

NAMMCO ANNUAL MEETING 33

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

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Hotel Hans Egede, Nuuk, Greenland

DOCUMENT 16	Report on NAMMCO’s educational project, GUARDNA
Agenda item(s)	12.4
Submitted by	Secretariat
Action requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take note • Provide comments and ideas, especially regarding possible funding opportunities for the translation into Icelandic, Norwegian and Northern Sámi
Background/content	<p>NAMMCO’s Communication Strategy and its Communication Plans (CPs) were developed to strengthen the organisation’s visibility and transparency. Council 29 (September 2022) adopted the 3rd Communication Plan (CP3) for 2023–2024, which highlights “youth, children, educators, and member countries’ educational networks” as a priority audience.</p> <p>Although NAMMCO’s website contains extensive information on marine mammals and their management in the North Atlantic, the material is not easily accessible to younger audiences. To better reach this group, the development of a dedicated educational portal was launched in 2023, with partners from all four NAMMCO member countries and Denmark.</p> <p>The portal will be freely available on the NAMMCO website for schools, youth, and the general public. Its purpose is to engage young people in marine conservation, promote awareness of responsible and sustainable use of marine mammals, and increase visibility of NAMMCO’s scientific work.</p> <p>“If you want to conserve marine mammals, conserve the sea.”</p> <p>The project is supported by partners from the NAMMCO countries and Denmark, with funding from Novo Nordisk (main funder), AG-Fisk, and in-kind contributions from NAMMCO.</p> <p>This report summarises the progress made in GUARDNA in 2025-2026 and outlines the next steps.</p>

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1 GUARDNA

The NAMMCO Educational project is presently centred around one large interregional project: GUARDNA—Guardians of the North Atlantic: Looking after our Seas to Conserve Marine Mammals.

Originally a three-year project (2023–2026), GUARDNA has now been extended now by 18 months to mid-2028 and aims at educating and contributing to the empowerment of the coming generation (7- to 20-year-old children and young adults), bringing the North Atlantic into the classroom and the students out into the North Atlantic (NA).

GUARDNA intends to develop a marine portal with appealing and playful educational materials, that intends to spark curiosity and interest of the youngest into ocean sustainability, using marine mammals as emissaries for the entire marine ecosystem, with the understanding that protecting/conserving marine mammals imply to conserve their habitat, i.e., to conserve the ocean. The GUARDNA educational portal will contain all the educational materials, both information and indoors and outdoors activities and guidelines for the teachers, and will be freely accessible. Produced in English, the material will be translated to Danish, Faroese, Greenlandic, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Northern Sámi, making it accessible to youth of the whole NA realm.

At present the partners of the Project are:

- NAMMCO
- Institute of Learning at the University of Greenland (with Lars Demant-Poort as project leader for the part funded by Novo Nordisk)
- NÁM, Faroese educational Publisher
- STEM Húsavík
- Nordnorsk Vitensenter
- The Natural History Museum of Denmark

To accomplish the objectives of the GUARDNA project, the NAMMCO Secretariat has established communication with schools, universities, science, and environmental organisations, as well as science communication and education service centres. During the idea development phase, the Secretariat closely collaborated with educators from Denmark, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, and Norway, who provided valuable feedback and expressed enthusiasm for the project. The goal of the Secretariat is to expand and strengthen this network further, actively focusing on the continuous improvement of the materials, which will promote the adoption of the project in as many schools as possible in the NA.

This document summarises the progress and status of the GUARDNA project per March 2026.

2 PROJECT PROGRESS: MARCH 2025-MARCH 2026

2.1 PROGRESS ON MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the past months, the Secretariat, partners, and content providers have continued to work diligently on the portal for the older age groups, originally scheduled for launch in autumn 2025. However, progress on several key components, including translations and various technical requirements, has taken longer than expected, resulting in delaying the launching.

Due to these delays, the Secretariat and project partners requested an extension of the funding period from Novo Nordisk and AG Fisk. The extension—from the original end date of December 2026 to June 2028—has been granted.

All materials developed to date are available on the project website, which is currently under construction. The link has only been distributed to project partners and educators testing the materials.

In 2025, the online portal and the project's visual profile were developed. The English language portal for the older age groups is now close to completion, and the Danish language materials are already available. Faroese and Greenlandic materials are being translated and updated on the site during spring 2026.

