

# REUNITING VESSEL OWNERS

*Effective collaboration takes priority as Faroese vessel owners look to reassert their role in trade negotiations and fisheries policymaking—with Herálvur Joensen appointed new managing director of their umbrella association.*

WITH HERÁLVUR Joensen at the helm, the Faroe Fishing Vessel Owners' Association (Føroya Reiðarafelag) has reemerged from a period of virtual invisibility.

By putting new management in place, the joint association of Faroese fishing vessel owner organizations has arguably not just rescued itself from descending into irrelevancy—the association is being reshaped, on the path to reclaim its influence and strengthen its role as a player in the rapidly changing political environment that surrounds it.

A former diplomat and the permanent secretary of two Faroese government departments, Mr. Joensen, 52, holds a Masters degree in International Law from the University of Bristol, in addition to his Law degree from the University of Copenhagen. He jumped ship, unexpectedly for some, by leaving his position as Director of Foreign Relations at the Prime Minister's Office to start working for the Vessel Owners on 1 May 2013.

One of the first steps the association took as soon as having recruited Mr. Joensen was to relocate office to become a tenant again at the House of Industry. The move was praised as one which made sense, symbolically closing an old



rift that had seen the two organizations drift apart.

"It's not just that the Vessel Owners and the House of Industry have something to gain by working more closely together," Mr. Joensen said. "There's also a practical side to it, since the Faroese Pelagic Organization, one of our strongest and most active members, already have their offices here. This makes it easier to coordinate correspondence and various activities; besides, it sends a positive signal and shows that things are moving forward."

It was no coincidence that the association hired Mr. Joensen, a man widely credited for his ability to reconcile opposing views and achieve results in difficult situations. According to insiders, the association needed a person that could gather together what was beginning to look more and more like a fragmented body—someone whose style is effective, pragmatic and non-confrontational.

**'A VERY GOOD JOB':** "You have to be able to bridge some of the differences that appear when you're dealing with issues that affect people's lives," Mr. Joensen told the Faroe Business Report.

"One of our ongoing challenges has to do with the fact that the various fish-

ing fleets represented by our member organizations operate under very different conditions, have different capital and labor requirements, target different species and use different fishing methods. Therefore, at times, they may see each other as competitors in certain areas. By working together, however, and sorting out differences in an atmosphere of mutual respect, all stand to gain. Because by communicating as a single body vis-à-vis, for example, fishery stakeholders and policymakers, our power of persuasion is greatly enhanced. And people obviously understand that together we represent most of the entire wild catch sector, which is something that cannot be ignored in a country that is so dependent on fishing."

Making big headlines or using media publicity at every opportunity is not the way Mr. Joensen operates—quite the contrary. For one thing, many people in the legal profession are known to be painstakingly aware of the trappings of news and the associated risks of backfiring. For another, Mr. Joensen has many years of experience working with lawmakers and government ministers and is, not surprisingly, well aware of the importance of timeliness.

"To be effective in the long run, you have to be patient and resist the tempta-



## Faroe Fishing Vessel Owners' Assn.

Føroya Reiðarafelag, Smærugøta 9A,  
PO Box 361, FO-110 Tórshavn

heralvur@industry.fo  
Tel.: +298 311800

Managing Director: Herálvur Joensen

The Faroe Fishing Vessels Owners' Association is the joint association for Faroese fishing vessel owners' organizations.

The Association's overall purpose is to provide a common platform for all fishing vessel owners of the Faroe Islands and to promote and protect the joint interests of its members.

Member organizations:

- Verksmiðjutrolarar (Freezer Trawlers)
- Nótaskip (Faroe Pelagic Organisation)
- Ídnaðarskip o.a. (Industrial Trawlers)
- Rækjuskip (Factory Shrimpers)
- Lemmatrolarar (Stern Trawlers)
- Partrolarar (Pair Trawlers)
- Línuskip (Longliners)
- Garnaskip (Gillnetters)

*Managing Director Herálvur Joensen;  
Purse seiner/pelagic trawler Tummás T (below);  
Longliner Sigmund (opposite bottom, right);  
Pair trawlers Heykur and Falkur (opp. top);  
Freezer trawler Enniberg (opp. bottom, left).*



tion to exaggerate too much or hype up things; you don't go public at the first sign of disagreement. You have to guard your credibility because without that credibility, you'll have a hard time getting any useful message across anywhere. As part of that game you have to respect the fact that people may need time to double check your position to see where you're coming from—they want to know whether you can be trusted and that may take a little time sometimes.

"The important thing is to show that you're part of the solution, not the prob-

lem. It's called trust and mutual understanding—working together in earnest to achieve something meaningful for everybody involved.

"As far as I can see, that's the essence of negotiation, especially when it concerns longterm relations, which is usually the case as far as this association is concerned."

Apart from helping member organizations negotiate collective agreements on pay and conditions, the association also advises the Faroese Government on a number of fisheries related issues

including international fisheries negotiations.

"The Government did a very good job in securing a deal on the Northeast Atlantic mackerel fishery," Mr. Joensen said.

