



EU-Norway cooperation in the area of foreign policy and defence

SUMMARY *The paradox of Norway's "Inside, outside" approach towards the EU is particularly apparent in the areas of foreign policy and defence. Increasingly aware of its limited influence on EU policy formulation, Norway has adopted a proactive and participative approach to avoid marginalisation. Norway's foreign policy is aligned with the majority of EU foreign policy declaration and sanctions. Norway has also contributed troops to EU-led missions. By permanent deployment of its soldiers to EU battlegroups from 2005, Norway symbolically demonstrates its commitment to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In addition, the EU and Norway cooperate in various regional organisations, in which they have to deal with other key parties, such as Russia.*

Both institutional arrangements and everyday cooperation at international level are underpinned and driven by common interests and values, such as regional stabilisation, strengthening the international legal order, the rights of minorities, environment and sustainable development. However, in some cases, differences are acknowledged in particular in methods. In Arctic policy, for example, the EU has focused more on international governance in contrast to Norway's priority of preserving national sovereignty.



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Context

Part of the European Economic Area (EEA) since 1994 and of the Schengen area from 2000, Norway has evolved into a non-EU country which is highly integrated into the EU's internal market. In addition, Norway also cooperates with the EU in a number of other areas, including research and development, education, the environment and social policy. It complies with most of EU directives and contributes financially to EU social and economic cohesion.¹

However the twofold (1972 and 1994) rejection by referendum of Norway's EU accession shows the ongoing struggle to strike a balance between the deeply rooted desire for self-government and the necessity to prevent Norway's marginalisation in an increasingly integrated environment. The difficulty of this "Inside, outside" position is particularly sharp in the area of foreign policy and defence, where Norway has to cope with diverse and sometimes competing commitments.

Political cooperation

Bilateral arrangements in CFSP

Although the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as such is not covered by the EEA agreement, it does contain provisions for "political dialogue" between the EU and the EEA EFTA states. This includes informal exchanges at ministerial level in EEA Council

meetings, director-level meetings and dialogue with a range of the EU's CFSP working parties. Norway can also be invited on a case-by-case basis, to align itself with EU declarations and statements in this area.

Of the EU's current 36 CFSP working parties, Norway has mainly been involved with those for the Middle East, Western Balkans, OSCE/Council of Europe and Russia/CIS. However, Norwegian officials do not participate in working party meetings as such, but meet the chairs' representatives to discuss the outcomes of meetings.

Norway has been associating itself with the majority of EU declarations. The exceptions are a small number of international issues on which Norway has chosen to make its own mark.² From 2008 to 2011 Norway aligned itself with 518 EU declarations, i.e. 94% of those it was invited to align with.³ Norway has also joined EU sanctions against third countries on six occasions (from 2001-2011), on the basis of a special framework law, "[Sanctions Act](#)" adopted by Norway in 2001 to facilitate this.

EU-Norway cooperation in regional fora

In parallel to collaboration on CFSP, Norway conducts a proactive foreign policy of its own, at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Norway is particularly proactive and cooperates with the EU and/or its Member States, as well as Russia, in a number of regional fora such as:

- The [Arctic Council](#)

This organisation, established in 1996, comprises Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. The EU has applied for observer status. It focuses on sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic, as well as indigenous peoples' rights. Six NGOs concerned with indigenous people have permanent participant status with full consultation rights in connection with its negotiations and decisions.

- The [Council of Baltic Sea States](#) (CBSS)

CBSS is an inter-governmental forum, gathering 11 states (including eight EU Member States) of the Baltic Sea region as well as the European Commission (EC).

The organisation holds a number of international and regional meetings with two alternating high-level meetings, at ministerial and head of government level. The main areas of cooperation include: removing regional economic barriers to trade and investment; improving nuclear and radiation safety; confidence building through the promotion of democracy and human rights; projects which facilitate cross-border cooperation.

- The [Barents Euro-Arctic Council](#) (BEAC)

Created in 1993 to foster long-term stability and reduce possible tensions in the region, BEAC has seven members. Along with Norway, Russia and Iceland, the EU is represented by the EC and its three Nordic Member States. It brings together experts on rescue services, infrastructure, trade and customs, culture, environment, youth issues, tourism, energy, and social and health-related issues. Indigenous peoples' representatives have an advisory role. BEAC priorities are mainly implemented through cross-border projects, with either EU-based or other funding schemes.

