DRAFT REPORT

on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic (2016/2228(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs
Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

Rapporteurs: Urmas Paet, Sirpa Pietikäinen

(Joint committee meetings – Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure)
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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic
(2016/2228(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) concluded on 10 December 1982 and in force since 16 November 1994, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People of 13 September 2007¹,

– having regard to the Agreement adopted in Paris at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC of 12 December 2015 (the Paris Agreement),

– having regard to the Minamata Convention, the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Gothenburg Protocol, the Stockholm Convention, the Århus Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity,

– having regard to the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development and the outcome document adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, entitled ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’²,

– having regard to the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 16 November 1972,

– having regard to ILO Convention 169 and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

– having regard to the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat³,

– having regard to the Council Conclusions on Arctic issues, in particular those of 20 June 2016, 12 May 2014, 8 December 2009 and 8 December 2008,


– having regard to the joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) of 27 April 2016 on ‘An Integrated European Union Policy for the Arctic’⁴, the joint communication by the Commission and the HR of 26 June 2012⁵ on ‘Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region’ and the Commission communication of 20 November 2008 on ‘The EU and the Arctic region’.

² UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/1.
⁴ JOIN (2016)0021.
⁵ JOIN (2012)0019.
– having regard to the national Arctic strategies of Arctic states, in particular those of the Kingdom of Denmark (2011), Sweden (2011) and Finland (2013), as well as those of other EU and EEA Member States,

– having regard to the Arctic Council (AC) programme for 2015 to 2017 under US chairmanship,

– having regard to the statements of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (CPAR) and of the Barents Parliamentary Conference (BPC), in particular the Conference Statement adopted at the 12th Conference of the CPAR in Ulan Ude, Russia, 14-16 June 2016,


– having regard to its previous resolutions on the Arctic, in particular the resolutions of 12 March 2014 on ‘An EU Strategy for the Arctic’\(^5\), of 20 January 2011 on ‘A Sustainable EU Policy for the High North’\(^6\) and of 9 October 2008 on ‘Arctic governance’\(^7\),

– having regard to its resolutions of 2 February 2016 on ‘The mid-term review of the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy’\(^8\) and of 12 May 2016 on the ‘Follow-up and review of the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals’\(^9\),

– having regard to the relevant recommendations of the Delegation for relations with Switzerland and Norway and to the EU-Iceland Joint Parliamentary Committee and the European Economic Area Joint Parliamentary Committee (SINEAA Delegation),

– having regard to Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the joint deliberations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety under Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinions of the Committee on

\(^1\) Texts adopted, P7_TA (2013)0513.
\(^3\) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0458.
\(^6\) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0024.
\(^8\) Texts adopted P8_TA(2016)0034.
International Trade, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Fisheries (A8-0000/2016),

A. whereas the EU is a global actor; whereas there has been a longstanding engagement of the EU in the Arctic based on history, geography, economy and research;

B. whereas the EU has gradually built and enhanced its Arctic policy; whereas the evolving engagement and common EU interests are best served by well coordinated common means;

C. whereas a broad international legal framework applies to the Arctic;

D. whereas interest in the Arctic and its resources is increasing because of the changing environment of the area, and resource scarcity; whereas the region’s geopolitical importance is growing; whereas climate change effects and growing competition for access to the Arctic and natural resources, and increasing economic activities have brought (security) risks to the region, including challenges to human security, but also new opportunities; whereas as a result of climate change new navigation routes will open and new fishing grounds and natural resources will become available resulting in an increase in human activity in the region;

E. whereas the Arctic has long been an area of constructive international cooperation and whereas there is a need to keep the Arctic as a low-tension area;

F. whereas a robust and healthy Arctic ecosystem inhabited by viable communities is strategically important for the political and economic stability of Europe; whereas the costs of inaction on preserving the Arctic ecosystem are increasing exponentially;

G. whereas the Arctic sea ice has diminished significantly since 1981, the areas under permafrost are decreasing, causing the risk of incidental release of huge amounts of carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere, the snow cover continues to decrease and the melting glaciers are contributing to globally rising sea levels; whereas it has been noticed that the sea ice is disappearing at an even faster pace than the models predict; whereas climate change is advancing at the fastest pace in the polar regions;

H. whereas three EU Member States (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) are full members of the eight-member AC, and seven others (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom) are observers; whereas the EU is seeking to upgrade its status in the AC;

