

# Sustainable AI-ready infrastructure in the Nordics



DIGITAL REPORT 2023

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### atNorth's CEO discusses the leading pan-Nordic operator's tremendous growth journey and how it continues to push innovation in the wake of AI

**M**uch like many who work in the data centre industry, Eyjólfur Magnús Kristinsson, CEO of the pan-Nordic colocation, high-performance computing and artificial intelligence service provider atNorth, had a far-from-conventional entry into the field.

An engineer by training, Kristinsson gained his Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Iceland before going to Denmark for his Masters in Industrial Engineering.

“One could argue I haven't spent my whole career doing that much engineering, although I've spent my whole career in the data centre and IT industry,” Kristinsson jokes. But with his logical engineering brain, Kristinsson is armed for what the data centre industry throws at its workforce – the ability to think on your feet and critically analyse to then problem solve, and fast.

He adds: “The essence of my engineering studies is the ability to learn new things and understand complex models and systems, and I've benefited a lot from that during my whole career.”

Following a varied career starting in sales before moving up into managerial roles across the IT industry, Kristinsson is now at the helm of atNorth, a pan-Nordic data centre and HPC AI operator which soon will be present in all Nordic nations. Currently operational in Iceland, Sweden and Finland – and launching atNorth's ninth data centre in Denmark in





Q4 of 2024 – atNorth provides data centre services to international customers as well as advanced HPC and AI services. Since atNorth’s inception in 2009, the company has been laser-focused on sustainability and has built its service offerings on the foundation that it operates in locations with access to renewable energy and where extremely high levels of energy efficiency can be achieved. For example, all its new data centres are built to reuse heat.

“If you ask someone that doesn’t know the data centre industry what they know about it, normally the feedback that you get is that it is something slow, boring and not a lot happens, that it lacks excitement. But when you work in the industry it’s the exact opposite. What I love is the speed at which it’s moving.

“Obviously that also includes all the great customers the industry caters for, but I think the importance of the data centre industry is how almost with all technologies that we are working with today in the data industry we can be extremely impactful in terms of sustainability.”

### **atNorth: Providing AI-ready infrastructure in the Nordics**

One of those growing technologies, unsurprisingly, is AI. For this reason, atNorth is extremely well focused on executing on its strategy to build a pan-Nordic deep data centre platform. Operating in Iceland, Sweden, and Finland, as well as working on a new facility in Denmark, atNorth anticipates that in the near future it can announce its footprint expansion to the last remaining unconquered Nordic country of Norway.

“In all of those markets in which we are building, we hope to especially cater



for large-scale HPC and AI workloads,” Kristinsson explained. As well as establishing themselves in metropolitan areas, atNorth is ensuring it has a footprint in more remote locations, too.

He added: “There, we can cater for workloads in the magnitude of 100 to a couple of hundred megawatts. Besides that, we are also focusing highly on servicing our customers higher up the stack. We are operating AI and HPC-dedicated clusters for our customers and are doing a lot of innovation there.”

In recent months, atNorth acquired key HPC industry player Gompute. Since the acquisition, atNorth has leveraged the Swedish company’s platform to build on top of its own progress in the HPC and AI industry.





**“The Nordics, we believe, is one of the best locations in the whole world”**

**MAGNÚS KRISTINSSON**  
CEO,  
ATNORTH



ICE03 is a tier 3 data centre located in thriving tech hub Akureyri, in the north of Iceland






## MAGNÚS KRISTINSSON

TITLE: **CEO**

COMPANY: **ATNORTH**

INDUSTRY: **DATA CENTRE**

LOCATION: **THE NORDICS**

 Kristinsson joined atNorth in 2018, prior to which he was Managing Director at Advania for almost eight years and the Chairman of the board at Iceland Datacenter. He has been instrumental in developing and progressing the business since its inception and is widely quoted in the media as a leading figure in the Nordic data centre industry. His goal is to create a decarbonising platform for high-density IT workloads by operating data centres throughout the Nordics.





Magnús Kristinsson,  
CEO of atNorth

## “atNorth has grown immensely”

MAGNÚS KRISTINSSON  
CEO,  
ATNORTH

“AI is creating a boom in the industry,” Kristinsson says, relaying why for this reason atNorth is preparing for the disruption the technology brings. “Though, I think that the industry has seen nothing yet because AI is still not widely adopted.

“There are obviously a large number of startups and a few enterprises, including the hyperscalers, that are using AI widely but this is putting a lot of stress on data centres and not least the power grids where data centres are operating.”

For this reason, he explains, the Nordics are increasing in popularity when it comes to locations for data centre or IT workloads, especially power-hungry AI workloads.

