

JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Ref. 1126335

41<sup>st</sup> Meeting

28-29 October 2013, Vaduz, Liechtenstein

**RESOLUTION**

Adopted pursuant to Rules 11 and 13 of the Rules of Procedure,  
at the 41<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee

in Vaduz

on 28 October 2013

**Resolution on Arctic Policy**

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson (Independence Party, Iceland)  
Mr Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE, European Parliament)

adopted unanimously

The Joint Parliamentary Committee of the European Economic Area:

- Having regard to the European Commission and High Representative / Vice President Joint Communication entitled “Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps” (JOIN(2012) 19 final),
- Having regard to the European Commission Communication entitled “The European Union and the Arctic Region” (COM(2008) 763 final),
- Having regard to the EU Council Conclusions on Arctic issues, adopted on 8 December 2009 in Brussels,
- Having regard to the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on EU Arctic Policy to address globally emerging interests in the region – a view of civil society, dated 17 April 2013,

- Having regard to the Report and Resolution of the EEA Consultative Committee on The opportunities and challenges in a changing Arctic region, adopted on 10 October 2013,
- Having regard to the Joint Statement of the Third Ministerial Meeting of the Renewed Northern Dimension, adopted in Brussels on 18 February 2013,
- Having regard to the Kiruna Declaration: On the Occasion of the Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council, adopted on 15 May 2013 in Kiruna,
- Having regard to the Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation, Kirkenes, Norway, 3-4 June 2013,
- Having regard to the Resolution adopted at the Sixth Barents Parliamentary Conference, adopted on 23-24 April 2013 in Harstad, Norway,
- Having regard to the European Parliament Resolution of 20 January 2011 on a Sustainable EU policy for the High North (2009/2214(INI)),
- Having regard to the European Parliament Resolution of 9 October 2008 on Arctic governance,
- Having regard to the Parliamentary Resolution on Iceland's Arctic Policy, adopted on 28 March 2011,
- Having regard to the Norwegian Government's High North Strategy,
- Having regard to the Norwegian Government paper entitled "New Building Blocks in the North: The Next Step in the Government's High North Strategy",
- Having regard to the statement adopted by the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region on permanent observer status of the European Union on the Arctic Council on 19 September 2013 in Murmansk,
- Having regard to its Resolution on the High North: Opportunities and Policy Challenges, adopted on 13 April 2011,
- Having regard to its Resolution on Europe's High North: Energy and Environmental Issues, adopted on 23 May 2006,

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A. Whereas the Arctic Council Member States include five EEA States, including three EU Member States and two EEA EFTA States,

B. Whereas relevant EU legislation is implemented in the Arctic region by the EU Member States, and the EEA EFTA States Iceland and Norway, through the EEA Agreement,

C. Whereas the EEA EFTA States Iceland and Norway, and the EU, participate in the Arctic Cooperation in the context of the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Northern Dimension Policy and the EU cross-border programmes of Northern Europe, several of which Norway and Iceland participate in and contribute to,

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*Arctic environment and natural resources*

1. Expresses concern about the rapid climate changes witnessed in the Arctic, the region of the world where climate change effects are most tangible;
2. Stresses the need to protect the fragile environment of the Arctic and considers furthermore that increased economic activity in the Arctic should comply with the highest possible environmental and safety standards;
3. Underlines that it is essential to ensure a sustainable balance between environmental protection and economic activity in the Arctic;
4. Reiterates that the Arctic is an important source of renewable and non-renewable natural resources, which are important not solely for the nations in the area, but also for the EEA and beyond;

*Arctic Council*

5. Emphasises that the Arctic Council is the most important forum for circumpolar cooperation and the role of the Council should continue to be strengthened as a policy-making cooperation where decisions are made and concrete measures taken;
6. Commends the Arctic Council for its work in preparation for the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic of 2011 and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic of 2013, and urges the Council to continue its work on developing agreements and best practices that will enhance environmental and civil security in the Arctic;
7. Welcomes the decision of the Arctic Council to provisionally accept the European Union as an observer on the Council, and believes that the EU will continue to make a positive contribution to the work of the Arctic Council;
8. Urges the European Commission and the Canadian Government to resolve the outstanding issue in order to finalise EU's observer status in the Arctic Council by the end of 2013;

9. Reiterates the importance of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which represent well developed tools for governance in the Arctic, and regulate, inter alia, provisions on navigation, fisheries, exploitation of oil, gas and other natural resources on the continental shelf, maritime delimitation, ocean pollution prevention, scientific marine research and dispute settlement applicable to all sea areas, including the Arctic region;
10. Reiterates the importance of overall stability and peace in the Arctic region; calls for safeguarding broadly defined security interests in the region through civilian means; and strongly opposes any kind of militarisation of the Polar Sea.