I. whereas some four million people live in the Arctic region, of which some ten percent are members of indigenous peoples; whereas the vulnerable Arctic environment, as well as the fundamental rights of indigenous people, require more stringent safeguards, especially when it comes to projects where intrusive extraction of natural resources takes place;

J. whereas the ecosystem in the Arctic, including its flora and fauna, is particularly vulnerable to abruptions, with a relatively long recovery period; whereas the negative environmental impacts are often accumulated and irreversible;
K. whereas increased amount of greenhouse gases and air pollution in the atmosphere are contributing to the changing climate of the Arctic; whereas pollution appearing in the Arctic climate is mostly derived from Asian, North American and European emitters, so that the emission reduction measures in the EU play a great role in tackling the climate change of the Arctic;

L. whereas the EU policy in the Arctic region should reflect more closely the Sustainable Development Goals that the EU has committed to achieving by 2030;

M. whereas science-informed decision-making is key to safeguarding the fragile ecosystems of the Arctic, to reducing risks and to enabling adaptation of local communities; whereas the EU is the world’s leading funder of Arctic research and promotes free exchange of its results;

1. Welcomes the joint communication as a positive step towards an integrated EU policy on Arctic matters, identifying 39 specific areas of action, and towards developing a more coherent framework for EU action; stresses the need for more coherence between the EU’s internal and external policies as regards Arctic matters; reiterates its call for a comprehensive strategy and a concretised action plan on the EU’s engagement in the Arctic;

2. Underlines the importance of UNCLOS in providing a complementary multilateral legal framework for settling intra-Arctic sovereignty issues; notes that only very few unresolved issues of jurisdiction exist in the Arctic; considers respect for international law in the Arctic essential; advocates a strong role for the EU in promoting effective multilateral arrangements and a global rules-based order through the strengthening and consistent implementation of relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements, frameworks and arrangements; underlines that the EU should have a strong role in reaching an agreement to maintain the Arctic, which is not under any country’s jurisdiction, as an area of common heritage to be used exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes; notes that this does not concern navigation and traditional livelihoods;

3. Welcomes the ratification of the Paris Agreement by the European Union;

4. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take a stronger role in the effective implementation of international conventions such as the Paris Agreement, the Minimata Convention, the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Gothenburg Protocol, the Stockholm Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity; asks the Commission to pay special attention to the ongoing international process by the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee to further restrict the use of persistent organic pollutants;

5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts within the EU legislative framework by agreeing on ambitious reduction targets in the negotiations on the National Emission Ceilings Directive, by reducing local pollution levels through the Clean Air Package, and by negotiating ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and measures on both the emission trading and effort-sharing sectors, bearing in mind the target of limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C by 2100;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States affiliated to the work of the Arctic Council to support the development of an Arctic Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to preserve the vulnerable ecosystem of the Arctic; notes that this special EIA should eventually be made mandatory and take account of at least the following aspects when evaluating projects taking place in the Arctic:

- All potential environmental, socio-economic and cultural impacts both during and after the project, including cumulative effects of current and future projects,
- The precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle must be applied at all stages of project planning, assessment, implementation and reclamation,
- Reclamation and recovery of habitat and affected lands must be thoroughly planned and fully funded in advance,
- A proven demonstration of the industry’s ability to retrieve spilled oil in frozen, broken and refreezing ice conditions,
- An international liability and compensation regime for contamination of lands, waters and marine areas resulting from offshore oil exploration and exploitation must be established;

7. Invites the Commission and the EU Member States to set the successful application of Arctic EIA as a prerequisite for goods marketed in the EU deriving from the projects executed in the Arctic region;

8. Encourages close cooperation between EU Institutions and relevant EU Member States on Arctic issues; invites those Member States that are full members of the AC to keep the other Member States and the HR informed of any matter of common interest in the AC in accordance with Article 34(2) of the Treaty on the European Union;

9. Stresses the need for the EU to engage with all Arctic partners in policy dialogue; calls for improved coordination between the EU, the AC, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and other bodies involved in cooperation in the High North;

10. Reconfirms its support for observer status of the EU in the AC; is convinced that the upgrading of the EU’s status would reinforce the political and institutional role of the AC in tackling Arctic matters;

11. Suggests further enhancing coordination between the Commission and the EEAS on Arctic issues, as well as considering creating a unit for Northern policies at the EEAS and strengthening EEAS-Commission inter-service cooperation to ensure a coherent, coordinated and integrated policy approach across the relevant key policy areas;

