

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH SWITZERLAND, ICELAND AND NORWAY AND TO THE EEA JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

INFORMATION NOTE

ON THE

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S RELATIONS WITH

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Directorate General for External Policies



5 May 2009 /LM

EP RELATIONS WITH THE NORDIC COUNCIL

The Nordic Council is the parliamentary branch of Nordic cooperation, and consists of senior representatives of the parliaments of the five Member States of the Nordic Union¹, often including Speakers, both present and former, and former Prime Ministers.

On 15 January 1992, the European Parliament - in the light of developing relations with the EFTA countries in the framework of the EEA agreement, and having regard to the successive applications for EC membership of (inter alia) Sweden, Finland, and Norway - set up individual delegations for relations with Sweden, with Finland, and with Norway². This decision resulted in the absence of any parliamentary body responsible for relations with the Nordic Council.

At its meeting of 2 December 1992, the enlarged Bureau "took the view, given that intensive contacts were taking place in the (...) joint parliamentary committees (with Sweden, Finland, and Norway) and would take place in the new EEA joint parliamentary committee, there was no need to set up a specific body to handle relations with the Nordic Council". The successive delegations of the European Parliament for relations with Sweden, Finland and Iceland, were consequently also responsible for relations with the Nordic Council.

Following the accession to the European Union on 1 January 1995 of Finland and Sweden, these countries and Denmark have continued to be active in Nordic cooperation³. The issue of Nordic cooperation in the context of European integration was the central issue on the agenda for the 46th plenary session of the Nordic Council in Reykjavik from 27 February to 2 March 1995.

On 11 May 1995, the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament decided to appoint Mr Brian Simpson, MP, Chairman of the delegation for relations with Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway, as its representative to the Nordic Council. This decision has been reconfirmed ever since and the EP relations to the Nordic Council are currently based on the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 28 October 2004.

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Meetings between a delegation from the European Parliament and the Nordic Council have taken place, on an irregular basis, but the European Parliament is usually invited to plenary sessions of the Nordic Council, and to other events organised under its aegis.

Regular contact has been maintained since the early 1980's between officials of the secretariats of the European Parliament and the Nordic Council, and members of the Nordic Council have frequently been visiting the EP where they have been received by the Bureau of the Delegation for Relations with Switzerland, Iceland and Norway (now the SINEEA Delegation).

¹ Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

² Following the accession to the EU on 1 January 1995 of Finland and Sweden, the EP decided, on 18 January 1995, to add responsibility for relations with Norway to the existing delegation for relations with Switzerland and Iceland.

³ Joint declaration 27, annexed to the accession agreements, notes the intention of the Nordic countries, as members of the European Union, to continue Nordic cooperation among themselves.

At its 58th session, the Nordic Council met in Copenhagen 31 October - 2 November 2006. The Prime Ministers, the Foreign Ministers and a high number of Ministers with other responsibilities (defence, environment, social affairs, energy, transport, culture, education) from all the Nordic countries attended the Session and took part in the debates.

The Session was opened by Mr Ole Stavad, President of the Nordic Council. In his address Mr Stavad underlined that the Nordic co-operation has the potential to take on new meaning and create new results for the benefit of the peoples.

The Nordic Summit with the theme "The Nordic Region as a Global Winner" was the first topic on the agenda and the debate described how the Nordic countries clearly have common strengths, which can be used as an advantage in the global marketplace with a joint strategic effort. For the first time the Nordic Council had a general debate between the Prime ministers and the opposition leaders on the future policies in the Nordic region.

Other topics at the Session were:

- Question time with the ministers for Nordic Co-operation
- Reports from the Foreign Minister and the Defence Ministers
- Combating trafficking and prostitution
- Nordic welfare policy
- Change of climate in the Nordic countries
- Nordic co-operation on energy planning
- Nordic language and cultural policy
- Research, innovation and education

The European Parliament was invited to attend the Session. Mrs Diana Wallis and Mrs Ewa Hedkvist Petersen (Chair and first Vice-Chair of the SINEEA delegation) were unable to attend the Session, but Mr Jens-Peter Bonde, 2nd Vice-Chair of the SINEEA delegation participated. In his intervention to the plenary, Mr Bonde underlined the need for a better co-operation between the parliamentary bodies of the EU and the Nordic countries. He highlighted the environmental issues as priority areas for such a co-operation. Especially within the EEA a closer co-operation between the European Parliament and the parliaments of Norway and Iceland could be strengthened on the soft legislation in order to create a stronger position towards the European Commission to improve a better lawmaking.