All GUARDNA activities for the 13–15 age group have been linked to elements of the national curricula. This alignment will be further refined in the coming months, as both Denmark and the Faroe Islands are currently updating their national curricula.

2.1.1 Country specific updates

Denmark

Translations to Danish of all materials for the older age groups were completed in autumn 2025 and integrated into the website throughout February 2026. During spring 2026, collaboration with Danish partners will continue in order to further strengthen the alignment between the GUARDNA activities and the updated Danish school curriculum.

Faroe Islands

Geneviève Desportes and Naima El bani Altuna met with its Faroese partners (Enna Garðshorn Mikkelsen (NÁM), Eyðun Gaard (NÁM), Gunvá Magnussen (NÁM), the Jógvan Dahl (professional translator), and Erla Olsen (Biologist PhD and Associate Professor at the Department of Education, University of the Faroe Islands) on 16 January 2026. The purpose of the meeting was to meet in person and strengthen the network, provide an update on project progress, gather feedback on the suitability of the material for Faroese youth and school curriculum, and receive an update on the translation work on their side. The overall feedback was very positive.

The material was tested by Olsen's students, who are biology teaching students at the University, and the feedback was positive. Translations for the 13–15 age group are expected to be sent to the Secretariat in April.

After translation, the material is reviewed by Olsen to ensure the correct translation of scientific terms and concepts and the relevance of the text and material to the Faroese realities.

A follow up meeting with NÁM planned for May 2026. Another online meeting is tentatively scheduled for late summer with NÁM and several high school teachers with the goal of presenting the project to the teachers and invite them to test it with their students during autumn 2026. If the testing is successful, NÁM will begin the process of including the project in the course catalogue for the 2027–2028 academic year.

Greenland

El Bani Altuna met in April 2025 with Lars Demant-Poort (Institute of Learning, University of Greenland) and, Kaali Olsen and Brita T. Hyltdgaard (Greenland Agency of Education) to present the project, which received positive initial feedback and an expression of willingness to support it.

Since then, the material has been translated by a professional translator in connection with the Greenland Language Secretariat, Oqaasileriffik. The material is then reviewed by Sascha Schiøtt, Post Doctoral Researcher at the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, with speciality on seals, ecosystem ecology and equitable utilisation of scientific and local ecological knowledge, to ensure the correct translation of scientific concepts and terms, as well as the relevance of the material and text to the Greenlandic biological and societal realities.

Originally, the plan for disseminating the project was to meet in person with teachers from across Greenland to present the project, gather their feedback, and promote its use in schools. However, this has proven administratively difficult and also costly. Demant-Poort's suggested collaborating with consultants from the [Kivitsisa](#) education scheme, a digital-based initiative supporting remote teaching. The current idea is that Kivitsisa will help spread the reach of GUARDNA among teachers in Greenland

by including the project in their digital toolbox explaining how to use the portal and providing a real example of how the material can be integrated into classroom practice. Videos would be prepared as tools.

Iceland and Norway

Communication with partners continues in these countries, however, there are no updates as funding are still missing for translations in these countries.

2.2 TEACHER ENGAGEMENT STUDY FOR GUARDNA

In autumn 2025, the GUARDNA project received support from Eli Oerlemans, who joined the NAMMCO Secretariat as part of her Master's degree in Wildlife Management at Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands). Her major project, "Communicating Marine Mammal Conservation: Educational Strategies for Engaging Young Audiences", focused on understanding how the GUARDNA portal can be effectively communicated to teachers and sustainably integrated into classroom practice.

Through Oerlemans' project, GUARDNA engaged with teachers across the target region during autumn 2025. The research combined semi-structured teacher interviews with a literature review on digital learning and science communication. It examined how educators perceive digital learning platforms, which factors influence adoption, and how communication strategies can support long-term use.

The findings emphasise the importance of usability, clarity, and practical applicability. Teachers value ready-to-use and clearly structured materials that require minimal preparation. Intuitive design and straightforward navigation were also highlighted as essential, as they enhance credibility and encourage continued use.

These insights strongly confirm GUARDNA's current direction. The portal already supports teachers through printable PDF information cards, time-efficient classroom activities, and a comprehensive teacher's guide designed to facilitate implementation and address potential questions. Educators also appreciate the student-centred, modular structure of the resources, which aligns well with existing teaching practices.

