

With the Arctic quickly heating up as a focus of global economic, military, and environmental efforts, sub-Arctic Europe is already devoting resources to the region and will do so even more in coming years. Sub-Arctic European countries are proving that they need not have an Arctic border in order to have a stake in the region's future.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EU ARCTIC POLICY: INTERESTS, OBJECTIVES, AND INITIATIVES

Steffen Weber

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Introduction

When and how did the Arctic become attractive for the European Union's policy makers? The placing of the Arctic on the Union's policy agenda was an incremental development, and the evolution of an Arctic policy is anything but a linear process. On the contrary, the shaping of an EU Arctic Policy (EUAP) can be best understood as the result and subject of a constant dialogue between a multitude of actors in and outside the EU institutional framework. Apart from some individual discus-

sions in the European Parliament (EP) in the 1990s and early 2000s, the main focus of this paper will be about documents and discourse during 2006-2014, as this is the period where an EU Arctic Policy was pursued in a more determined manner.

The challenge the EU faces is not only to reach coherence and consensus among its internal institutional bodies, but also to have its interests and position recognized and accepted by relevant Arctic actors outside the EU. Without an Arctic coastline, the EU lacks the legal authority to directly exert control in the region – however, its policies do affect the Arctic region. Continuous dialogue with non-EU partners, regulating market conditions for Arctic products or services as well as de facto shaping EU consumer behavior and its position as trading partner, are further means to assert influence.

As a first step, this article outlines the emergence of Arctic issues in EU discourse. The appearances of Arctic matters in internal discussions concentrate on specific case-to case approaches. After outlining the historical background and context of emerging EU Arctic Policy, this paper briefly introduces major areas of concern and interests that have triggered a more active EU approach. Subsequently, key actors and decisive policy steps will be identified. This section seeks to shed light on the main objectives and interests of the EU, how they were expressed, and by whom.

As the perception of the EU as one single actor is oversimplified and misleading, the complexity and diversity of the institutions involved will be addressed as well. Each of these actors contributed, and continues to contribute, to ongoing EU-Arctic discourse with its own specific objectives, views and aspirations, and an understanding of these drivers helps to understand the evolution of the policy process itself.

Since the main objective of this article is to show the evolution of an Arctic policy in the European Union's foreign policy framework, the nature of this paper will be largely descriptive. Due to the limited scope of this paper, focus will be on the EU institutions displayed in selected documents and discussions.

The Arctic as an emerging subject of the European Union's policy agenda

From an international perspective, the “Arctic discourse” largely emerged outside the Arctic rather than in and from the region. Discourse before and during the Cold War was mainly based in natural sciences and drew from a traditional perspective of the Arctic as wilderness; a remote area with a hostile environment, characterized by perceptions of exploration, environmental concerns or national strategic interests.¹ The Arctic was henceforth widely perceived as a harsh, but fragile natural environment, and during the Cold War, it was also of crucial strategic importance – the Arctic Ocean represented the shortest attack route between the two adversaries, and the US-built Early Distant Warning Line stretched 3,000 miles across the western Arctic.² These preconditions led to a rather narrow and selective conception of the High North.

Following this fragmentary approach, a more holistic perception of the region, including the understanding of it as an area of everyday life for its estimated 4 million inhabitants, was largely missing in international discourse prior to the 1980s. The EU and its attitude towards Arctic issues was no exception from the general perception, and discussions on the circumpolar region in EU-framework gradually evolved from a narrow, topic-based perspective towards a more holistic one over the years.

Up to the 1980s and 1990s, the Arctic was mainly a subject of the natural sciences and Cold-War strategic considerations. In 1989, when the Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Ernest Glinne submitted a written question on the “State of the ozone layer over the Arctic” to the

¹ Cf. Keskitalo, Carina: *Negotiating the Arctic. The Construction of an International Region*, Studies in International Relations, ed. by Charles G. MacDonald, Florida International University, Routledge 2004, p.30-33.

² Lackenbauer, P., Farish, M., Arthur-Lackenbauer, J.: *The Distant Early Warning Line. A Bibliography and Documentary Resource List*, Section 2.2: *The DEW Line Story in Brief*, extract from the Western Electric Corporation 1960. Published for The Arctic Institute of North America 2005, p.9.

Council of the European Communities, the Arctic Region appeared in EU documents for the first time.³ Although the Council's answer confirms its general commitment to "strengthen international cooperation on environmental protection", the issue was not followed by specific action.⁴ Only a few years later, MEP von Habsburg submitted an oral question addressing the environmental implications of Soviet military bases in the polar region. The European Political Cooperation (EPC), who was responsible for the Union's foreign policy coordination at that time, did not discuss the issue as it was stated that it "does not fall within its competences".⁵ These occasional appearances of Arctic issues in the European Parliament epitomize a broad lack of interest in the circumpolar region and indicate that an Arctic discourse was largely absent in EU institutions in past decades. If the circumpolar region became a subject of discussion at all in the 1980s and 1990s, the focus rested on aspects like environmental and security issues linked to resource competition or military presence in the region. The Arctic was not regarded as a policy area in its own right, but perceived through an environmental or strategic-military lens, a perspective common among international policy makers at that time.⁶

When the Arctic region emerged as region for international policy making, one issue that needed to be agreed upon was its geographical delimitation. With several existing physical and environmental definitions of what "Arctic" is or means, including the treeline-delimitation, temperature, marine delineations or the sun-height definition of the Arctic Circle, the latter prevailed as a political definition and became the most widely agreed delimitation of the region in the realm of political cooperation. The understanding of "the Arctic" was then not limited to

³ Written Question No 2616/88 by Mr Ernest Glinne (S-B) to the Council of the European Communities, European Communities, Official Journal of the European Communities, No C 174, 10/07/1989, p.42.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.43.

⁵ Question No 68 by Otto von Habsburg (H-0912/91), Official Journal of the European Communities, Debates of the European Parliaments No 3-411, p.241.

⁶ Cf. Keskitalo, Carina: *Negotiating the Arctic*, p.30.

earlier definitions of "the Arctic" as synonymous with the Arctic Ocean, but encompasses the whole region above 60° North latitude. This is especially noteworthy because earlier references to "the Arctic" only applied to the Arctic Ocean itself or, at the utmost, to the Arctic coastal states Norway, Russia, Denmark via Greenland, the US and Canada, also called the "Arctic 5" or "A5". The 60° North latitude delimitation of what is understood as "Arctic" expanded this circle of Arctic states and included Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, now members of the "Arctic 8" or "A8".