- The [Northern Dimension](#)

Launched as an EU initiative in 1999, the Northern Dimension became a common cooperation policy tool of the [EU, Russia, Iceland and Norway](#) from 2006. The main priorities dealt with in this framework include: economic cooperation, freedom, security and justice, civil protection, research, education, environment and nuclear safety.

Military cooperation

Cooperation agreement with the European Defence Agency (EDA)

An administrative agreement, concluded in 2006 with the EDA, provided Norway with

the option to participate in EDA initiatives, albeit without strategic decision-making power. Under this agreement, Norway is part of the [Intergovernmental Regime on Defence Procurement](#) and became an important contributor to several research and technology (RT) programmes and two joint investment programmes.

Participation in EU crisis management

Norway can participate in EU-led military and civil operations following case-by-case invitations to third countries. Norway is the most responsive third country in this regard. From 2002 to 2011 Norway has participated in three of seven EU military operations, two peacekeeping operations, and seven of nine civilian operations. In 2004 a [framework agreement](#) was concluded to simplify modalities for Norway's engagement in EU-led missions.⁴

Norway's engagement in EU Battlegroups

In May 2005, an agreement was reached on the permanent Norwegian contribution to the [EU Battlegroups](#), which are aimed at forming part of a European rapid reaction force for crisis management operations. Norway contributes 150 soldiers, deployed in the [Nordic Battlegroup](#) of 2 800 soldiers.

Participation in EU missions and the Nordic Battlegroup has contributed to the ongoing restructuring of traditional territorial defence forces to flexible mission-based forces, and triggered inter-parliamentary cooperation among the states involved.

Prospects

Limits of political gains from military involvement

Commentators consider permanent military contribution to EU forces as proof of Norway's strong will to tie itself as closely as possible to CSDP and gain some influence across the entire CFSP via this channel. However this "troops for influence approach"⁵ has brought limited fruit. Indeed since the dismantling, from 1999 on of the Western European Union⁶ and absorption of

its function into the EU, Norway has not been involved in EU military planning. Norwegian demands to preserve the previous practice were opposed by Greece, which was unwilling to provide other associate members, notably Turkey, with similar rights.⁷ The Lisbon Treaty has further limited the "political dialogue", stopping the meetings between the Norwegian Defence Minister and the EU troika. Indeed, it is argued that it is impossible for the High Representative (HR), now responsible for this issue, to continue all ongoing political dialogues with third countries. Norway has requested instead a bilateral meeting between the HR and its Defence Minister, but the issue has yet to be resolved.

Relations with NATO versus EU

The development of EU CSDP is now less perceived, in comparison with the 1990s, from the sole perspective of the NATO-Norway relationship. But striking the right balance between engagement in the framework of NATO and the EU remains for Norway, as for some EU members, an ongoing challenge.⁸ Indeed NATO is perceived as the main guarantor of Norway's security and some still fear that the development of CSDP might undermine the alliance's primacy as the main security provider for Europe. On the contrary, as [stressed](#) by Norway's Defence Minister, NATO's core collective-defence function should be strengthened.

Common interests

Notwithstanding the strategic and institutional issues described above, the EU and Norway have several common interests in the foreign policy arena, even though in some cases divergence may still limit the potential for future cooperation. These interests are:

Russia

Some [observers](#) stress that the Norwegian proactive approach to participation in various intergovernmental cooperation fora stems from a deep need for multilateral

rules and regulations for this small country, faced with a giant neighbour.

Relations between the two countries have recently seen ups and downs.

In [September 2010](#), Russia and Norway signed an agreement settling a long-standing border issue concerning the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean, thus allowing new gas and petrol exploration in a maritime zone half the size of Germany. The EU has welcomed this step.

Some tensions arose last year when internal political and legal changes in Russia brought a more [restrictive policy on civil society](#).

In October 2012, the indigenous people's NGO, RAIPON was suspended by Russian authorities, triggering criticism from Norway and other Arctic Council states.

During the [EU-Russia 16th round](#) of human rights consultations in December 2012, the question was raised of the deteriorating conditions in which non-governmental organisations operate in Russia.