Kristinsson shares: “It makes most sense to locate those workloads where there is ample power and where you can run those workloads in the most efficient way. The Nordics, we believe, is one of the best locations in the whole world to run those types of workloads. This is our focus at the moment.”



Inside atNorth's  
Helsinki data  
centre campus  
CREDIT: PETRI ANTILA

Characteristics boasted by Nordic locations not only make its data centres efficient and scalable, but also support atNorth's core sustainability values and underpin its belief that the Nordics is where the data centres of the future are. For example, facilities in the region can make the most of the naturally cold climate, which can offset the need for server cooling systems.

Not only does atNorth locate and build its facilities in regions where there is a highly-skilled workforce and access to true renewable energy, renewables are often the sole form of power available. Heat from its Stockholm data centre is redirected to district heating systems to heat local homes, while new facilities will reuse heat in a range of other ways.

"Local district heating systems are very developed here," Kristinsson shares.

"Our data centre in Stockholm is reusing the excessive heat for the benefit of local district heating, as will those in Copenhagen and Helsinki.

"This obviously supports our sustainability story quite a lot. On top of this, we are deploying liquid cooling systems in all of our sites, and this is for the benefit of the high-density workloads. At the same time, especially in Iceland, where heat reuse is not as adopted, we are innovating to increase rack density to AI standards based on air cooling as well. We have a lot of initiatives to support and underpin our sustainability story."

Despite there not being a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to picking a particular data centre location, atNorth vouches for the region as a whole as a leading destination for these reasons.





Inside atNorth's  
Helsinki data  
centre campus  
CREDIT: PETRI ANTILA



## Strong ecosystem of partners integral to success

Despite atNorth leading the way when it comes to sustainability in the data centre space, and making the most of the world around them in an ethical and respectful manner, Kristinsson is quick to acknowledge that success in this area is also down to another strength – of partners with shared values.

“In the growth market we are in at the moment we are laser focused on bringing more capacity and great service to our customers,” Kristinsson advocates. “That being said, we need a very strong ecosystem of partners to support us

achieving those goals. Our policy is to use local partners where we build and operate our data centres. That is a part of our social responsibility, but obviously we also need international partners that are not always located where we are building our data centres and we have built I think an exceptionally strong ecosystem of partners that are helping us serve our customer goals.”

One of said exceptional partners is CoolIT. The leading liquid cooling solution provider for HPC, cloud and enterprise markets worldwide helps atNorth provide direct liquid cooling solutions to its customers, a partnership which has been applauded for









ICE02, located close to Keflavik international airport, Iceland



atNorth operates in  
**four**  
of the five Nordic  
nations and by  
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## “AI is creating a boom in the industry”

MAGNÚS KRISTINSSON

CEO,  
ATNORTH

its ongoing success and for aiding businesses to reduce their carbon footprint.

Kristinsson emphasises: “We would not work without our partners. We are not trying to do everything ourselves, and would rather focus on what we want to be best at. Therefore, we are nothing without our partners, that goes without saying.”

### Innovation at the core of atNorth’s future

“It’ll be crazy but extremely fun,” Kristinsson adds, looking forward to what the future has in store for him and his atNorth colleagues. “We will continue to innovate and we will continue to build in terms of customers, our data centre footprint and our partner network.”

One of the reasons Kristinsson predicts the coming months will bring excitement and disruption is thanks to one of the industry’s – and wider world’s – most dominating technologies, AI.

“A lot of the demand we’re seeing coming to the market comes from AI,” he analyses. “But we have not seen everything yet on that front. That means that we, and all data centres, will need to continuously adapt to the rapid changes that we are seeing and will see in the AI industry, whether that be releases of new equipment, for example.”

Although this means an immense amount of pressure is, and will continue, to be put on data centre operators, Kristinsson is

positive that it will keep him and his team busy for the next few months and further down the line.

And while taking time to look ahead, Kristinsson is proud of how far atNorth has come. Even from before when he joined as CEO in 2018, he has seen significant change.

“atNorth has grown immensely,” he says, proudly. “We started in one small data centre in Reykjavík capital area, where I’m sitting now, which almost only serves the local market.”

Now operating a network of seven facilities across the geography, with two under construction and more in the pipeline, atNorth’s customer portfolio has exploded in terms of both numbers and variety.

“What we called high density back in 2011 or 2012 is not even medium density today. So I mean things have changed incredibly since we were designing our first assets,” Kristinsson declares.

2023 was a year of celebration for atNorth. As well as announcing its highest revenue to date, it has maintained its core values the whole way, mastering the true balancing act of not letting quality suffer as a result. And, looking forward, there is no sight of that upward trajectory slowing down. 