The notion of an existing "Arctic 8" institutionalized in the Arctic Council heavily influenced the notion of who counts as an Arctic actor. When the EU entered the circle of Arctic actors through the accession of Finland and Sweden, its policy approach was restricted to issues within these states - they were practically oriented (in this case mostly towards agriculture), and were not targeted at the Arctic region as a whole.

With the accession of Sweden and Finland, and in adherence to the Arctic Circle geographical delineation of the Arctic, the European Union's sphere of influence was extended to the Arctic region in 1995, although it lacked coastal access to the Arctic Ocean. This step did not lead to the sudden development of an Arctic identity, but for the first time, the European Union was directly confronted with the exceptional environmental conditions of its Arctic member states; these conditions somehow became a domestic issue.⁷

Subsequently, the European Parliament passed a resolution on "A New Strategy for Agriculture in Arctic Regions" in 1999. The resolution raised concerns about the climatic and competitive disadvantages, such as short growing and grazing seasons and smaller yields, widely dispersed locations and long distances over which goods have to be transported.⁸ It further specifies a small population base, a pe-

⁷ Although Denmark is considered an Arctic state because of Greenland, Greenland itself is an autonomous region that does not belong to the EU.

⁸ Official Journal of the European Communities No C 175, 21/06/1999, p. 27, Pdf available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:1999:175:0027:0031:EN:PDF>. Last Access 10 Nov 2013.

ripheral location and centralized trade structures that lead to much higher agricultural production costs than elsewhere in the EU. Although the overall emphasis of the resolution lay on economic considerations, the resolution also stressed the importance of enabling the Sami culture and reindeer farming to develop on the Sami people's own terms. Furthermore, the Parliament "considers it important to encourage and enable people to remain in the northernmost regions of Europe and hence stem population loss", and it stressed its support for immigration facilitation and part-time farming concepts.⁹ These proposals exceeded classical economic considerations and touched upon social aspects of living in the Arctic.¹⁰ Referring to the Agenda 2000 proposals which include agricultural reforms, the Parliament forwarded the resolution to the Council and the Commission and called for the implementation of necessary adjustments to common agricultural policy.

The Parliament's resolution on agriculture in the Arctic region epitomizes a first step towards a more comprehensive and systematic approach towards the Arctic, taking into account the socio-economic implications that come with an exposure of Arctic farming to the European Single Market. However, apart from the Parliamentary initiatives outlined above, discussions on the Arctic among Parliament, the Commission, and the Council still lacked momentum, and it took a few more years for Arctic affairs to gain greater attention.

Existing mechanisms like the Northern Dimension policy, coordinated by the Commission Directorate General for External Affairs (DG RELEX) could have been a tool to raising attention about the Arctic within the EU institutional framework. The Northern Dimension policy was established in 1999 and aimed to increase and coordinate cooperation between the EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia. Despite its link to the

⁹ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁰ This resolution also states that the EU's arctic and sub-Arctic regions comprise Finland, the area of Sweden north of Stockholm, parts of Scotland and certain Alpine regions where the annual temperature sum lies between 1300°C and 400°C.

Barents region which was supposed to serve as an "Arctic window", it proved to be unsuccessful in engaging Arctic affairs and had "in so far not fulfilled the expectations."¹¹

Following the European Parliament Resolution on the Northern Dimension in 2005, MEP Diana Wallis, Vice President of the European Parliament, submitted a written question to the Commission, asking "what steps it intends to take to be more active within the Arctic and the Barents Euro Arctic Council (BEAC) and in particular what initiatives it might consider taking in relation to the preparation for a possible 'Charter for Arctic Governance' to coincide with International Polar Year?"¹²

The initiatives that emerged in the following years were, however, by far not restricted to the actions of the European Commission. After a long period of neglect, the EU became increasingly active in Arctic affairs after 2005/2006. In the past few years, several official EU documents were produced with the 2008 EU Commission communication, subsequent EU Council conclusions in following years, the pivotal 2011 report of the European Parliament, the Joint Communication of EEAS and EU Commission of summer 2012, and the latest resolution of the European Parliament in March 2014.

As these initiatives, policies and resolutions are always closely tied to the Union's interests and objectives, the following section will address the main actors, their interests and motivations behind their actions. There is no such thing yet as just one single EU policy addressing the Arctic. The Council, Parliament, and the Commission, as well as individual DGs and working groups, worked intensively on the further development of

¹¹ Herman, J., Deputy Director of the DG RELEX: "Common concern for the Arctic", Nordic Council of Minister's Conference, Ilulissat, Greenland 9-10 September 2008, p. 35, available at: <http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2008-750>. Last access 10 Nov 2013.

¹² Written question by Diana Wallis (ALDE) to the Commission, Subject: Resolution on Northern Dimension (Arctic Governance), 22 December 2005, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=WQ&reference=E-2005-4860&language=EN>. Last Access Nov 10, 2013.

several policies and programs having an effect on the Arctic, and thus on EU-policy positions for the Arctic region on a multilevel approach.

Key areas of interest and concern in the EU's Arctic policy development: climate change, resources, border disputes, and maritime transport

A rapidly increasing awareness of the implications of Climate Change in the Arctic, as well as entailing economic opportunities such as resource extraction and the opening of new transport routes, represent key concerns and interest areas of the EU Arctic Policy process. Multiple actors within the EU system address these issues in their communications, proposals and public debates. Climate Change, Resources, and Transport are major components of the Union's Arctic Governance approach. As each of these components relates to one another and none of them can be examined in isolation, this section addresses their close entanglement that is mirrored in their recurrent appearance in various policy documents.

Although the dynamics of Climate Change have evolved over decades, the alarming news on drastic changes in the Arctic have pushed awareness of environmental change in the European Union and internationally. The Commission's Green Paper "Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European Vision for the oceans and seas" calls attention to the warming of the Arctic with a 3°C increase over the past 50 years, a development from which flora and fauna may "suffer severe changes" and that will bear "severe consequences for indigenous peoples."¹³ The paper further acknowledges that "Climate Change in the Arctic could become a major challenge for EU Maritime Policy", as these changes are of a

¹³ Commission of the European Communities, Green Paper: Towards a Future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas, COM(2006) 275 final, Brussels 7 June 2006, p.14.

global nature and would cause repercussions for European coastal areas and ports and many other areas as well.¹⁴ The Directorate General for Maritime Affairs (DG MARE) subsequently continued its work on an Integrated Maritime Policy that includes issues of the Arctic maritime environment and became actively involved in the EUAP shaping process.¹⁵

The European Space Agency's satellites recorded the lowest Arctic sea ice coverage in 2007, indicating that the Northwest Passage became fully navigable for the first time in September of that year.¹⁶ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report of that year noted that increasing emissions of Global Greenhouse gases (GHG), mainly due to human activities, have led to a marked increase in atmospheric GHG and thus to a strongly increased global warming potential.¹⁷ According to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA) report, temperatures in the Arctic have risen almost twice the rate as the rest of the world.¹⁸ Climate Change in the Arctic results in melting glaciers and melting ice sheets in Greenland, which in turn results in global sea level rises. Soil erosion due to melting permafrost, more frequent extreme

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See also the Commission's Communication "An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union": Commission of the European Communities: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union, COM (2007) 575 final, Brussels 10 October 2007.

