

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2228(INI)	Procedure completed
Integrated European Union policy for the Arctic		
Subject		
3.70.03 Climate policy, climate change, ozone layer		
3.70.18 International and regional environment protection measures and agreements		
6.40 Relations with third countries		

Key players			
European Parliament	Joint Committee Responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Foreign Affairs		05/09/2016
		 PIETIKÄINEN Sirpa	05/09/2016
		 PAET Urmas	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 GAHLER Michael	
		 JAAKONSAARI Liisa	
		 SCHALDEMOSE Christel	
		 DOHRMANN Jørn	
		 FOTYGA Anna	
		 JÄÄTTEENMÄKI Anneli	
		 VALERO Bodil	
		 ŠKRLEC Davor	
		 CASTALDO Fabio Massimo	
		 D'ORNANO Mireille	
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Foreign Affairs		
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed

	INTA International Trade		13/07/2016
		 MARTIN David	
ITRE	Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
REGI	Regional Development		14/07/2016
		 NILSSON Jens	
AGRI	Agriculture and Rural Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PECH	Fisheries		15/06/2016
		 WAŁĘSA Jarosław	

Key events

27/04/2016	Non-legislative basic document published	JOIN(2016)0021	Summary
15/09/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
15/09/2016	Referral to joint committee announced in Parliament		
31/01/2017	Vote in committee		
08/02/2017	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0032/2017	Summary
15/03/2017	Debate in Parliament		
16/03/2017	Results of vote in Parliament		
16/03/2017	Decision by Parliament	T8-0093/2017	Summary
16/03/2017	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2228(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54; Rules of Procedure EP 58
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CJ26/8/07812

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		JOIN(2016)0021	27/04/2016	ECHR	Summary
Committee opinion	REGI	PE589.342	07/12/2016	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE592.099	07/12/2016	EP	

Committee opinion	PECH	PE592.195	07/12/2016	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0032/2017	08/02/2017	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0093/2017	16/03/2017	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2017)390	22/08/2017	EC	

Integrated European Union policy for the Arctic

PURPOSE: to present an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic.

BACKGROUND: the EU has a strategic interest in playing a key role in the Arctic region, which must remain a safe, stable, sustainable and prosperous not just for the region itself, but for the world.

Eight states have territories in the Arctic: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Three EU Member States are therefore also Arctic states, while Iceland and Norway are members of the European Economic Area.

The Arctic needs a solid framework for sound stewardship: large parts of the high seas areas beyond national jurisdiction are currently not covered by specific arrangements for managing economic activities, nor is there sufficient scientific knowledge about the sea basin.

Against this background, several Member States have issued national Arctic policy frameworks in recent years. In 2014, the Council and European Parliament asked the Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to develop an integrated policy on Arctic matters, and to develop a more coherent framework for EU action and funding programmes.

In response, an integrated EU Arctic policy is proposed in this joint communication.

CONTENT: this joint communication proposes an integrated EU Arctic policy in three priority areas:

The fight against climate change and safeguarding the arctic environment: in recent years, the Arctic's role in climate change has become much more prominent. The Arctic is warming at almost twice the global average rate. It is essential to understand better the problems with which the region is faced.

Strategies must focus on fighting climate change, research and environmental protection. The EU should, in particular:

- maintain its current funding levels for Arctic research (around EUR 200 million in the past decade) under the Horizon 2020 programme. The EU has already committed EUR 40 million under the 2016-2017 work programme to Arctic-related research. A central plank of the EUs Arctic research efforts will be the EU-PolarNet initiative, which supports an EU-wide consortium of expertise and infrastructure for polar research to better assimilate Europe's scientific and operational capabilities in the Polar regions;
- promote and facilitate effective international scientific cooperation through supporting transnational access to research infrastructure and open data resources to maintain good relations with key countries in the region ;
- work with regions in the Arctic to draw up appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures that take account of the local circumstances and special nature of the Arctic regions. It can do this partly through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), which mainstream climate action;
- contribute to international efforts to limit emissions of short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon and methane that further accelerate climatic changes in the Arctic;
- work with partners to promote a high level of biodiversity protection and support the establishment of marine protected areas in the Arctic;
- support work at international level to prohibit or phase out the use of persistent organic pollutants in the environment between now and 2020 in order to protect inhabitants of the Arctic;
- work closely with Member States, the OSPAR Convention and other stakeholders on oil and gas activities to promote the adoption of the highest standards of major accident prevention and environmental control.