High North/Arctic policy

Increased accessibility, due to ice melt, of the Arctic's resources has stimulated broad international interest in the region, considered to contain over 24% of world gas and petrol reserves.

The High North has been always been an important component in Norwegian national policy, due to economic, foreign policy and security considerations. [Norwegian High North](#) policy emphasises the development of knowledge in order to promote sustainable use of natural

EP position

In its [resolution of 9 October 2008](#) on Arctic governance the EP expressed deep concern about the effects of climate change on sustainable development in Arctic areas, in particular over the ongoing race for natural resources. It calls therefore for international negotiations leading to the adoption of an international treaty for the protection of the Arctic.

In its [resolution on sustainable EU policy for the High North](#), adopted in January 2011, the EP underlined the key role of states in Arctic governance, nevertheless pointing to the need to further develop international rules to tackle the challenges of climate change and increasing economic development. The resolution also highlighted the important and growing role of the Arctic Council and supported the EU bid for observer status.

The calls from the EP for more international governance over the Arctic, and especially the idea of a [50-year moratorium on Arctic oil drilling](#) was heavily [criticised](#) by Norway's representatives.

resources and business, particularly petroleum-based. It gives a lot of importance to cross-border cooperation with Russia. One of its main aims is to maintain state sovereignty, particularly as regards maritime sovereignty around the waters of Svalbard in the context of [divergent interpretations](#) of its jurisdiction.

For the EU, the Arctic has been a priority of the Northern Dimension since 1999, but it was in 2008 that the Commission presented a specific [Communication](#) on this issue. The EU approach is based on three objectives:

- Protecting and preserving the Arctic

and its people.

- Promoting the sustainable use of resources.
- Contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance.

Those objectives are evaluated in a [2012 communication](#), which confirms the overall direction of EU Arctic policy while stressing the need for more bilateral cooperation with Arctic states.

Energy

Almost 100% of Norwegian [gas exports](#) are sold to the EU, with 20% of EU gas consumption coming from Norway. Taking into account this interdependence and Norway's participation, as a member of the EEA, in the EU internal energy market, both parties have regular [Energy Dialogues](#). These take the form of annual meetings between the EC and Norway's Ministry of Energy. This dialogue serves primarily the coordination of energy policies in a broad

sense. It also covers both partners' relations with third countries and possible exploration of the energy resources in the High North.

Middle East

The Council of the EU [welcomed](#) the cooperation with Norway in the ad hoc Liaison Committee on Palestine, in which Norway played an important role as one of the main contributors of financial aid.

Further reading

[Integration, Security and Associated Non-members, The EU as a Regional Security Provider](#)/ P. Rieker, NUPI Working Papers, Issue 802, 2012.

Outside and Inside: Norway's agreements with the EU/ official Norwegian Reports NOU 2012:2, chapter 1: [Main messages and overview](#).

Endnotes

- ¹ [Integration, security and associated non-members: The EU as a regional security provider](#)/ P. Rieker, NUPI Working Papers, Issue 802, 2012.
- ² [From fly in the ointment to accomplice: Norway in EU foreign and security policy](#)/ H. Sjurseth, Paper prepared for the 3rd international conference on Democracy as Idea and Practice, Oslo 12-13 January 2010.
- ³ Outside and Inside: Norway's agreements with the EU/ official Norwegian Reports NOU 2012:2 ([original version](#) and chapter 1: [Overview](#)).
- ⁴ Idem.
- ⁵ Norway between Europe and US/ N. Groeger, in *New Security Issues in Northern Europe*, C. Archer (ed), Routledge, 2008.
- ⁶ [Death of an institution? The end for Western European Union, a future for European defence?](#)/ A.J. Bailes, G. Messervy-Whiting, Egmont Paper 46, May 2011.
- ⁷ Norway outside the EU. Norway and European Integration from 1994 to 2004/ C. Archer, Routledge, 2005, p. 144-149.
- ⁸ [From fly in the ointment to accomplice: Norway in EU foreign and security policy](#)/ H. Sjurseth, Paper prepared for the 3rd international conference on Democracy as Idea and Practice, Oslo 12-13 January 2010, p. 14.

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