¹⁶ "Satellites witness lowest Arctic ice coverage in history", European Space Agency's website, available at: http://www.esa.int/esaCP/SEMYTC13J6F_index_0.html. Last November 10, 2013. The area covered by ice had shrunk to its lowest level since the beginning of measurements in 1978.

¹⁷ IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007, Working Group III: Mitigation of Climate Change Contribution to the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC. Cambridge University Press 2007, Summary.

¹⁸ Susan J. Hassol, Impacts of a warming Arctic. Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, Executive Summary, Cambridge University Press 2004, p.8.

weather events and changes in the Arctic flora and fauna (such as biodiversity loss and the migration of fish stocks, and marine and other mammals), and entailing changes and impacts on indigenous livelihoods are further implications of the ongoing changes.¹⁹

Resources

As Climate Change in the circumpolar region and prospects of newly accessible resources and shipping routes go hand in hand, the economic implications of a warmer Arctic are often discussed in a dichotomy of risks and opportunities. Natural resources in the Arctic region, onshore and offshore, comprise of oil and gas, fish and other marine resources, and mining products like iron ore or rare earth.

As the EU is among the most important consumers of fish caught in the Arctic region, it could assert its influence as a key consumer in this field. What is of much more strategic importance to the EU, however, is the development of energy resources in the High North.

Resource assessments estimate that 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil resources and 30 percent of gas resources are found in the Arctic offshore region.²⁰ Although there is much uncertainty attached to these estimates, they remain a driver for resource exploration and exploitation. The scarcity of resources (oil, rare earth) coupled with an increase in prices and global energy demand – by more than one-third in the period prior to 2035²¹ – impact the geopolitics of resources. Since 2008, new national strategies are emerging to ensure control of resources. Russia, Canada and the US – who are exploiting oil sands - have started (or are planning to start) drilling operations for exploration of the continental sea shelves. Without respecting trade rules, China has

¹⁹ IPCC Fourth Assessment Report 2007, Working Group II.

²⁰ US Geological Survey, Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle, US Department of the Interior, USGS fact sheet 2008, ed. by Peter H. Stauffer.

²¹ International Energy Agency, World Energy Outlook 2012, OECD/IEA, Paris, 2012.

put restrictions on its export of raw materials, and lost an appeal at the WTO in January 2012. China alone owns 50 percent of the known world reserves of rare earth, strategically important for the industry, and controls more than 97 percent of rare earth production in the world.²² This triggered the EU, US and Japan to elevate a trade complaint within the WTO over China's protectionist measures.

The European Union currently receives 33 percent and 16 percent of its oil imports from Russia and Norway respectively, the share of its gas imports account for 21 percent (Russia) and 26 percent (Norway).²³ In the face of rising global energy prices and an increasing energy demand, the Arctic in general, the Barents Sea in particular, becomes an area of growing interest for the EU's aspiration to achieve long-term energy security and move towards a diversification of stable suppliers. The EU's energy-import dependence is projected to reach a 84 percent dependence on imported gas and a 93 percent dependence on imported oil by 2030.²⁴

These reservations notwithstanding, unresolved border issues in this resource rich area raised concerns over the potential for conflict. The most prominent case is the claims on the Lomonosov Ridge made by Russia, Norway, Denmark, and Canada.²⁵ All Arctic coastal states except for the US have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and agreed to adhere to decisions made by the convention.²⁶ Each littoral state can submit claims to expand its marine exclusive economic zone (EEZ) within 10 years after the UNCLOS rati-

²² V. Niquet, La Chine et l'arme des terres rares, *Revue internationale et stratégique*, vol. 4, no. 84, 2011, pp. 105-113.

²³ European Council, Background paper: EU Energy Policy, 4 February 2011.

²⁴ Cf. Offerdal, Kristine: Arctic Energy in EU Policy. Arbitrary Interest in the Norwegian High North, in: *Arctic Vol. 63*, No 1 (March 2010), p.30-12, p. 32.

²⁵ The Lomonosov Ridge is an underwater mountain chain that crosses the North Pole.

²⁶ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, 1982. Full text available at: http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf. Last Access November 11, 2013.

fication. To do so, each state has to prove that its coastal shelf continues beyond the EEZ's 200 nautical miles. In September 2007, a Russian submarine conducted a crewed expedition to the Lomonosov Ridge in order to collect stone material that was intended to support the Russian UNCLOS-claim (the rock samples were assumed to be of the same material as rock formations in Siberia). In a provocative move, the crew planted a Russian flag on the bottom of the Arctic Ocean in the course of this expedition.²⁷

Although the ratification of UNCLOS and the general atmosphere of cooperation among the states make conflict over territory and resources very unlikely, public concern on Arctic geopolitics and resource competition increased after this incident. In 2008, The EU's High Representative Javier Solana and the Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, issued the paper "Climate Change and International Security", in which they called for an EU Arctic Policy "based on the evolving geostrategy of the Arctic region, taking into account i.a. access to resources and the opening of new trade routes".²⁸

Transport

In the realm of maritime transport, increasingly navigable sea lanes in the Arctic like the Northwest Passage and the Northern Sea Route can shorten the transport distance between Europe and Asia significantly. Approximately 90 percent of freight exchanges between Europe and the rest of the world are currently seaborne, which makes shipping a factor of strategic economic importance to the EU.²⁹

²⁷ atsauce – Richard Lovett, Russia plants Underwater Flag, Claims Arctic Seafloor, National Geographic News, August 3, 2007. Available at: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/08/070802-russia-pole.html>. Last access November 10, 2013.

²⁸ Javier Solana and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, "Climate Change and International Security", Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council, S113/08, 14 March 2008.

²⁹ Cf. Iulian Romanyshyn, Steffen Weber and Cécile Pelaudeix, Analysing the EU Policy Process. Actors, Interests and Coherence, Brussels 2013, p 13.