The Nordic Prime Ministers nominated Mr Halldór Ásgrímsson, former Prime Minister of Iceland as Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Mr Dagfinn Høybråten from Norway was elected as President of the Nordic Council for 2007.

At its 59th session, the Nordic Council met in Oslo, Norway on the 30th of October until the 1th of November in 2007. The EP was represented at the Nordic Council Session by Mrs Bilyana RAEVA and Mr Jens-Peter BONDE, Chair and Vice Chair of the SINEEA Delegation.

The topics of the Session were:

- Nordic response to the climate change (debate with the Nordic Prime Ministers)
- Nordic cooperation in a European Framework (debate with the Nordic Foreign Ministers)
- Welfare, Research and Education in the Nordic countries
- Globalisation

In her intervention in the debate with the Foreign Ministers, Mrs Raeva underlined the importance of the Northern Dimension for both the internal policies of the Union and its external relations and welcomed the new ND policy including Iceland, Norway and Russia as equal partners with USA and Canada as observers. The EU enlargements have changed the geopolitical map of Northern Europe and have brought a new emphasis on cooperation around the Baltic Sea, since all Baltic Sea States except Russia are EU member states.

Mrs Raeva advocated for a bottom-up approach in the policy making, involving the elected people of the regions concerned. She recalled that the EP has suggested to host the First ND Parliamentary Forum during spring 2009 in order to facilitate the democratic parliamentary monitoring of the Northern Dimension. She also made reference to the EEA Agreement as a field of EU-Nordic cooperation not just relevant for the internal market but also touching upon energy and environmental issues in the High North. The International Polar Year was an opportunity to promote the Arctic Region and the development of Arctic science as well as the possibility of creating a Charter for Arctic Governance. Mrs Raeva supported a strong parliamentary cooperation in the Northern Europe.

In the General debate, Mr Bonde also commented on the EEA and the inter Nordic cooperation, which to his opinion should be developed much more, especially within the EU legislation process, where a close cooperation between the Nordic countries was recommended. Former Finnish Foreign Minister, Mr Erkki Tuomioja was elected as President of the Nordic Council.

On the 26 October 2008 in Helsinki, the President of the Nordic Council, Mr Erkki Tuomioja had arranged a debate on the current issues related to the Northern Dimension focusing on the role of the parliaments and parliamentarians of the region in promoting the aims of the common policy. Parliamentarians from the contracting parties of the Northern Dimension and the entire northern region, including the Baltic Sea region and the Barents region, representing both national and regional parliaments as well as parliamentary assemblies, met in the Finnish Parliament.

Together with the Pres. of the Nordic Council, Mrs Diana Wallis, Vice President of the EP and Mrs Valentina Pivnenko, the Russian Duma, were the key note speakers at the meeting.

In her speech, VP Wallis underlined that the EP has been a big supporter of the ND since its inception. The EP has lately championed at least 3 parliamentary debates on Baltic Sea Strategy - Nordstream Baltic pipeline - Arctic Governance. Since 2000, the EP had been participating in all the ND ministerial meetings and has promoted parliamentary involvement.

Next step will be the ND parliamentary Forum in the EP on 25-26 Feb. 2009 in Brussels. Mrs Wallis was claiming that the Commission has shown little or no activity in this field during the last year. The EP has given a big input to the Baltic Sea Strategy and we are now waiting for the Commission to deliver the Baltic Strategy by the end of this year as well as a cross-cutting policy document on the Arctic. She also made reference to the Nordic Council of Ministers' meeting in Greenland in Sept. on a future Arctic policy.