Sustainable development in and around the Arctic: the EU should also promote sustainable development in the Arctic, taking into account both the traditional livelihoods of those living in the region and the impact of economic development on the Arctic's fragile environment. It should contribute to enhancing the economic, social and environmental resilience of societies in the Arctic:

- investment by European companies can help advance sustainable development in the region, possibly aided by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and initiatives under the Investment Plan for Europe;
- the climate of the Arctic region also makes it an ideal innovation site for cold climate technologies and services;
- opportunities in the Green Economy, such as sustainable multi-source energy systems, eco-tourism and low emission food production, could be developed further;
- there are potential opportunities for sustainable economic activities in Blue Economy sectors such as aquaculture, fisheries, offshore renewable energy, maritime tourism and marine biotechnology;
- energy is expected to be a growth sector, and may include on- and off-shore wind power, ocean energy, geothermal energy and hydropower.

3) **International cooperation on Arctic issues:** the EU has a strong interest in seeing that the Arctic remains a zone of constructive international cooperation where complex issues are addressed through negotiated solutions, and where common platforms can be established in response to emerging risks

In particular, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides a framework for managing the Arctic Ocean including the peaceful

settlement of disputes. The EU will continue its active participation in the Arctic Council and continue to support regional and sub-regional cooperation.

The EU will continue to engage with Arctic indigenous peoples and local communities to ensure that their views and rights are respected and promoted in the ongoing development of EU policies affecting the Arctic.

The EU needs to ensure that the necessary coordination structures are in place at EU level to meet the challenges ahead. The Council could consider establishing a Working Party on Arctic matters and northern cooperation and the European Parliament could similarly consider establishing a delegation on Arctic matters and northern cooperation.

Integrated European Union policy for the Arctic

The Committee on Foreign Affairs Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report prepared by Sirpa PIETIKÄINEN (EPP, FI) and Urmas PAET (ADLE, EE) on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic.

Members recalled the longstanding engagement of the EU in the Arctic. Three of its Member States – Denmark, Finland and Sweden – are Arctic countries.

The effects of climate change and growing competition for access to the Arctic and its natural resources, and increasing economic activities, have brought risks to the region, including challenges to the environment and human security.

Given the growing importance of the regions geopolitical situation, the Arctic should remain an international low-tension area. In this regard, the report stressed the importance of continued engagement and dialogue with Russia within the framework of Arctic regional cooperation, notwithstanding the increase in the stationing of Russian military forces in the region.

Towards an integrated EU policy: welcoming the joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the report stressed the need for more coherence between the EU's internal and external policies as regards Arctic matters. It also reiterated its call for a strategy and an action plan on the EU's engagement in the Arctic, wherein the aim of preserving the vulnerable ecosystem of the Arctic should be the starting point.

Underlining the importance of UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Members considered respect for international law in the Arctic essential. They advocated a strong role for the EU in promoting effective multilateral arrangements and a global, rules-based order. They also suggested reinforcing multilateral Arctic governance through the strengthening and consistent implementation of relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements, frameworks and arrangements.

Preservation and environmental protection in the region: the report called on 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, Aarhus Convention and Convention on Biological Diversity.

Members supported the development of a network of Arctic conservation areas and called for any development of commercial fishing in the region to be carried out in a way that is fully compatible with the sensitive and specific nature of the region.

The EU is called upon to promote strict precautionary regulatory standards in the field of environmental protection and safety for oil exploration, prospection and production internationally.