12. Notes the EU’s capacity to contribute in multiple ways to the resolution of potential security challenges and the prevention of conflicts; calls on the EU to contribute, in partnership with its Member States, to building civilian security mechanisms, as well as to enhancing both natural and man-made crisis and disaster management capacities, and search and rescue infrastructure;
13. Notes the increase in the stationing of Russian military forces in the region, the building and reopening of bases and the creation of an Arctic military district of Russia;

14. Stresses the importance of engaging Russia in Arctic cooperation and the need to further assert EU strategic interests towards Russia by the use of selective engagement and to seek progress on issues of common concern where there is ground for global solutions to common challenges and threats; urges that this issue be included in the EU strategy on the Arctic;

15. Notes that Arctic migration routes have formed which enter the European Union; emphasises that migration routes and increased transport should be considered when drafting an EU Arctic strategy;

16. Welcomes plans to create a European Arctic stakeholder forum; agrees not to create new funding mechanisms but to enhance synergies between existing financing instruments in order to prevent possible duplications and to maximise interaction between internal and external EU programmes;

17. Calls for better and earlier involvement of indigenous people in the making of a citizen-centred Arctic policy; stresses the need to safeguard their rights, culture and language;

18. Pays special attention to the SDG 4.5, which includes ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for indigenous people;

19. Highlights the role of local communities and indigenous people in keeping the Arctic region viable and sustainable; calls on the Commission to target these communities in providing access to all relevant information on EU single market requirements, best practices and funding instruments; underlines the role of fluent transport, communication and electricity networks in creating economic activity in the area;

20. Welcomes the Commission’s commitment to at least maintaining the level of funding for Arctic research in Horizion2020;

21. Given that better knowledge of the Arctic is key to adequately meeting all challenges, encourages the promotion and facilitation of international scientific and research cooperation among all stakeholders active in the field of Arctic research and in establishing research infrastructures; supports cooperation between leading Arctic research institutions to develop an integrated European polar research programme under the EU-PolarNet initiative;

22. Reiterates its call on the Commission to establish the EU Arctic Information Centre, with sufficient funds, in order to ensure efficient access to Arctic information and knowledge;

23. Calls for more systematic and long-term gathering of data derived from Arctic research projects; regrets that the achievements of individual projects often disappear when passing from one funding period to another; calls on the Commission to aim at continuity when planning the post-2020 framework for Arctic research;

24. Welcomes the Commission’s determination to promote the establishment of marine
protected areas in the Arctic; reminds the Commission and the Member States of the at least 10 % protection target of coastal and marine areas as part of the Sustainable Development Goals;

25. Reiterates its position from 2014, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to actively facilitate the ban on the use of heavy fuel oil (HFO) and carriage as ship fuel in vessels navigating the Arctic seas through MARPOL of IMO and/or through port state control; invites the Commission to include the environmental and climate risks of the use of HFO in its study on the risks that the increase in navigation of the Northern Sea Route would bring;

26. Considers parliamentary engagement and close interparliamentary cooperation on Arctic matters, in particular with national parliaments of relevant EU Member States, essential in the implementation of Arctic policies;

27. Invites the HR and the Commission to closely monitor climate, environmental, maritime, socio-economic and security developments in the Arctic and to report back regularly to Parliament and the Council, including on the implementation of the EU’s Arctic policy;

28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the HR, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the governments and parliaments of the Arctic region States.
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Geopolitics, international cooperation, security challenges and governance issues in the Arctic region

The geopolitical importance of the Arctic region is growing. The climate change effects and growing competition for access to the Arctic, natural resources and increasing economic activities have brought both opportunities but also risks to the region, including challenges to security. The transformation of the Arctic will potentially open new navigation routes and the new fishing and natural resources grounds will become available resulting in the increase of human activity in the region.

The Arctic has long been an area of constructive international cooperation and it has remained a low-tension cooperative regional order in the world. It is of highest importance to continue to keep the Arctic a low-tension area. There is an extensive international legal framework that applies to the Arctic and UNCLOS as a complementary multilateral legal framework for the settling of intra-Arctic sovereignty issues is very important.

The EU has a long standing engagement in the Arctic based on history, geography, economy and research. Three EU Member States (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) are full members of the eight-member Arctic Council, and seven others (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom) are observers.

The EU has a pending observer status in the Arctic Council. As the EU is the world’s leading funder in the Arctic it would only make sense that it could upgrade its status in the Arctic Council to become an observer.