As for transit shipping, ad hoc projections for the increase of transportation in the Arctic by 2050 rise to 2.5 million TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) for trade potential, and a total number of Arctic transit passages (one-way) in the summer of 2050 to about 850.³⁰ At the moment, shipping is of strategic importance for the EU: in terms of volume, 90 percent of the freight exchanges between Europe and the rest of the world are seaborne.³¹

As potentially increasing shipping activities in the Arctic bears significant risks for ships and the fragile environment due to the extreme conditions in the region, DG MARE's initiative for an Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) especially emphasizes the need for disaster prevention measures and calls for efforts to diminish GHG emissions from ships.

Furthermore, the European Commission is involved in the development of an international "Polar Code" through its observer status in the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Shipping represents one of Europe's largest export industries, providing deep sea transport services between Europe and the rest of the world, as well as in cross trades between third countries. Furthermore, maritime transport services, including offshore activities, are essential for helping European companies compete globally. Maritime transport is key to Europe's energy security and therefore is an important instrument of the EU energy policy.

Geopolitics of the Arctic and the EU context

Emerging states, mainly from Asia, show a great interest in the Arctic region where they strive to establish new economic and research partnerships. China has demonstrated great institutional power, being an influential member of the G-20, IMF, WTO and now an important

³⁰ L. Eide, M. Eide, U. Endresen, "Shipping across the Arctic Ocean A feasible option in 2030-2050 as a result of global warming?", *Research and Innovation*, Position Paper 04, 2010.

³¹ European Commission, "The European Union's maritime transport policy for 2018", Press Release, MEMO/09/16, Brussels, 21 January 2009.

source of aid and development.³² On the geopolitical level, changes are reflected in the evolution of institutions in the region. The Arctic Council's traditional role in monitoring and assessing the domain of scientific research is extending to decision-making and limited regulatory functions, exemplified by non-legally binding Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines. A search and rescue agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic has been signed under the auspices of the institution, which is the first legally binding international instrument negotiated by the eight members of the Arctic Council. The primary intergovernmental institution in the region also strengthened the criteria for admitting observers and the rules of their participation and in May 2013, in its Kiruna meeting, included the Asian States China, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, plus Italy as observers. The EU's application was "affirmatively received" and agreed on in principle, but deferred until the issue of the seal product ban would be resolved with Canada, although it was agreed the EU should continue to participate in the same way as until now as an ad hoc observer.³³

As a matter of fact, the European Commission is de facto already, present through participation in several working groups. Indeed, the EU intends to continue playing a positive role in the region in terms of cooperation and funding research.³⁴ In addition the EU is involved in other regional cooperation bodies, most prominently the Barents Euro Arctic Council, of which the European Commission is a member, and has in the Kirkenes II declaration adapted its mandate to current challenges in the region.

³² US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2011 Report to Congress*, Washington, 2011, retrieved 18 February 2012, http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/annual_reports/annual_report_full_11.pdf.

³³ Kiruna Declaration of the Arctic Council Ministerial of 15 May 2013.

³⁴ European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps*, JOIN(2012) 19 final, Brussels, 26 June 2012.

Climate change, pollution, and a higher pressure on the fragile Arctic environment, combined with the development of economic activities in the Arctic, have raised the issue of research cooperation and regulatory measures. The development of a mandatory Polar code under the auspices of the International Maritime Organisation is widely recognized as a priority, in particular regarding cruise ship tourism, although the drafting of the International code of safety for ships operating in polar waters is taking time. Regarding offshore activities, the European Commission published draft legislative proposals for offshore safety in October 2011 as it believes "the likelihood of a major offshore accident in European waters remains unacceptably high", and set up the European Union Offshore Oil and Gas Authorities Group.³⁵ Although the EU has no legislative competence on Arctic waters, this legislative move and subsequent debates in the European Parliament have underlined the commitment of the EU towards sustainable development in the Arctic.

Among the many changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, reform of the EU's external affairs was one of the most significant. Aimed at providing better continuity, coherence, and visibility of the EU's external affairs, the Treaty stipulated the creation of the European External Action Service. The idea was to bring the resources and expertise of the Commission, the Council, and the member states into a single diplomatic body chaired by the upgraded post of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Yet, as it appeared later, the practical process of an institutional set-up, launched in December 2010, proved to be quite difficult in terms of organization, structure, and staff recruiting.³⁶ Wearing a "triple hat" of the High Representative, as chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, Vice President of the Commission, and

³⁵ European Commission, "Commission Decision of 19 January 2012 on setting up of the European Union Offshore Oil and Gas Authorities Group", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 18/8, 21 January 2012.

³⁶ S. Vanhoonacker & N. Reslow, "The European External Action Service: Living Forwards by Understanding Backwards", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1-18.

main executor of the CFSP, observers started to raise questions of the impossibility of the job.³⁷ In the end, beyond the institutional innovations, a challenge remains in that the truly common EU foreign policy requires 28 member states to agree on the same line and speak with one voice.

The Lisbon Treaty also places the European Parliament on an equal footing with the Council in the ordinary legislative procedure and in budgetary matters, and enhances Parliament's role in the EU's external policy, including the CFSP. The Parliament can use its budgetary power to impose priorities on the foreign policy agenda as well as co-decide the budget of the EEAS. Various committees in the Parliament are involved in discussing the evolving Arctic Policy: the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Environment, Transport, Industry, Research and Energy, as well as Development and Transport. Moreover, inter-institutional agreements, aimed at improving the functional relations between the Parliament and Commission, contribute to enhancing parliamentary power. The Lisbon Treaty encourages institutions to conclude such agreements, shifting political and legal institutional balance within the EU.

Actors and initiatives

The key concerns and interests outlined in the previous paragraphs fed into the development of policy documents at different EU institutional entities. The focus of this section will be on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council.

The European Commission and the EEAS

Until drafting work on the first “Commission Communication on the Arctic” started at the end of 2007, there were two broad trends of Arctic

³⁷ M. Schmid, “The Deputisation of the High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission: Making the Impossible Job Work”, *EU Diplomacy Paper*, 02/2012, College of Europe.

related activities within the EU. The first track was led by the Directorate-General on Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE). In 2005 the European Commission under the new leadership of José Manuel Barroso declared as one of its strategic objectives “an all-embracing maritime policy aimed at developing a thriving maritime economy”.³⁸ In subsequent years DG MARE initiated several consultations with a broad range of stakeholders leading to the launch of an integrated maritime policy (IMP) in October 2007. By its definition the policy was to spread geographically as far as the Arctic Ocean and the IMP Communication and Action Plan explicitly requested a “report on strategic issues for the EU relating to the Arctic Ocean”.³⁹ It is interesting to note this was not the first time officials of DG MARE referred to the Arctic. A 2006 Green Paper on a future maritime policy had already mentioned the Arctic region in the context of climate change,⁴⁰ but this had not been followed by any particular action. Requesting a specific Arctic related report one year later clearly signaled a different level of commitment.

