

2020 Public Consultation on the EU Arctic Policy

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

The EU's Arctic policy has been updated regularly since it was first outlined in 2008. The EU's Arctic policy is set out in a Joint Communication from 2016.[1] Now, once again, EU Member States have invited by way of Council conclusions the Commission and the High Representative to continue to actively implement the EU Arctic policy, and to initiate a process in order to update the EU Arctic Policy, as set out in the 2016 Joint Communication, and to continue to report to the Council regularly.[2]

The EU needs an Arctic Policy that is capable of addressing different and often interrelated challenges, many of them derived from rapid climate change in the region. The rate of Arctic warming is unprecedented and its implications are severe. Arctic sea ice extent is declining at alarming rates, Arctic surface air temperature has likely increased by more than double the global average over the last two decades, and widespread disappearance of Arctic near-surface permafrost is projected to occur.[3]

Arctic matters cover a wide range of individual issues, which are developing at varying speed and present a formidable array of problems. These include systemic climate change; consequently receding sea ice and its many implications at sea and on land, including infrastructure damage; increased environmental pressure; socio-economic challenges; challenges of intra-Arctic connectivity as well as connectivity towards non-Arctic regions and players; safety and security issues; and the ever-increasing geopolitical importance of this region. Furthermore, many of these issues are interrelated, and the number of actors and decision-makers in the Arctic has increased immensely over the years.

It is therefore important to evaluate continuously the role that the EU plays, and can play, in this complex policy area, which clearly affects a wide range of stakeholders, both directly (e.g. local communities) and indirectly (e.g. consumers). Reflecting on the relevance of the EU Arctic policy is all the more important in light of today's key challenges and opportunities, as well as the EU's ambitions under the European Green Deal. The consultation proposed in this strategy should be considered against this background.

[1] Joint Communication of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament and the Council "An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic" (JOIN(2016)21 final) of 27 April 2016.

[2] As per the 14249/19 Council conclusions on Oceans and Seas of 19 November 2019, para. 63; 13996/19 Council conclusions on Space solutions for a sustainable Arctic of 21 November 2019, para. 17; 14952/19 Council Conclusions on the EU Arctic Policy of 9 December 2019, paras. 4 and 5.

[3] "Polar Regions" in: IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (2019).

Objective

While many elements of the Joint Communication remain as valid as they were in 2016, the invitation by the Council presents a good opportunity to launch a public consultation, reflecting on the relevance and completeness of current focus areas.

The input gained will enable an informed decision on possible future actions.

Guidance on answering the questions

Though this consultation is in English, contributions in any of the EU languages will be accepted. When answering the questions, it should be kept in mind that EU competences in the Arctic depend on the policy area. The Arctic policy touches among other things upon environment, climate change, energy, research, transport, mining, connectivity, health, tourism, agriculture, shipping, trade, regional development, indigenous peoples, and the conservation of marine biological resources and fisheries. Some of these involve shared (e.g. environment) or even exclusive EU competences (e.g. conservation of marine biological resources), whereas in other areas the EU has supporting (e.g. tourism) or no competences. Moreover, many of the actions that are needed in and for the Arctic depend for their success on the active involvement of all states (and indeed, all actors) concerned.

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Check if your organisation is on the [transparency register](#). It's a voluntary database for organisations seeking to influence EU decision-making.

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Please add your country of origin, or that of your organisation.

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The Commission will publish the responses to this public consultation. You can choose whether you would like your details to be made public or to remain anonymous.

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Only your type of respondent, country of origin and contribution will be published. All other personal details (name, organisation name and size, transparency register number) will not be published.

Public

Your personal details (name, organisation name and size, transparency register number, country of origin) will be published with your contribution.

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Questionnaire

To begin, we seek to assess the contribution of the three-pillar structure of the 2016 Joint Communication, as described above, and the continued relevance of structuring the EU Arctic Policy along these three main lines. Moreover, we seek to identify any obvious gaps and assess the scope for EU involvement in Arctic matters. To what extent should the EU address particular issues, such as agriculture, health (e.g. as a consequence of thawing permafrost), safety for cruise ships, investment codes of conduct, security, etc.?

In your view, what have been the EU's main achievements and failures under each of the three priorities in the 2016 Joint Communication?

1500 character(s) maximum

Looking forward, to what extent are the three priorities of the Joint Communication still relevant? Rate on a scale from 1 to 5, whereby 1 star is not relevant at all, 2 is somewhat irrelevant, 3 is unsure/neutral, 4 is somewhat relevant, and 5 is still very relevant.

