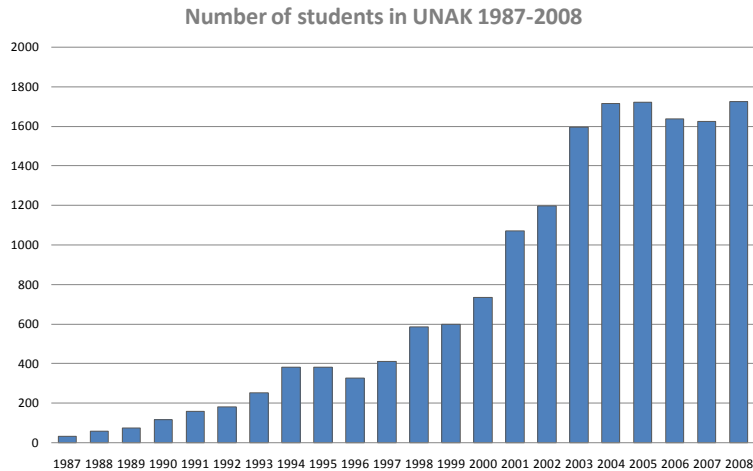
## University of Akureyri (UNAK)

### Basic Profile

- Provides academic and professional education which takes in account the needs of society
- Number of students is around 1700
- Number of employees are 208, part-time teachers are approximately 500
- Is second of Icelandic universities in terms of research activities



# UNAK has grown rapidly since 1987



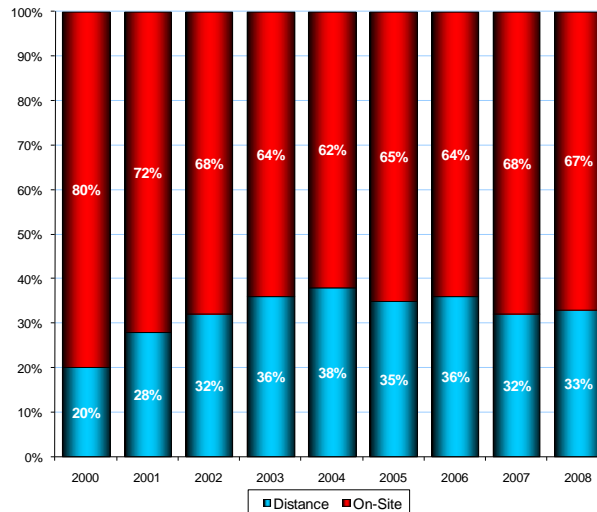
## University of Akureyri

### Faculties

- Faculty of Health Sciences (nursing, occupational therapy)
- Faculty of Business and Science (business administration, fisheries science, biotechnology etc.)
- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (teacher education, law, social sciences etc.)



## Proportion of distance and on-site students



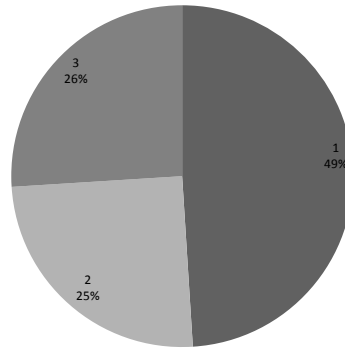
## Qualified people into the economy from UNAK – few examples

- The rate of qualified teachers in kindergartens in Akureyri increased from nearly 40% in 1999 up to almost 80% in 2008
- The rate of qualified teachers in Primary schools in Akureyri increased from about 60% in 1996 up to more than 95% in 2009
- Research has shown that it is significantly more likely that nurses stay in the region than if they pursue studies in University of Iceland.
- Graduates from business administration and fishery sciences have significantly contributed to increased professionalism in companies in the Akureyri region



## Where graduated students live and work after finishing UNAK

49% in the Akureyri Region  
25% in the capital area  
26% in areas outside Akureyri and Reykjavik



## Research spin-offs

- Research in energy biotechnology and marine microbiology has during last year created more than 20 jobs for skilled people in Akureyri

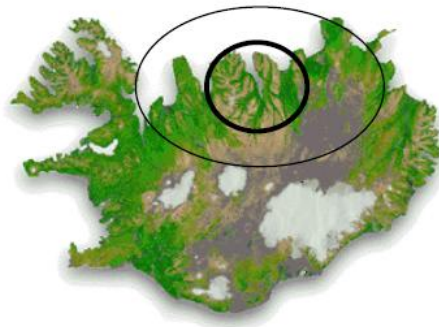
## University of Akureyri: A few general impacts