*Arctic policy*

11. Calls on the European Commission and the European External Action Service to further develop and implement the EU Arctic Policy in close cooperation with Norway and Iceland;
12. Welcomes the Communication on “Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps” and highlights that the document bears a large similarity to the recent policy documents issued by Iceland and Norway, particularly in terms of priorities;
13. Underlines the importance of cooperation in the framework of the European Economic Area, particularly in the fields of transport, environment and energy, in order to tackle common challenges related to the Arctic;
14. Welcomes that environmental protection is given high priority in the Arctic Policy of the European Union and of the EEA Arctic Member States (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden);
15. Welcomes the newly established EU-Iceland “Arctic dialogue”, a bilateral forum where mutual interests in the field of transport, energy and environmental protection are discussed;
16. Welcomes recent work by the Icelandic Government to review the feasibility of establishing an international rescue and response centre in Iceland whereby regional stakeholders could jointly prepare for the security challenges that they are faced with in the Arctic;
17. Emphasises the vast, common challenges in disaster preparedness in the North Atlantic, particularly in the area northeast of Iceland; welcomes deeper cooperation between Iceland and the EU in the area of disaster preparedness in the area; and encourages the relevant authorities to allocate ample resources to counter these challenges;

*Northern Dimension*

18. Highlights the contribution of the Northern Dimension Partnerships to the Arctic Cooperation in the European continent, and supports the further development of the “Arctic window” of the Northern Dimension Policy;
19. Underlines that the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership plays a crucial role in tackling environmental problems in the Barents Euro-Arctic region, among others by providing a framework for successfully cleaning up radioactive waste in the Kola Peninsula;
20. Considers that the EU regional and cohesion policy and the Interreg and European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) Programmes are of major importance to the outermost northern European regions;
21. Underlines the importance of improving Arctic transport networks and infrastructure, especially the east-west connections, in all forms of transport, and underlines the key role of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics;
22. Urges the European Commission and the EEA States to address the accessibility problems facing the outermost regions, islands, and landlocked and peripheral regions, and to ensure good connections between EU Member States and their EEA EFTA neighbouring countries;
23. Reiterates the need for deep and continuous consultation between the EU institutions and EEA EFTA States on legislative proposals related to the Common Transport Policy;

*Civil society*

24. Underlines that Arctic indigenous people have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for their own development; all six associations of indigenous peoples, which are participants in the Arctic Council, should be able to conduct their business without pressures from the authorities of the Arctic States they belong to; the autonomy of these associations should be guaranteed. Supports the dialogue with indigenous people and other residents in the Arctic region in matters that would affect their rights;
25. Considers that civil society, including businesses, employees and environmental groups need to be broadly and regularly involved in Arctic work;
26. Calls for enhanced cooperation with the business sector and highlights that in this context the ongoing work in establishing the circumpolar business council is of great importance;
27. Calls for an increased focus on gender equality in the Arctic;

28. Is concerned with the handling of Greenpeace's Arctic Sunrise ship after the Arctic rig protest of 19 September 2013 at the Pechora Sea by the Russian authorities;

*Scientific cooperation*

29. Recognises the significant contribution of the European Union to Arctic research, in particular through the current Seventh Framework Programme;

30. Emphasises the building up of local knowledge and capacity in Arctic affairs at universities and the increase in scientific cooperation at both national and international level;

*Parliamentary cooperation*

31. Commends the work of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region and its Standing Committee, and highlights in particular its contribution to the setting up of the Arctic Council;

32. Supports the further strengthening of cooperation between parliamentarians from the Arctic States and Members of the European Parliament; and

33. Instructs its President to forward this Resolution to the EEA institutions, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EEA EFTA Parliaments.

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