Climate Change and Safeguarding the Arctic Environment	
Sustainable Development in and around the Arctic	
International Cooperation on Arctic Issues	

Why? (Explain the above ratings)

4500 character(s) maximum

Is enough being done at EU level to reduce the environmental impact of being a major consumer of Arctic resources? What else can be done at EU level and/or by way of its external relations, through international organizations or directly with international partners?

1500 character(s) maximum

The Arctic region is also of great importance to the Earth's climate system – and it is warming at at least twice the rate of the rest of the world. A warming Arctic has implications around the globe, including for the EU. The EU's carbon footprint contributes to a warming climate, and therefore, a warming Arctic.

Climate change is dramatically affecting the Arctic regions physically, economically and socially, with global consequences. In light of the EU's goal to be climate neutral by 2050 and to adopt a new climate adaptation strategy, what concrete actions could be undertaken at EU level vis-a-vis the Arctic? Promoting sustainable development in the Arctic region is important, as this enhances the economic, social, and environmental resilience of Arctic societies. However, the Arctic is also a very fragile environment. Economic development must be low-carbon and climate resilient, in line with the precautionary principle, and be sustainable in the long term.

How could the EU Arctic policy contribute to addressing more effectively the balance between the need for preservation and precaution and the sustainable use and development of the economic potential across the Arctic regions?

1500 character(s) maximum

Sustainable development in the Arctic must furthermore take into account the traditional livelihoods of those living in the region, and be attuned to the region's changing demographics. The Arctic is home to several Indigenous Peoples, including partly on the territory of EU Member States. Though certain issues in relation to indigenous peoples[1] fall under the competence of individual Member States, the protection of persons belonging to minorities is a fundamental principle under the EU Treaties. The EU seeks to integrate human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, into all aspects of its external policies, and it continues to work on advancing consistency between the EU's internal and external policy towards indigenous peoples. A large number of EU projects and programmes exist in support of indigenous peoples, both as part of broader country (or regional) programmes (mainstreaming) or through actions that specifically target indigenous peoples.

[1] Recognition of the status of minorities, which includes the recognition as indigenous; their self-determination and autonomy, including collective rights; and the regime governing the use of regional or minority and indigenous languages

What more could be done at EU level to help ensure the sustainable development of the Arctic region which meets the needs of Arctic communities and respects the rights of indigenous peoples?

1500 character(s) maximum

How could the EU Arctic policy best complement EU Member State action in the Arctic to address socio-economic challenges and demographic development?

1500 character(s) maximum

In light of growing international interest and changing geopolitics, it is more important than ever to ensure that the Arctic remains a zone of peace and prosperity. This can be ensured only when all interested states cooperate constructively with one another. Indeed, the EU is obliged under Article 220 TFEU to maintain appropriate forms of cooperation with international organisations.

The EU has applied for observer status at the Arctic Council and in that capacity attends relevant meetings and Working Groups, and the EU is active in terms of regional cooperation, notably via the Northern Dimension policy framework and membership of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. In addition, the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, for which the EU has been instrumental, will hopefully enter into force this year. The EU is also a Contracting Party to the OSPAR Convention for the protection of the Northeast Atlantic, which includes Arctic waters.

Cooperation is all the more important in light of recent environmental and climatic changes and their consequences, from cooperation with coastal States in relation to increased shipping to pooling resources to deal with Arctic fires.

How could intergovernmental and regional cooperation in the Arctic be improved for the benefit of the Arctic region and what should the EU's role be in this?

1500 character(s) maximum

One of the major contributions of the EU to the Arctic is through its investment in technology,[1] and science /research,[2] which support the EU Arctic Policy along its main areas of focus: Climate Change and Safeguarding the Arctic Environment, Sustainable Development in and around the Arctic and International Cooperation on Arctic Issues.

[1] The European Space Programme operates satellite technologies that deliver Earth Observation and Navigation services in the Arctic. The EU will invest in new services and systems pertinent for the Arctic in the next funding cycle (2021-2027).

[2] Horizon 2020 budget has dedicated just under EUR 200 million for research and innovation in the Arctic.

How can the impact of EU science and technology/research and innovation efforts be further enhanced, as a means of supporting the priorities of the EU's Arctic Policy? To what extent can EU engagement in science and technology/research and innovation be strengthened, for the benefit of the Arctic region ?

1500 character(s) maximum

In case you think a relevant topic has not been covered by any of the above questions, please use the box below to submit your comments.

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