The EU has gradually built and enhanced its Arctic policy. The Commissions’ joint communication is a positive step towards a more integrated EU policy on Arctic matters. The EU Global Strategy for the EU Foreign and Security Policy of June 2016 on “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe” also addresses the security aspects in the Arctic, as opposed to the Commission joint communication. It has to be kept in mind that the geopolitical developments in the Arctic region also affect the security situation in Northern Europe and globally. There is a need to avoid the militarisation of the Arctic. The report foresees the need for a more coherent EU internal and external policy, an Arctic strategy and a concrete action plan on the EUs engagement in the Arctic taking into account all the aspects. This follows also from the fact that all of the EU Arctic Member States and also some other states have their own national Arctic strategies.

The EU has a capacity to contribute in multiple ways to the resolution of potential security challenges and the prevention of conflicts and the EU should contribute, in partnership with its Member States, in building civilian security mechanisms as well as in enhancing crisis and disaster management capacities, search and rescue infrastructure.

The report calls for a sustainable Arctic policy and draws attention to the fact that the EU considers essential the respect of international law in the Arctic and advocates a strong role for the EU in promoting effective multilateral arrangements and global rules-based order. It
also suggests to reinforce multilateral Arctic governance through the strengthening and consistent implementation of relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements, frameworks and arrangements.

A sustainable Arctic policy, local communities, environmental challenges and the need for climate action

The Arctic region is especially pristine and sensitive area. The ultimate goal of the global community is to preserve and strengthen the ecosystem capacity of the Arctic. This capacity is under a pressure from several sources. The Arctic is a region with local communities seeking for sustainable economic growth, coastal countries exploring natural resources in the area, global companies interested in faster logistic routes and scientists researching the changing environment of the Arctic. All these interests are tightly connected with the utmost goal that all Arctic policies should be environmentally, socially and culturally sustainable, and aim at the moderation of the climate change by reducing human carbon footprint. The EU has committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Sustainable development is the only feasible way of development in the Arctic region and therefore the EU Arctic policy should reflect better the requirements of individual SDGs in the Arctic context, with a special orientation on the preservation of ecosystems. SDGs provide a useful framework to holistically examine the ecosystem capacity which is under pressure from accumulating negative environmental effects, accelerated by climate change.

Anthropogenic contribution to climate change is indisputable. Environmental changes are taking place in the Arctic at a faster pace than anywhere else around the globe. The increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in the last 50 years has increased the surface temperature in the Arctic 2° degrees more than elsewhere. The Arctic sea ice has diminished by 13.4 % by decade since 1981 and the snow cover continues to decrease every year.

Warming temperature and melting sea ice affect the ecosystems worldwide in the form of raising sea levels, changing composition of the sea mass and creation of unpredictable weather patterns. Without effective action, the pace of the climate change might accelerate even more in the future, affected by the melting of permafrost in the Arctic region. The areas under permafrost decrease cause a risk of incidental release of huge amounts of carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere.

The keys for effective climate action are not only in the in the hands of the Artic countries but all states situated in mid-latitudes. Pollution appearing in the Arctic climate is mostly derived from Asian, North American and European emitters, hence the emission reduction measures in the EU play a great role in tackling the climate change of the Arctic.

The report calls for the Commission and the Member States to take a stronger role in the effective implementation of international conventions, such as Paris Agreement, Minamata Convention, Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, Gothenburg Protocol, Stockholm Convention, Århus Convention and Convention on Biological Diversity. The Commission should also use its enabling role in the on-going negotiations in the International Maritime Organisation to ban the use of heavy fuel oil and carriage as ship fuel in vessels navigating the Arctic seas through MARPOL of IMO.
Rapid action is needed. The costs of inaction increase with the time that passes. In order to reach the target set in the Paris Agreement, immediate and sharp emission reductions are necessary. In addition, negative environmental impacts on the Arctic are often accumulated and irreversible. The ecosystem, including its flora and fauna, in the Arctic is particularly vulnerable to abruptions.

Sustainable development of the Arctic consists of the combination of viable local communities and healthy ecosystem. The Commission’s proposal to establish the Stakeholder Forum, with the local actors in its focus, is a very welcomed initiative and once in function, should evolve towards a more permanent structure. The forum has the potential to raise the awareness on the opportunities the EU has to offer in the area, e.g. for small- and medium sized enterprises, for improving transport, communication and electricity networks, and for innovating cleantech solutions for cold temperature conditions.

One additional way to establish more stringent safeguards for the vulnerable environment as well as for fundamental rights of indigenous people, is through an Arctic specific Environmental Impact Assessment that precedes the projects executed in the Arctic region.