Her main message was that the Northern Dimension partnership should work on the ground and the new projects being taken up and developed should have the active engagement and input of parliamentarians across the region. Mrs Pivnenko from the Russian Duma spoke on creating an

improved structure for the ND, especially concerning the parliamentary cooperation. The initiative from the EP to hold the First Northern Dimension Forum in the EP in Feb. 2009 was appreciated by the meeting.

The debate was followed by the 60th Session of the Nordic Council, 27-29 October 2008. The main topics of the session were:

- Security and defence cooperation between the Nordic Countries
- Arctic cooperation
- Nordic Council of Ministers programme for 2009
- Nordic Summit: Globalisation, the financial crisis and the Nordic welfare model (all the Prime Ministers, several Foreign Ministers and other ministers from the Nordic countries took part in the debate).

The European Parliament was represented by Bilyana Raeva. In her intervention to the Plenary, on the Arctic cooperation, she stated that "in the last 20 years, we have been trying to build the Arctic as a genuine zone of peace and fruitful cooperation. During this time, several issues - pollution, climate change, fishery stocks, energy supply - have merged and have focussed the attention on the High North. Currently, the Arctic Region is not governed by any multi-lateral norms and regulations, as it was never expected to become a navigable waterway or an area of commercial exploitation. In the same time, maritime traffic in the Arctic waters has increased exponentially, owing to more frequent passage of cruise ships as well as increased drilling off-shore".

The 61st Nordic Council Annual Session will take place in Stockholm on 26-28th October 2009.

EP RELATIONS WITH THE CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE ARCTIC REGION

In September 1994 the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region was established based on a decision at the first Parliamentary Conference concerning Arctic cooperation in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1993. One of the main priorities of the Standing Committee was originally to support the establishment of the Arctic Council. The new organization, representing the eight Arctic states, was founded on September 19, 1996. Since then the Committee has worked actively to promote the work of the Council. The Committee also participates in the meetings of the Arctic Council as an observer. *The Standing Committee* is meeting approx. 3 times a year in order to prepare the conferences and to represent the Arctic parliamentarians between the conferences, which takes place every second year.

In the Standing Committee the EP is represented by its Chairman of the delegation for relations with Switzerland, Iceland and Norway and to the EEA JPC (decision of the Conference of Presidents of 28 October 2004).

Conferences of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region have taken place as follows:

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| - 2nd Conference, | Yellowknife, Canada | March 1996 |
| - 3rd Conference, | Salekhard, Russia | April 1998 |
| - 4th Conference | Rovaniemi, Finland | 27-29 August 2000 |
| - 5th Conference | Tromsø, Norway | August 2002 |
| - 6th Conference | Nuuk, Greenland | September 2004 |

- 7th Conference	Kiruna, Sweden	August, 2006
- 8th Conference	Fairbanks, USA	12-14 August 2008

The 8th Conference of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region took place in Alaska, USA in 12-14 August 2008. The Bureau of the SINEEA delegation is representing the EP at these conferences. The European Parliament was represented by Mrs Diana Wallis, Vice President and Mrs Bilyana Raeva, Chair of the SINEEA Delegation. MEPs Mr Olle Schmidt, Mrs Danute Budreikaite and Mr Kyosti Virrankoski also attended the Conference.

The topics of the Conference were:

- Human health in the Arctic
- Development of renewable energy resources
- Development of an Arctic maritime policy for safety at sea
- Adaptation to climate change

The Conference underlined the need to

- develop harmonised, effective regulations to reduce all forms of pollutions from ships sailing in the Arctic Ocean
- ensure the inclusion of an appropriate contribution from elected representatives of the Arctic Region to the COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009
- develop an Arctic policy in the European Union and the Arctic states, and to involve the national parliaments and the European Parliament in this process, taking into account the Communication from the European Commission on an Arctic policy to be issued in the autumn of 2009

The Conference was convinced that there was an urgent need to develop the political role of the Arctic Council given the many challenges facing the region, particularly by ensuring more regular ministerial meetings with all participants, no less than once a year, and to ensure their full engagement with other international bodies, particularly the UN. The strategic and geopolitical importance of the Arctic Region was underlined.

The European Parliament will host the 9th Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region in 2010.