During the preparations for the first Arctic Communication in the European Commission, DG MARE (which has launched the Integrated Maritime Policy) and DG RELEX (administering the Northern Dimension) became driving forces in initiating a Commission Communication on the Arctic. DG RELEX set up an internal body, the Arctic inter-serv-

³⁸ Commission of the European Communities, *Strategic Objectives 2005-2009, Europe 2010: A Partnership for European Renewal Prosperity, Solidarity and Security, Communication from the President in Agreement with Vice-President Wallström*, COM(2005) 12 final, Brussels, 26 January 2005, p. 9.

³⁹ Commission of the European Communities, *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying Document to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union*, SEC(2007) 1278, Brussels, 10 October 2007, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Commission of the European Communities, *Green Paper. Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union: A European vision for the oceans and seas*, COM(2006) 275 final, Brussels, 7 June 2006.

ice group (AISG) that consisted of 20-25 officials of several DG's. The AISG's task was to draft a policy document addressing the entire Arctic region in a comprehensive approach. DGs actively involved comprised of DG Environment, DG MARE, DG Research and DG Energy, DG RELEX and, to a lesser extent, DG AGRI and DG SANCO.⁴¹ During the drafting process, the Commission officials also met and discussed with non-EU actors such as the WWF, Russian and Canadian representatives, and energy companies such as Statoil and Shell to exchange views.

The resulting Commission's first Communication on Arctic issues, "The European Union and the Arctic Region" was published on 20 November 2008 and describes the EU as being "inextricably linked to the Arctic region".⁴²

In the introduction Commission policy makers discussed "Arctic challenges and opportunities" and made a strong reference to EU citizens' interest arguing that "[the Arctic] will have significant repercussions on the life of European citizens for generations to come".⁴³ The overall tone of the document was quite ambitious and forward looking: "This Communication sets out EU interests and proposes action for EU Member States and institutions".⁴⁴ Thus the Communication identified 49 proposals for action and put them under three core objectives.

The first objective, "Protecting and preserving the Arctic in unison with its population" focuses on the environment and climate change, as well as on support to indigenous peoples and the local population. It confirms support for multilateral environmental agreements in order to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The European Union and the Arctic Region, COM(2008) 763 final, Brussels, 20 November 2008.

⁴³ Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The European Union and the Arctic Region*, COM(2008) 763 final, Brussels, 20 November 2008, p.2.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

mitigate climate change and states its commitment for an ecosystem-based management of the region. Finally, it promotes research and monitoring activities in the High North and refers to the EU's contributions to Arctic research.

"Promoting sustainable use of Resources" as a second policy objective touches upon the EU's interest in a secure energy supply, but states Arctic hydrocarbon resources should be exploited in full respect of strict environmental standards.⁴⁵ International cooperation with Norway and Russia is particularly highlighted in this objective. Further areas of interest in this field are fisheries, transport and tourism, and calls for a responsible conduct in each of these sectors.

The third policy objective, "Contributing to enhanced Arctic multi-lateral Governance" turned out to be the most controversial of the three target areas. It acknowledges the UNCLOS framework and work of the Arctic Council, but laments the "fragmentation of the legal framework, the lack of effective instruments, the absence of an overall policy-setting process, and gaps in participation, implementation and geographic scope".⁴⁶ Although it did not propose new legal instruments but full implementation of existing legal tools, this criticism was not welcomed by some Arctic states. Furthermore, this paragraph states it would not support "arrangements which exclude any of the EU Member States or Arctic EEA EFTA countries".⁴⁷ At the same time, Commission policy makers did not opt for replacing the existing legal regime with new instruments, an idea advocated by the EP in its October 2008 resolution. Despite the fact that environmental objectives were placed at the top of the hierarchy of priorities, Arctic policy emerged not as an "appropriate" response to developments in the High North, but rather because of a need to protect EU interests including the interests of its citizens.

In the following years the development of EU Arctic policy was more in focus in the other EU institutions, the Council - with its conclusions -

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and the European Parliament - with its elaborated work on The “Report for a sustainable EU Policy for the High North”.

Finally in 2012 the EU Commission, together with the then newly established EEAS published a long awaited Joint Communication, combined the several times postponed progress report with some additional papers and, with the primary goal to present its case to the Arctic Council, which was scheduled to decide on the status of observers, for which the EU Commission had applied.

In June 2012, the Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Damanaki, together with the High Representative Ashton, presented a new Joint Communication which, using an enlargement policy jargon, can be entitled as “a progress report” on the for EU Arctic policy. The drafting process started already in September 2010 in the DG RELEX and was carried on by the EEAS departments in cooperation with Commission’s DGs on the basis of the formerly established AISG mechanism. The Communication suggested an elaborated detailed summary of the EU’s contributions to the Arctic, varying from funding research, fighting climate change, supporting indigenous groups, to investing in sustainable development, shipping, and maritime safety. It is noted that the EU provided more than €1.14 billion in financial support for sustainable development of the Arctic region in from 2007-2013 and a €200 million investment into international research activities in the region.⁴⁸ For the next financial period of 2014-2020, EU officials declared an intention to bring Arctic research to an even higher level through a proposed €80 billion research and innovation programme Horizon 2020.

With regard to the policy's ends, the EU’s objectives toward the region remained unchanged in relation to the 2008 Communication. They included addressing challenges of environmental and climate changes in the Arctic; economic development based on sound environmental impact assessment and sustainable use of resources; and the constructive engagement and dialogue with Arctic states and indigenous people. Inter-

⁴⁸ European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *op.cit.*, p.4.

estingly, the form in which the new document communicated the EU’s objectives to the outside world differed. Joint Communication highlighted eye-catching ideas of knowledge, responsibility, and engagement as underlying principles of the EU’s approach. Previous reference to enhanced multilateral governance in the region was replaced by a value-free heading of international cooperation. These changes were shaped, first and foremost, by a cold-shouldered reaction of the big Arctic states and the EU’s necessity to win more friends in support of the Commission’s bid for observer status in the AC.