The Commission should also use its enabling role in the on-going negotiations in the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to ban the use of heavy fuel oil and carriage as ship fuel in vessels navigating the Arctic seas through the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention).

Protecting local populations: given that some four million people live in the Arctic region, of which some 10 % are indigenous peoples, Members called for more stringent safeguards for the vulnerable environment as well as for fundamental rights of indigenous people, as well as their right to give their prior consent as regards the extraction of natural resources.

In this regard, Parliament called for special attention to be paid to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4.5, which includes ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for indigenous peoples, also in their own languages.

Preserving marine ecosystems: noting that the volume of sea ice present during the summer has fallen by more than 40 % in 35 years and that climate change is advancing at a double pace in the polar regions, Members called for the adoption of a precautionary approach in order to establish appropriate international measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources on the Arctic high seas.

Scientific cooperation: in order to improve knowledge in the Arctic, the report encouraged the promotion and facilitation of international scientific and research cooperation among all stakeholders active in the field of Arctic research. It supported cooperation between leading Arctic research institutions with a view to developing an integrated European polar research programme under the EU-PolarNet initiative that incorporates traditional and local knowledge.

Integrated European Union policy for the Arctic

The European Parliament adopted by 483 votes to 100, with 37 abstentions, a resolution on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic.

Climate change effects and growing competition for access to the Arctic and its natural resources, and increasing economic activities, have brought risks to the region, including challenges to the environment and human security.

Given the regions growing geopolitical importance, Parliament stressed the important role of the Arctic Council for maintaining constructive cooperation, low tension, peace and stability in the region. It also called for a continued dialogue with Russia within the framework of Arctic regional cooperation, while noting the increase in the stationing of Russian military forces in the region.

Towards an integrated EU policy: Parliament stressed the need for more coherence between the EU's internal and external policies as regards

Arctic matters, a comprehensive strategy and a concretised action plan on the EU's engagement in the Arctic, wherein the aim of preserving the vulnerable ecosystem of the Arctic should be the starting point.

Underlining the importance of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Members considered respect for international law in the Arctic essential. They advocated a strong role for the EU in promoting effective multilateral arrangements and a global, rules-based order. They also suggested reinforcing multilateral Arctic governance through the strengthening and consistent implementation of relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements, frameworks and arrangements.

Preservation and environmental protection in the region: the resolution stressed that in the last decades, the temperature in the Arctic has been increasing at about twice the rate as the global average and that the volume of sea ice present during the summer has fallen by more than 40 % in 35 years.

Parliament:

- called on 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, Aarhus Convention and Convention on Biological Diversity;
- supported the development of a network of Arctic conservation areas and called for any development of commercial fishing in the region to be carried out in a way that is fully compatible with the sensitive and specific nature of the region;
- reiterated its call on the Commission and the Member States to take all necessary measures to facilitate actively the ban on the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil as ship fuel in vessels navigating the Arctic seas. In the absence of adequate international measures, the Commission shall put forward proposals on rules for vessels calling at EU ports subsequent to, or prior to, journeys through Arctic waters, with a view to prohibiting the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil.

Parliament called for the adoption of a precautionary approach aiming to establish appropriate international measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources in the Arctic high seas.

Protecting local populations: given that some four million people live in the Arctic region, of which some 10 % are indigenous peoples, Members called for more stringent safeguards for the vulnerable environment as well as for fundamental rights of indigenous people, as well as their right to give their prior consent as regards the extraction of natural resources.

In this regard, Parliament called for special attention to be paid to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4.5, which includes ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for indigenous peoples, also in their own languages.

Scientific cooperation: in order to improve knowledge in the Arctic, Parliament encouraged the promotion and facilitation of international scientific and research cooperation among all stakeholders active in the field of Arctic research. It called on the Commission to study and make proposals on the strengthening of the Arctic telecommunications infrastructure, including satellites, in order to help scientific research and climate monitoring.