The Standing Committee

On 25 February 2009 parliamentarians from the Arctic Region met in the European Parliament in Brussels. The meeting, chaired by Ms Hill-Marta Solberg (Norway), discussed the forthcoming Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Tromsø in April 2009, the development of an Arctic Policy for the EU and the preparation of the First Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum. The EP was represented by Ms Bilyana Raeva, Chair of the SINEEA delegation.

The next meeting of the Standing Committee will take place in Greenland in May 2009.

At a Joint Meeting between *the Standing Committee* of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and the University of the Arctic Rectors' Forum in Rovaniemi, in Finland on 28-29 February 2008, the parliamentarians discussed the holding of the 8th Conference and the topics for it which is to be;

- Human Health in the Arctic

- Adaption to Climate Change
- Development of rural energy resources, and
- Maritime policies

The EP was represented by Mrs Diana Wallis, Vice President and Ms Bilyana Raeva, Chair of the SINEEA Delegation. In her keynote speech, Mrs Wallis called for the EU to play a much more proactive role in the Arctic and to create a dedicated Arctic policy in order to coordinate policy areas such as energy, security and climate change. Further on the meeting was briefed by the Nordic Investment Bank on the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics. As all Arctic countries (Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Canada and the USA) each have held a Conference, the meeting suggested that it would be welcomed if the EP would host the 9th CPAR in 2010 in one of its working places. This would promote the Arctic issues at the EU level. Ms Raeva would convey this message to the EP. Also, as a follow up of the 7th CPAR statement, the Committee was promoting the idea of having UN Treaties relevant to the Arctic as the scope of the next UN Annual Treaty Event before initiating an audit of existing legal regimes that impact the Arctic.

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On 25 January 2001, a joint meeting of the members of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and the EP delegation for Relations with Switzerland, Iceland and Norway was held in the EP in Brussels. The meeting discussed the implementation of the statement from the Fourth Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, 27-29 August 2000, Rovaniemi. Members also had an exchange of views on the EP and the Northern Dimension policy of the EU as well as Northern and Arctic issues in the Trans-Atlantic dialogue and in EU-Russia co-operation. Members of relevant EP committees and delegations took part in the meeting.

On 23 February 1999, the Standing Committee held its meeting in the EP in Brussels where the situation of the indigenous peoples and the sustainable development of Arctic Russia, as well as the EU policy for a Northern Dimension, were topics on the agenda.

Following the meeting, a hearing was held on "The Northern Dimension of the EU" in which members from relevant committees and delegations of the EP participated. Representatives of the European Commission had been invited to brief members on the policy of the EU based on the policy document for the development of a policy for the Northern Dimension of the European Union approved by the European Summit in Vienna.

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On 29 April 2003, the SIN delegation held a joint meeting in Brussels with the Presidents of the **Saami Parliaments of Finland, Norway, Sweden, The President of the Greenland Parliament and members of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.**

At several occasions, the SIN/SINEEA delegation also met with the **President of Sametinget** in Oslo to discuss matters of mutual interest.

EP RELATIONS WITH THE BALTIC SEA PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

The aim of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference is to strengthen the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region by close co-operation between national and regional parliaments. The Parliamentary Conference shall be a forum for debate and information exchange between Parliaments and other organisations in the region both on international and interregional levels.

The Standing Committee and the Extended Standing Committee of the BSPPC are the permanent political bodies of the Conference and have a mandate to perform an executive function in monitoring the implementation of the final resolutions.

All national and regional parliaments in the Baltic Sea region as well as the EP send delegates to the yearly conference as does some international organisations.

On 15 February 2006, the Conference of Presidents decided that the EP should be represented as a full member in the Standing Committee of the BSPPC in the person of the chair of the SINEEA delegation in order to improve the coordination of the work of the EP in the parliamentary assemblies in the Northern part of Europe.

The chair of the SINEEA delegation has therefore frequently participated in the meetings of the Standing Committee (3-4 meetings per year) and has represented the EP at the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conferences.