Accordingly, reactions in Brussels after the decision at the Arctic Council 2013 in Kiruna to treat the EU differently than other applicants for observer status ranged from officially stated satisfaction that the EU was in principal included, more private statements of disappointment there was no full success yet, in the executive branch, to criticism by several politicians, in the legislative, particular the European Parliament.

Analysing the implementation of EU policies, the EEAS played a crucial role in implementing the EU Arctic policy, aiming “*for the member states and third countries the EEAS to be the first contact point, if they want to talk about the Arctic*”⁴⁹. It was the EEAS who pushed forward an idea of enhanced bilateral dialogue with Canada, Norway, Russia, the US, and Iceland on Arctic matters reflected in the Joint Communication. EU delegations to these countries constituted an integral part of the EEAS and had a great potential role to be played in the Arctic outreach ranging from coordination and information exchange to public diplomacy. In March 2012, High Representative Ashton conducted her first three-day-long visit to the northernmost regions of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, including Svalbard.⁵⁰ The primary aim of the visit was to reaffirm the

⁴⁹ Interview with an official (1), European External Action Service, Brussels, 31 August 2012.

⁵⁰ European External Action Service, *Catherine Ashton to visit northern Finland, Sweden and Norway to highlight importance of an enhanced EU policy towards the Arctic*, A 99/12, Brussels, 5 March 2012.

EU's interest in the region and to discuss its application for AC observer status. Ashton's personal commitment should be emphasized here, as the visit was organized against the background of the growing crisis in Syria and the wider Middle East. Apart from diplomatic instruments, the EEAS holds, either solely or jointly with the Commission, a number of financial tools that support the EU's external action in the Arctic.⁵¹ It is responsible for programming the Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialized Countries which, as of 2014, is replaced by the Partnership Instrument (PI) covering, *inter alia*, Canada, Russia, and the US.

The Council of Ministers of the EU member states

Since the 2008 Commission Communication was addressed to the Council and the EP, they needed to come up with some sort of response to this "first layer of an Arctic policy for the European Union".⁵² It was the Council who first adopted its elaborated conclusions on the Arctic on 8 December 2009.

Substantial discussions on Arctic issues within the Council started in the second half of 2009 under the Swedish rotating presidency as there was a need to respond to the Commission Communication of 2008.⁵³ Nine EU member states – Finland, France, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK – declared different interests in Arctic issues by way of joining the Arctic Council as full members or observers. Yet, by 2009 only Denmark had in place a policy strategy that sought to address the entire circumpolar region in a systematic way.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, it was Denmark who

⁵¹ Although the Commission and the EEAS are in charge of the implementation of the foreign policy financial instruments, the Council and the Parliament co-decide on the formal adoption of these instruments.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵³ In fact, the Council adopted the first Arctic conclusions in December 2008, but it refrained from a serious debate and detailed comments leaving them off the table until the following year.

⁵⁴ Heininen, *op.cit.*; N. Petersen, "The Arctic as a New Arena for Danish Foreign

pulled the strings during the Council negotiations, exploiting its status as an Arctic littoral state. Faced with uncertainty over the future status of Greenland and the increasing assertiveness of other Arctic states, Denmark became cautious about the EU's intentions. It entered into a controversy with the Commission by criticizing the language used in the Communication. Finland and Sweden in Council debates made relatively focused and modest contributions, due to some extent to their preoccupation with ND policy and a traditional focus on the Baltic Sea, although Finland shared a larger interest in Arctic research and shipbuilding. The two countries, nevertheless, expressed their readiness to support the EU's emerging Arctic policy. Other member states indicated or confirmed their specific interest in fisheries (Spain, UK), research (France, Germany, Poland), and maritime routes (Germany, Netherlands).

In a nutshell, the Council welcomed the Commission's move to develop an Arctic policy. It declared its support for protecting the Arctic ecosystem, strengthening international efforts to mitigate climate change, expanding environmental impact assessments, and more active involvement of the European Environmental Agency (EEA). With regard to natural resources, the Council reiterated the idea of sustainable development and management of Arctic natural resources. It also supported a "gradual opening" of Arctic maritime routes for shipping activities based on the principles of innocent passage and freedom of navigation. In comparison to the Commission, the Council put stronger emphasis on maritime security, and the development of search and rescue capabilities. Most importantly, member states backed the Commission in its bid for AC observer status, but refrained from criticizing the existing legal and political regimes in the region.

As most Commission proposals were supported and replicated in Council conclusions, the logic of consequences seemed to steer Council vision as well. Indeed, while welcoming the Commission's initiative, the

Policy: The Ilulissat Initiative and its Implications", *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2009*, pp. 35-78.

Council refers not only to the EU's interests but also responsibilities, and 'Member States' legitimate interests and rights in the Arctic".⁵⁵ Further, according to the Council, EU Arctic policy should be formulated "with respect for its unique characteristics, in particular the sensitivities of ecosystems and their biodiversity as well as the needs and rights of Arctic residents".⁵⁶ Thus, in contrast to the Commission, the rationality of the Council as a collective decision maker actor, appeared to be already restricted by the logic of appropriateness.

The Council did not discuss the Arctic again until spring 2013, and then decided not to put forward any specific Council Conclusions replying to the recent 2012 Joint Communication of Commission and EEAS. It can be assumed the fact that EU member state Sweden was then holding the presidency of the Arctic Council, was responsible for organizing the Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna in May 2013 (at which the hot issue of observer status for the EU was to be decided), might have played a role in the Council's decision not to come forward with Council Conclusions at that time. Instead it was the European Parliament, which took up the issue of the Arctic on its Agenda on several occasions.

The European Parliament

Despite a high institutional status in the Arctic, obtained through long-time membership in the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic region, the European Parliament until 2008 was largely absent. Except for several parliamentary questions addressed to the Commission, there were no systematic discussions about the Arctic among the MEPs up to 2008.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on Arctic issues*, 2985th Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 8 December 2009, p.1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ A. Airolidi, *The European Union and the Arctic: Policies and Actions*, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen, 2008, pp. 99-100; A. Maurer, "The Arctic Region – Perspectives from Member States and Institutions of the EU", SWP Working Paper, no. 4, 2010.

In 2008-2011 the Arctic was discussed four times in plenary debates, meaning one discussion per year on average.⁵⁸ While several attempts were made during 2008-2009 to address the Arctic region, such as the resolution on Arctic governance of October 2008 or the failed attempt to put forward a resolution on the Arctic treaty in March 2009, our focus lies in the drafting of the EP's report on "A sustainable EU policy for the High North"; the first comprehensive document on the EU Arctic policy produced by European Parliament. The drafting process started just after the EP's elections in June 2009, driven by an intention to promote a holistic vision of the policy and compensate for the EP's previous shortfalls due to excessive focus on promoting new governance frameworks in the Arctic.