- Better study opportunities in the region and a higher education level
- Higher earnings potential
- Improved promotion possibilities
- More support for scientific research
- More appealing living conditions
- More diversity for people with university degree
  
- Generally, many opportunities and characteristics in the region are similar to the capital region but in a smaller scale

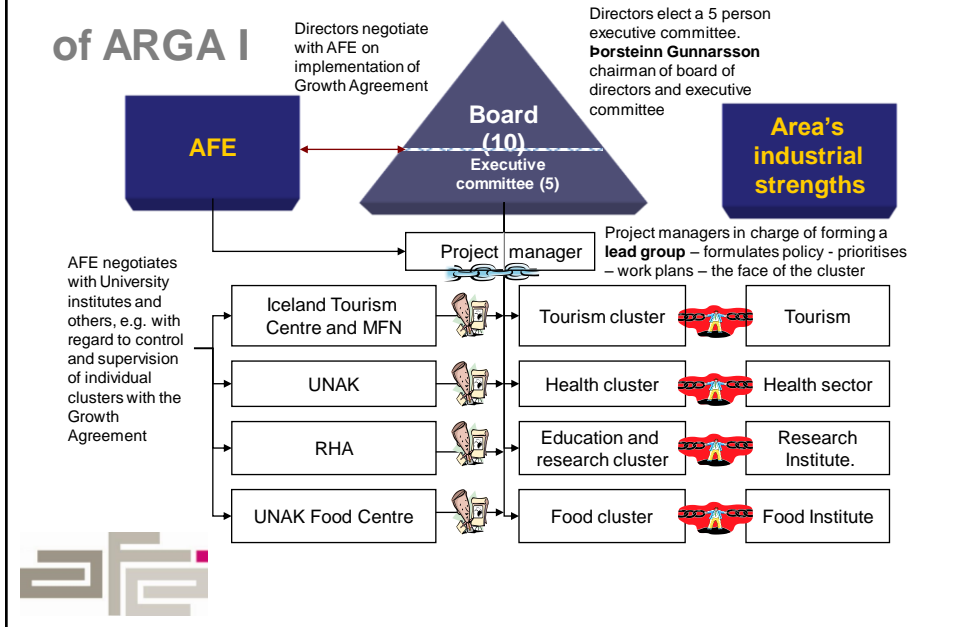


## Objectives of the Akureyri region Growth Agreement 2004-2007 (ARGA I)

- Enhance the Akureyri region as a popular place to live in
- Stimulate the region's population increase
- Raise the region's competitiveness and nurture economic growth
- Develop and strengthen the region's growth sectors
- Increase the number of competitive companies and jobs, augmenting the supply of products and services
- Exploit the possibilities created by taking part in international projects
- Attract international investment and knowledge



# Planning of ARGAI



## RES - The School for Renewable Energy Science

- One-year intensive international M.Sc programme in environmentally friendly energy use
- RES target groups are primarily:
  - Students holding B.Sc. degree with top grades in engineering or physical/ natural science (chemistry, physics, geology and related fields)
  - Second master in renewable energy science
  - And/or using RES as a part of their Ph.D. studies at their home institute.



**RES**  
THE SCHOOL FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY SCIENCE

[www.res.is](http://www.res.is)





## Akureyri Region Growth agreement 2008-2010 (ARGA II)

- The main objective of the present Growth Agreement is to promote innovation and increase economic growth in the region with active triple-helix co-operation
- The criteria for funding in the ARGA II 2008-2010 :
  - Cooperation between at least two factors, lead by a private company
  - Emphasis on Research and development
  - Marketing is important
  - Outreach; projects should aim at marketing and export
  - Growth; projects shall aim at innovation and growth in the region
- Similar to project funds, but with more support.



## To sum up

- The University of Akureyri, UNAK has proved to be immensely important for the town of Akureyri and the region in general
- The university came at just the right moment in times of structural change in the economy
- Higher education level, more diversity of jobs for educated persons, better access to educated people for the economy, adds an important flavour to the town and region
- Growth Agreement and the existence of UNAK were important for long term projects such as RES - School for Renewable Energy Science