The Extended Standing Committee

The Extended Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, chaired by Ms Christina Gestrin (Finland), met in the European Parliament on the 25th of February 2009 to discuss the report from the Council of Baltic Sea States, the EU Baltic Sea Strategy and to prepare the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference to be held in Denmark in 2009. The BSPPC work programme for the upcoming conference in Denmark was also discussed, as well as budgetary matters and the organisation of the BSPPC. The European Parliament was represented by Mr Aloyzas Sakalas, Vice-chair of the SINEEA delegation.

Under the chairmanship of Mrs Sinikka Bohlin, Sweden, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference's Extended Standing Committee met in the European Parliament in Brussels on 22 January 2008. The meeting gathered parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea region and the European Parliament, which was represented by Ms Bilyana Raeva, Chair of the SINEEA Delegation and Mrs Diana Wallis, Vice President.

Ambassador Valdis Krastins, Latvia, representing the Council of the Baltic Sea States, presented a status report on the Council's work and the outcome of the resolution from the last BSPPC meeting in Berlin in August 2007 was discussed.

Furthermore, the Committee discussed the New Northern Dimension Policy and the EU Maritime Policy based on briefings given by Mr Garcés de los Fayos and Mrs Izola Bulvinaite from the European Commission.

The Committee also had an exchange of views on the future prospects of the next BSPP to be held in Visby, Sweden in September 2008 concerning the topics:

- Energy and Climate Change
- Labour Market and Social Issues
- Eutrophication and Maritime Policy

Prior to its meeting the BSPP Committee met with the Committee of Regions discussing a closer cooperation between the parliamentary bodies in the Baltic Sea Region.

Parliamentarians from all the countries in the Baltic Sea Region met in Visby for the **17th BSPP**. Unfortunately, the EP was not represented at the Conference, due to the EP session taken place in Brussels the same week. However, Vice President Wallis had sent a message to the Conference stating that the EP currently is dealing with the energy supply and maritime policy issues. She underlined, that the energy security must be regarded as an essential component of the overall security of the EU and that the maritime policy within the EU has become a very significant policy area after the publication of the Green Paper 'Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union' and the subsequent Commission statement entitled ' Maritime policy: a new step forward towards integrated maritime governance'.

The 17th BSPP considered following topics:

- Cooperation in the Region
- Climate Change and Energy Issues in the Region
- The Baltic Sea Action Plan and the Integrated Maritime Policy
- Labour Market and Social Affairs

The EP participation in the Working Group on Energy and Climate Change (MEP Paul Rübig) was highly appreciated.

In its resolution, the BSPP called on the governments, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the EU to take into account the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and to ensure the coordination with the CBSS and the new Northern Dimension policy to implement the reduction of CO₂ emissions as decided at the COP-13 in Bali and to fulfil the recommendations of the EU to achieve a significant emission reduction by 2050 to take steps to develop to Baltic Sea Region into Europe's model maritime region, recognizing that the maritime policy must be seen within the framework of sustainable development, environment, marine spatial planning, safety at sea and inter modality, according to the IMO (Law of the Sea) and EU maritime policies to establish fair clear and accessible rules for labour mobility and to further develop the cooperation in the field of education.

The Polish, the Latvian and the Lithuanian delegations advocated to include a paragraph on the Nord Stream project/gas pipeline linking Russia and Germany (based on the EP resolution of 8 July 2008) to call on the European Commission and the Governments of the CBSS to fully commit themselves to make an analysis of the environmental consequences of the construction of Nord Stream. This proposal was not supported by the other participants and almost led to a

situation, where the consensus on the text could not be found. However, at the final vote on the resolution Poland, Latvia and Lithuania did not block the adoption of the resolution.

The next BSPC (18th) will take place in Nyborg, Denmark on 31 August - 1 September 2009.

EP RELATIONS WITH THE WEST NORDIC COUNCIL (GREENLAND, ICELAND AND THE FAROE ISLANDS)

On a proposal from the West Nordic Council, a parliamentary body with the aim to promote West Nordic (north Atlantic) interests, the EP decided (Conference of Presidents 10 Jan 2008) that its relations with the West Nordic Council should be included in the scope of activities of the SINEEA Delegation. The West Nordic Council is a formal forum for cooperation between the parliaments of Greenland, the Faroes and Iceland. This cooperation dates back to 1985, and was initiated and recognized due to common interest and concerns.