The report was launched as an initiative report in the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) by the German member of the European People's Party (EPP) group, Michael Gahler. There were several conditions in place that facilitated an emergence of the report in the AFET Committee. First, the AFET committee is the largest and, arguably, one of the more prestigious committee's of the EP comprising of 150 MEPs (including substitutes). Apart from that, allocation of the Arctic report to the AFET and not to other committees can be explained by the higher legitimacy of the former: in comparison to "sectoral" committees representing specific interest, such as the Committee for Industry, Research and Energy, or the Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, AFET was perceived as more impartial and neutral.

It must be noted that during the drafting process all seven political groups participated with differing degrees of activity, and nearly all designated shadow rapporteurs to follow the process. The majority of political groups voiced similar concerns regarding the Arctic related to climate change, environment, indigenous populations, maritime routes, security, and stability.⁵⁹ Yet, a slight cleavage emerged related to a per-

⁵⁸ S. Weber & I. Romanyshyn, "Breaking the Ice: The European Union and the Arctic", *International Journal*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2011, p. 855.

⁵⁹ Council of the European Union, *Summary of the plenary meeting of the European*

ceived trade-off between environmental protection and economic development, with the Greens, the Left group and ALDE sharing the first side of the spectrum, while the two larger groups, the EPP and the Socialist & Democrats group (S&D) leaning towards the second side. Special concern was raised by the “Euro skeptic” EFD (Europe of freedom and democracy) group which “questioned the value of an autonomous EU policy on the Arctic”.⁶⁰

On the initiative of the rapporteurs' advisor, the EU Arctic Forum in the European Parliament (EUAF) was created as a cross-party and cross-issue platform and proved to be an important actor throughout the policy shaping process in the EP. The Forum represented a platform for meetings and exchanges between different political groups and committees within the EP, as well as between MEPs and Commission officials. Moreover, it also performed outreach activities targeting external actors with a purpose of promoting their input into report preparations. Hence, several meetings and round tables were organized which attracted the attention of civil society and private stakeholders (Bellona, WWF, Statoil), state officials (Russia, Canada, Greenland and Norway), regional organizations (BEAC, the Barents Regional Council) as well as civil society and scientific institutions with some research organizations delivering several studies for the committee and holding discussions with MEP's during Fora, which were organized by the EUAF.

Due to a broad consensus and the initial support of all key political groups, facilitated through the work of several politicians and stakeholders coming together in the EU Arctic Forum, the report secured overwhelming support in the committee, without a single vote against, and was subsequently adopted in the plenary in January 2011. Comprehensiveness became one of the cornerstones of the report, not least because it stressed “the need for a united, coordinated EU policy on the Arctic region”.⁶¹

Parliament, held in Strasbourg on 8 March 2010: EU policy on Arctic issues, 7557/10, Brussels, 12 March 2010.

⁶⁰ Council of the European Union, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

⁶¹ European Parliament, *Report on a sustainable EU policy for the High North*

It is interesting to note the EP placed provisions on maritime routes and natural resources ahead of those for climate change and environment. This stood out as a key difference in priority setting, contrasting with the other two institutions. The EP also added an extra resource related dimension referring to mining, forestry, agriculture and minerals, which were somewhat overlooked in other documents. At the same time, the substance of these provisions reflected the Commission's and Council's approach in their highlighting a need for high safety, social and environmental standards, and ecosystem based principles in the management of natural resources. Furthermore, the MEPs capitalized on the Council's contribution related to search and rescue capabilities in the Arctic and suggested the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) take account of this issue. On governance, the MEPs mostly reiterated what their colleagues in other institutions had previously stated but also recommended the Commission complement a multilateral approach in the Arctic with a bilateral track, working directly with the Arctic states and indigenous groups.

The European Parliament acknowledged more than the others the EU's contribution to air pollution in the Arctic, as well as the indigenous people's legitimate right to intervene in Arctic governance processes. By emphasizing the EU's moral duty and responsibility to combat climate change for the sake of the region, and indeed the whole globe, the EP fell into the constructivist line of argumentation. On the other hand, the logic of consequences featured even more prominently in the EP's document. The MEPs were quite upfront in highlighting EU economic and geopolitical interests in the region originating from a need to secure access to offshore and onshore natural resources and maritime trade routes. This came as no surprise against a background of rising economic powers elsewhere in the world, and the EU's aspiration to boost the competitiveness of its own economy. An explanatory statement from the EP's report suggested putting cost-benefit calculations at the center of the EU's dealing with the Arctic: “The EU must acknowledge the need to adapt

(2009/2214(INI)), A7-0377/2010, Brussels, 16 December 2010, p.7.

to the unavoidable changes as well as have a rational assessment of the risks, threats, challenges and opportunities those changes entail”.⁶²

Following a debate in April 2013, prior to the Kiruna Ministerial of the Arctic Council, the European Parliament on 12 March 2014 voted a new resolution on an “EU strategy for the Arctic”⁶³. In its resolution the EP requested development of a proper EU strategy for the Arctic. Michael Gahler, German MEP of the EPP and Rapporteur on the Arctic, stated that: “The EU must address its interest and responsibilities towards the Arctic which is a region facing not only drastic changes and challenges, but also increased engagement of new political and business actors, not least from Asia.”

Gahler’s office, which was responsible for drafting the 2011 EP Report and who together with other colleagues formed the circle of politicians being co-founders of the EU Arctic Forum in the European Parliament, again coordinated negotiations for an updated EP Resolution. The European Parliament after rejecting an alternative resolution by the Greens, adopted the Joint Resolution agreed upon by major political groups the EPP, S&D, ALDE and the ECR, while the Greens, although part of the negotiation process, opted to table their own resolution. The overwhelming majority with which the Joint Resolution was adopted gives it considerable political weight, albeit its legal nature expresses the opinion of the European Parliament which will, after reconstituting itself after elections in May, soon faces the task of approving a new Commission and in this process no doubt will put forward specific political issues.

The Resolution reiterates the base of the 2011 report of the European Parliament, aimed at reassuring partners in the Arctic, but also lists numerous aspects needing to be included as the Commission develops an EU “strategy”, and thus encourages the Commission to prioritize Arctic policy development to a greater extent than in previous years.