The study further showed that NAMMCO's scientific background significantly strengthens trust, especially when content is presented in an accessible and engaging manner. To ensure awareness and uptake, maintaining GUARDNA's visibility within professional networks remains important.

3 NEXT STEPS

In addition to the country-specific next steps outlined in Section 2.1.1, namely the revision and update of the alignment with national curricula, country-specific adaptations, and the ongoing improvement of existing materials, the following broader next steps are planned within the GUARDNA project:

- Development of material for younger age groups. New content and activities tailored to younger learners will shortly start to be designed to expand the reach and impact of the project across age groups. These efforts have already started in autumn 2025 and will continue throughout 2026. All partners are asked to give feedback on the newer material.
- Expanding the activity "pool". Additional engaging activities will be developed to complement the existing materials and further enrich the learning experience. These new resources will be continuously added to the website once the main website development phase is complete. The goal is for some of the upcoming activities will be co-created in collaboration with researchers, as well as youth and nature organisations with whom the project has established contact.
- Outreach and dissemination. Strategic efforts to raise awareness of the project will begin shortly, focusing on outreach to schools, educational institutions, and other relevant stakeholders. In spring 2026, the project will be presented at the Conference of the European

Cetacean Society 22-24 April (poster), Dundee, Scotland, at the Andenes Whale Summit in 27-29 April (oral presentation), Andenes, Norway; and at the UArctic Congress 2026 – Ocean Connectivity Conference, 26-29 May (oral presentation) Tórshavn, Faroe Islands.

- **Funding for missing translations.** Despite ongoing efforts, the Secretariat has faced challenges in securing funding to support the translation of materials into Icelandic, Norwegian, and Northern Sámi. Ensuring accessibility for all target audiences remains a top priority, and the Secretariat is seeking input and guidance from the Council to identify potential funding sources or collaborative solutions to address this gap.

4 FINANCIAL UPDATE

The activities within the GUARDNA project are funded by NAMMCO (in kind funding as working hours), with support from national and regional funding bodies. NAMMCO has been successful with the applications for financial support from Novo-Nordisk and AG-Fisk. Ideas for further funding opportunities are most welcome. Funding is still missing for translation to Icelandic, Norwegian and Northern Sami. The financial status by 1 March 2026 is provided by Table 1.

Table 1. Financial status as of 1 March 2026

Educational Portal - Multi-Year Project (NOK) as of 01.03.26			
	Total Funding Granted	Nammco In-Kind Contribution to 28 February 2026	
2024	1,045,797	687,212	
2025	1,132,689		
2026	804,886		
Total	2,983,373		

Funding	Received	Remaining
AG-Fisk	917,686	164,198
Novo Nordisk	620,111	1,281,377
Total Funding	1,537,798	1,445,575

Expenses		
Project management, project website & dissemination	607,944	
Total Expenses	607,944	

Remaining Available Funding as of 01.03.26	2,375,429
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5 UPDATED TIMELINE OF THE PROJECT

The timeline of the activities as per March 2026 is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of timeline of activities related to GUARDNA as of March 2026.

Main activities	2023	2024				2025				2026				2027				2028		After
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	living programme
Development and design of educational materials																				
Information cards																				
Education activities																				
Supportive material																				
Web development and design																				
Translation of materials																				
DK								Older age groups				Younger age groups								
FO								Older age groups				Younger age groups								
GL								Older age groups				Younger age groups								
IS, NO, NS												Younger age groups								
Partner tasks																				
Review of draft material by partners																				
Partners evaluation meetings and contact			Online	Online	Online															
Launching of GUARDNA and announcement																				
DK, FO, GL																				
IS, NO																				
Dissemination of GUARDNA in the educational systems																				
DK, FO, GL																				
IS, NO																				
Dissemination of GUARDNA in other venues																				
UArctic Congress (FO)																				
Material related to NASS 2024 survey and MINTAG																				
GUARDNA Network - Collection of teachers/users input and experience for material improvement and tuning																				
Feedback from users																				
Meeting educators / GL							In person			In person										
Meeting educators / FO										In person										
Meeting educators / DK																				
Meeting educators / IS																				
Meeting educators / NO																				
Final workshop																				In person
Reporting																				
To funding agencies																				
To NAMMCO																				