The *1st EU-West Nordic Council Parliamentary Meeting* was held on the 28th of April 2008 in Reykjavik, Iceland. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms Bilyana Raeva, Chair of the European delegation and Mr Karl V. Matthíasson, President of the WNC. A topic on the agenda was the Climate Change and its implications for the environment of the North Atlantic and the Arctic region, presented by Mr Paul Rübig (MEP). Furthermore, the maritime policy for transport and security in the North Atlantic and in the Arctic region was presented by Mr Alyn Smith, (MEP) as well as the Northern Dimension Policy and the Intercultural Dialogue, presented by Marie Panayatopoulos (MEP).

The *2nd EU-West Nordic Council Parliamentary Meeting* was held on the 24th of February 2009, in the European Parliament. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Sakalas (vice-chair of the SINEEA delegation) and Mr Højgaard (President of the WNC - the Faroes). The following issues were discussed at the meeting:

- Sustainable utilisation of the living resources of the Sea
- Seal and whale hunting
- EU common fisheries policy and the North Atlantic
- EU-Greenland Partnership Agreement and its future perspectives (Presented by Mr M.E Janowski, MEP)
- The Climate Change and its implications for the environment (Presented by Mr Paul Rübig, MEP)
- Maritime policy for transport and security (Presented by Ms Bilyana Raeva, MEP)
- The Northern Dimension and its Arctic window (Presented by Ms Bilyana Raeva, MEP)

Initially, Mr Højgaard spoke about the region and its great natural resources and stated that the economies of these three countries have its ground in their natural resources. During the debate and discussion concerning Sustainable utilisation of the living resources of the Sea, seal and whale hunting and the EU common fisheries policy and the North Atlantic, Mr Højgaard stated that every country has the right to use its own natural resources in any way they like. Catching whales is very important for the West Nordic region, especially as the region contains of quite small economies. Many people live of the sea and Mr Højgaard assured that the whale population not is threatened.

Ms Ruth Heilmann, President of the Greenland Parliament, spoke about the banning on seal skin products that the EU is moving towards. She said that Greenland has suffered a lot because of this ban and that they do not have any alternatives of source of employment, and that it therefore has a huge impact on the economy and can lead to a big tragedy for a lot of families. She mentioned legislation in Greenland, which says that the animals must be killed as quickly as possible and that all kind of hunting is done in a human way. Finally, she said that the ban is a threat to their culture, and that the EU should take that into account before they introduce such a ban.

The 3rd EU-WNC IPM will be held in Greenland or in the Faroes in 2010.

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THE NORTHERN DIMENSION

In its resolution of 16 November 2005, the EP offered to host the first Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum, when such a Forum would be established. Following the adoption of a new Northern Dimension Policy by Russia, Norway, Iceland and the EU on 24 November 2006, it was decided to hold a **Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension** on 28 February -1 March 2007 in the EP in Brussels with participants from the parliamentary assemblies of the North.

The Northern Dimension (ND) covers the Baltic Region as well as the Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas of the continent from the Urals to Greenland, and aims to increase the welfare of this vast area with harsh climate conditions and many natural resources. This new policy is outlined in two basic documents - a Policy Framework and a Political Declaration - which provide a permanent basis with strategic objectives, priorities and concrete initiatives (i.e. the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership [NDEP] and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Health and Social Well-being [NDPHS]). The final paragraph of the Political Declaration speaks of arranging a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum. This Forum has for long been supported by the EP as a highly positive continuation of parliamentary cooperation and coordination of policies for the EP and the concerned regional parliaments and actors. As seen, the ND framework is divided into three parts; *political priorities*, *practical implementation* and *institutional arrangements*.