⁶² European Parliament, *op.cit.*, p.17.

⁶³ European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2014 on the EU strategy for the Arctic (2013/2595(RSP)).

Through reiteration of the 2011 policy wording, combined with specific criticism towards the Commission, the EP explicitly uses the term “strategy” to suggest the EU deals in a prioritized and coherent way with Arctic related policies. Detailed reference is made to numerous EU policies and programs relevant to the Arctic.

The European Parliament highlighted both the EU’s ambitions on a diplomatic level with participation in the Arctic Council, but also to the significant amount of European engagement in the Arctic and resulting European interests contributing to sustainable development, environmental protection, and cooperation in research and development. The support expressed for the Arctic coastal states initiative on “the development of a network of Arctic conservation areas and [...] the protection of the international sea area around the North Pole”, should not be misread as the EP pushing a moratorium on industrial exploitation for the Arctic Ocean,⁶⁴ but as a signal of respect for those nations rights and duties, and an expression of support for the cautious way in which they approach this development.

In a separate part, possible tools for EU policies and for EU policy makers are referred to with formulations hinting at the EU Arctic Forum, and “the need to maintain a special interface with EU Institutions, connecting Arctic stakeholders from politics, science, civil society and business”, as well as the support expressed for an EU Arctic Information Centre, a network of science institutions to be established.

The 2014 resolution focuses specifically on the various economic opportunities in the Arctic referring to related opportunities for European businesses. The European Parliament requested that the European Commission and Member States ensure European business and science can contribute to balanced and sustainable development with high European environmental and socio-economic standards, in particular in view of increased activities of Asian nations like China and South Korea. Explicitly, Michael Gahler emphasizes the EU’s need to “stake its claims”,

⁶⁴ As interpreted in the commentary by Kevin McGwin: EU pushes Arctic sanctuary, in: Arctic Journal, March 13, 2014.

especially in order to distinguish itself from increasingly announced Arctic-related interests by Asian states.⁶⁵

Before heading to the election polls in May 2014 the MEP's managed to make a clear statement and put the Arctic back on the EU's agenda with some clear suggestions and requests towards the Commission, which is already considering its next steps, and towards the Council, scheduled to debate the Arctic in the near future. No matter to what extent those issues will play a role in the fairly different constituencies in upcoming elections, one can assume that returning and new MEP's will take those issues forward when faced with the task of approving the next European Commission. In the context of recent developments in EU-Russia relations however, it is difficult to foresee how that will play out.

Conclusions: implications for the development of the EU Arctic policy?

First and foremost, one must realize the great number of various actors participating at different stages of policy making. It is important that all voices are heard and all interests are accommodated in order to find optimal solutions to growing challenges in the Arctic, with a sufficient level of support and legitimacy. This explains the EU's somewhat ambiguous call for protecting the Arctic environment and promoting the region's development at the same time. Policy inclusiveness is also inline with the EU's general conviction for a comprehensive approach to its foreign policy,⁶⁶ e.g. making full use of political, diplomatic, economic, and financial instruments and tools. It also corresponds with a specific

⁶⁵ EEP Group in the European Parliament Press Release, 13 March 2014.

⁶⁶ Council of the European Union, *Main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP – 2010: Annual report from the High Representative of the European Union Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament*, 12562/11, Brussels, 6 July 2011.

character of the Arctic arena as an intersection for environment, climate change, energy, transport, development, and other issues.

Policy coherence is a generic problem of EU foreign policy. Suffice to say, a coherence deficit was among the major driving force behind the reform of the EU foreign policy institutions brought about by the Lisbon Treaty. The lack of vertical coherence between the national and EU level of Arctic policy making may lead to certain implementation gaps and opportunity losses. First, such incoherence risks ending up with a multiplicity of voices and messages in the AC and related forums, just as it is often a case in many international institutions where the EU and member states sit at one table. Second, by failing to coordinate with Brussels, interested member states miss out on opportunities to fully benefit from the EU's bilateral dialogues with Arctic states, many of which are the EU's strategic partners. Such coordination could lead to a better channeling of national interests as well as reinforced EU clout over individual Arctic states.

The EU Arctic policy is a moving target. Indeed, it is hard to believe that the policy – together with its actors – has already passed an internal period of self-reflection given that just six years ago there was no single official EU document specifically targeting the Arctic region.

In terms of policy areas, priority is likely to be given to those elements of the Arctic policy which are perceived to be less controversial (environment, climate change, research, indigenous populations) and those that are being understood as being of strategic importance to the EU, its Member States, and its economies (as mentioned in the 2014 European Parliament resolution: sustainable development, resources, energy, transport, navigation, and communication etc.).

In the context of recent developments in EU-Russia relations subsequent to the Crisis in Ukraine and Crimea, it will be of major importance for the EU and its member states to find the right balance between clearly stating their position in “high politics” of security and international politics, and issues usually perceived as “low politics”. No less important to the long term strategic interests of Europe, is that which requires cooperation in dealing with adaption to climate change, develop-

ment of strategic resources, energy or minerals, and new global shipping routes – issues which can easily turn into factors of security of supply and thus “high politics”.

Without a doubt the EU will need more and more specific think tank- and other additional tools to advice on the development of its policies for a more strategic, longterm perspective and to make sure it's several Arctic related policies are developed in coordination with decision makers of the most relevant pillars of European power in the Arctic; in economy and businesses, in science, and in cooperation with its lively civil society.

ICELAND: SMALL BUT CENTRAL

*Alyson Bailes, Margrét Cela, Katla Kjartansdóttir,
Kristinn Schram*

Introduction: Arctic or sub-Arctic?

If asked whether Iceland should be considered an Arctic or sub-Arctic state, the best answer would be ,both‘ – depending on the context. Geographically, Iceland lies outside the North polar zone proper, with its Northernmost island of Grimsey just grazing the Arctic Circle. Settled around 1000 years ago, it has no ,indigenous peoples‘. Its vegetation is mostly sub-Arctic, although 11 percent of the land is covered by ice-sheets. However, in the work of the Arctic Council, such as the preparation of Arctic Human Development Reports (ADHR), Iceland and other territories even further South have been included¹ as they are seen as part of a single environmental and economic complex. Iceland's economy is still heavily dependent on fishing and more generally on natural resources, which it exploits both for hydroelectric and geothermal power generation and to attract tourists; this gives it more in common with North Norway, Greenland and the Faroes than, say, mainland Denmark.

¹ For this expanded zone see e.g the cover of the 2004 ADHR at http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/regionalreports/other/arctic_2004_en.pdf.