The two main themes that were discussed during the conference were the ND policies related to the Arctic Region and to the Baltic Sea Region. The Conference Statements brings out 16 points which were agreed upon. Primarily, it highlights the overall aim of a common framework and a joint ownership of a new policy (point 1&2). It further brings out a desire to make a constructive regional expression of the policy concerning the four EU/Russia Common Spaces, and draws attention to the Baltic Sea, the Kaliningrad, the Arctic and Sub-arctic areas including the Barents Region (point 3,4&8). Furthermore, point 5, 7 and 9 emphasizes environmental issues such as the Arctic's role as an early warning area for global warning and states that the NDEP should be regarded as a positive example of practical achievements. Finally, point 11 brings out the principle of co-financing from ND partners, whilst point 12-16 discusses the possibilities of further institutional arrangements/establishments relating to the Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum. This Forum could improve the role of parliamentarians of the ND region and enhance dialog, opportunities for discussion, new initiatives as well as oversight.

The Conference called upon the President of the European Parliament and the Speakers of the parliaments of Iceland, Norway and Russia to prepare for the arranging of the ND Parliamentary Forum to be held every two years in order to discuss issues of common concern and examine the evolution of the new Northern Dimension policy. The parliaments of Iceland, Norway, Russia and the EP have agreed to hold the first Parliamentary Forum in the EP during spring 2009.

The Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum

The *First Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum* was held on 25-26 February 2009 at the European Parliament. Members of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, of the Baltic Assembly, of the Nordic Council, of the West Nordic Council and of the network of Barents parliamentarians and the European Parliament met in Brussels, to discuss the development of the Northern Dimension Policy in the Baltic Sea region and in the Arctic region and to coordinate the policies of the parliamentary bodies within the Northern Dimension region.

The parliamentary assemblies invited to the Forum represented all the national parliaments in the Northern Dimension Region, including Canada. Representatives from the Czech Presidency, the European Commission, and the Arctic Council and from the governments of Finland, Russia and Iceland also participated in the meeting. The Forum was attended by approximately 200 participants.

The Parliamentary Forum was opened by Mr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament. President Pöttering began by welcoming all of the parliamentarians coming from Canada to the Urals to engage in a dialogue with a goal of cooperation and mutual prosperity in addressing the challenges in the Arctic and Baltic regions. In his speech, he stated that the purpose of the Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum is to strengthen the power and ensure the involvement of elected representatives through discussions and to influence the policy making every two years on the Northern Dimension priorities. Cross-border cooperation is of key importance to finding a global solution to the challenges of climate change, managing natural resources, cultural identity and human and economic potential. He stated that looking towards the second half of 2009, the Swedish Presidency will likely place greater priority to issues in the Arctic and Baltic regions.

In its Final Statement, the Parliamentary Forum underlined the importance and value of parliamentarians from different countries to meet and discuss issues of common concern within the framework of the Northern Dimension. It was also emphasized that the Parliamentary Forum shall not take the shape of a new institution, but rather be a recurrent place for representatives of the different parliamentary bodies in the north. Furthermore, the Forum supported the overall aim of the Northern Dimension to provide a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation, strengthening stability, well-being and intensified economic cooperation, promotion of economic integration and competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe.

The 2nd Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum will take place in Norway in 2011.

Northern Dimension Ministerial Meetings

Ms Diana WALLIS, vice chair of the SIN delegation represented the EP at the Ministerial Conferences on the Northern Dimension in Luxembourg 2001, in Greenland and in Luxembourg 2002, and as chair of the SINEEA delegation at the Ministerial Meeting in Brussels on 21 November 2005.

THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' CONFERENCE ON COMMON CONCERN FOR THE ARCTIC, Ilulissat, Greenland, 9 September 2008.

On the 9th september 2008, the Nordic Council of Minister's conference on Common Concern for the Arctic was held in Ilulissat, Greenland. The European Parliament was represented by Diana Wallis, Vice-President of the European parliament.

Diana Wallis stressed:

- Importance of awareness of the challenges and threats of climate change. In this respect it is crucial to listen to local inhabitants and residents, especially in the Arctic, and to science. The European Parliament has been and will continue to respond in three ways: firstly by seeking closer co-operation in this region through its commitment to the new EU Northern Dimension Partnership, then as a co-legislator in the EU where we are taking a lead with the ambitious legislative package to combat climate change, and lastly in seeking from the Commission a more holistic approach to EU Arctic policy.
- By setting a binding target (20%) for cutting CO2 emission, a signal to European industry can be sent to invest in cleaner and more energy efficient ways of production. The changes of climate affect us all, but within the EU small steps when multiplied by 27 Member States can make a big difference, and also help force the pace of change internationally.
- It is accepted that the EU needs a proper energy policy and, of course, with that comes a shared interest in what happens to the potentially rich resources being revealed in the Arctic.
- The changes in the Arctic also relate to new sea routes, new trade ways. It has already been a huge increase in seaborne tourism in the Arctic seas.
- Because of the President of the European Parliament has made intercultural dialogue a theme of his presidency, the commitment to the people of the Arctic: to listen and learn from them.
- The Parliament has always participated actively in the Standing Committee of Arctic Parliamentarians which shadows the Council. We now want to see the Commission take a role in the Arctic Council commensurate with its standing and those of the Member States. It is clear from the Commissioner's statement that the EU has much to contribute on so many of the horizontal issues under consideration.
- However, the Arctic Council structures also have to show themselves up to the tasks ahead. As the Arctic becomes the focus of international attention and national interests, there has to be a clear political framework. Arctic nations and peoples and those close friends of the Arctic have to find a coherent mechanism to work together to confront the challenges of the future.

EP RELATIONS WITH THE BARENTS REGION

The cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region was launched in 1993 on two levels: intergovernmental (Barents Euro-Arctic Council) and the interregional (Barents Regional Council), with sustainable development as the overall objective. The region was an area of military confrontation during the Cold War. The underlying premise was that close cooperation

would secure long-term stability in political and other relations and reduce possible tensions. This objective has already been successfully achieved.

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region is equivalent to the combined area of France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, with a population of 6 million inhabitants. The Barents cooperation has developed successfully within a wide range of fields, and includes the indigenous peoples and a multitude of specialists, business and people-to-people networks. A large number of projects have been implemented, mainly with financing from national sources. EU funding, such as Interreg, also plays a very important role.

Ms Diana WALLIS represented the EP at the **2nd Barents Parliamentary Conference** on 29-30 June 2005 in Bodø, Norway and at the follow-up meeting to the Conference in Oslo on 26 January 2006.

At the **3rd Barents Parliamentary Conference**¹ Parliamentarians from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Russia, Sweden and the Regional Assemblies of the North met in Rovaniemi, Finland on 11-12 June 2007.

At the **3rd Barents Parliamentary Conference** three main topics were discussed:

- Environment, energy and climate change
- Public health and social wellbeing
- Transport and logistics

The Conference made reference to the Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension held in the European Parliament this spring and supported the forthcoming Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum to examine the evolution and to facilitate the parliamentary monitoring of the new Northern Dimension Policy. It also supported the overall objectives of the cooperation in the Barents region to enhance stability and wellbeing and to ensure sustainable development in economic, environmental and social fields.

The Conference was calling on the EU to use the Northern Dimension and the regional and cross-border cooperation for promoting cleaner production in the Northern regions.

The climate change was one of the major topics being discussed at the Conference and it was recommended that the EU should influence the governments of the Barents Region to pay attention to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment and to convey a Barents message to the International fora bearing in mind those problems the climate change can pose to traditional means of livelihood of the indigenous peoples in the region.

In the transport field, the Conference encouraged further development of various transport connections throughout the Barents region and recommended to consider establishing a Partnership on Transport and Logistics in the Framework of the Northern Dimension.

The EU was also called upon to give priority to improve the prevention of communicable diseases like HIV/Aids and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis as well as other lifestyle, health and social problems.

In his address to the Conference, Mr Paavo Värynen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland highlighted the "dialogue and cooperation towards sustainable regional

¹ The representative from the European Parliament, Vice President Diana Wallis was unable to attend the Conference due to pressing engagement in Brussels.

development particular within the environmental and social and health sectors". He also underlined, that the Barents region has become increasingly attractive for commercial and economic cooperation due to its valuable natural resources, particularly abundant oil and gas reserves. In order to tackle the issues in the Barents region, the existing cooperation instruments should be used to their full extent. However, the Barents cooperation needs concrete action and more visibility. To achieve this goal, parliamentary support is needed.

The 4th Parliamentary Conference is schedule to take place in Syktyvkar, Russia on 26-27 May 2009.