Introduction

Poland has many reasons not to develop the Arctic policy. It is geographically distant from the Arctic. Moreover, for the time being, the country has very limited directly economic, or strategic interests in the region. The national business players in extractive sectors, sea trade, and fisheries are too small to exert influence on developments in the Arctic, and are not present in the regional business fora. Hence it can come as a surprise that the country has a long established presence in the region on an expert and political level. Polish scientists have been conducting climate and environment research for half a century, some of this done at the Polish Polar base in Svalbard.

Although the country is an Arctic Council observer, political interest in the region has developed quite recently. In Poland’s foreign policy the Arctic is often linked with cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, as a part of the “Northern dimension” policy. Still, popular knowledge about the region remains scarce.

At the same time, its distant geographical location has positive implications. It enables Poland to look from a certain perspective at chal-
The Arctic is neither the most obvious, nor the most developed dimension of the policy of Poland. A population of 38 million people makes it a much more active player in multilateral organisations such as the European Union, NATO, or in regional policy for the Visegrad Group, and around the Baltic Sea Region.

Nevertheless, due to historic developments, Poland has played the role of “one of the most active outside actors” in the Arctic. The achievements in the Arctic’s scientific research legitimised the actions of Polish diplomacy and gave the country a certain standing in regional affairs. As a result, Poland was included in a group of primary countries to receive the status of permanent observers on the main regional political forum, the Arctic Council (together with Germany, Netherlands and the United Kingdom). In this way it participated in the political developments of the region. This is important due to the security implications; any destabilisation in the European part of the Arctic may have a negative effect on Polish security. Hence it is in the country’s interest to influence the processes of the governance and economic development of the Arctic, while at the same time limiting possibilities for negative security scenarios. Geographical conditionalities have been reflected in Polish foreign policy where the Arctic is often treated as a part of a broader, Northern macro-region, together with the Baltic Sea Region. Progressing geopolitical and environmental changes in the area will likely trigger new political, industrial, and social developments, but also challenges. Poland has tried to address these challenges by getting involved in the reform process of governance structure in the High North. As a country with no direct interests in the region it attempts to make a positive contribution to Arctic affairs by raising topics of the Arctic on the fora of international organisations like the EU and NATO, by developing polar research and engaging in initiatives towards implementation of safety and security in the region, including the necessity for better exploration and regulations on trade and sailing routes, and crisis management etc.

The expertise and scientific research regarding the Arctic and its environment remains a major Polish strength. Polish scientists benefit from the freedom of research, derived from the provision of Article 3 of the Svalbard Treaty, ratified in 1931. The scope of research that

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1 Piotr Graczyk, “Poland and the Arctic: Between Science and Diplomacy”. Arctic Yearbook 2012: 139.


3 Graczyk, “Poland and the Arctic: Between Science and Diplomacy”: 140.
Poland belongs to a group of pioneering countries which tried to use the Northern Sea Route more than half a century ago. In July 1956 seven ships, built by the Polish shipbuilding industry on request of the Chinese government, operated by Polish crews, flying the Polish flag and filled with cargo, embarked on a journey from Gdansk to Murmansk and along the coast of Siberia to China. Unfortunately, the convoy, due to the heavy ice conditions, had to turn back.7

At the same time, the prospective new, shorter sailing routes through the Northern Sea Route to the Baltic Sea, create the necessity to improve regulations on trade and sailing routes, and increase the significance of safety and security in the region.

Foreign policy: renewed interest

So far, formulation of Polish policy towards the Arctic has remained a challenging task. The distance to the region seems to not only be geographical, but also mental. The policy focuses on two major questions. Firstly, how to increase the stability of the region, and involve, rather than antagonise, Russia? Secondly, what is the optimal governance structure in the Arctic to provide security, safety, and sustainable development?

Increased industrial activities, together with the Asian and Arctic countries in the region, create a necessity for strong and balanced governance structure, which foresees roles for international organisations.

Still, despite the historical engagement on Svalbard, and post-1990 interest to engage in various Western fora of cooperation, the process of formulation of Polish policy began only in 2006.8 The formulation of the national Arctic policy goals has been a top-down process, and to some extent been triggered by external events, such as the planting of

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7 “Obserwator Morski” nr 11(54) November 2012.
granting permanent observer status to the EU at the Arctic Council and underlines the importance of developing a coherent EU Arctic policy. Greater presence of the EU in the Arctic gives an additional leverage for Poland to express interest in the region. Third is co-operation with the Arctic Council. Poland is determined to maintain permanent observer status within the organisation, and to act as a mediator between Arctic states and other observer countries. Since 2010 it has been developing pragmatic dialogue and contact between representatives of the observer states with the chair of the Arctic Council (called “the Warsaw Format”).

Fourth, Poland wishes to support public diplomacy related to Arctic issues and has already done so by organising international conferences: in Warsaw in March 2011, in Zieleniec, Sopot, Lublin and on board the Horyzont II vessel in 2012, and in April 2013 at the Arctic Science Summit Week in Cracow, which gathered about 500 participants from around the world. At the same time, building on the experiences of Baltic Sea Region cooperation, Poland advocates for cooperation in the domains where consent can be reached. At the same time, it is vital to progress in other domains, including hard security. The country sees it necessary to implement trust building measures between parties and increase the role of international fora. Therefore Poland – a NATO member - advocates for a strong and reliable NATO, able to protect its members in the High North, and at the same time support implementation of trust-building measures with Russia. The conclusions of the Draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations “Security in High North: NATO’s role” advocate for a greater presence from NATO in the Arctic. The report underlines that “with four of the five Arctic littoral states being member of the Alliance, NATO has been an instru-

9 Graczyk, “Poland and the Arctic: Between Science and Diplomacy”: 143-144.

10 Information on the policy priorities are based on interviews at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, in September 2013.


12 Document retrieved from the MFA of Poland, September 2013.


mental player in Arctic security since the Cold War” and that “NATO and NATO member states can ill afford to neglect the region’s renewed strategic importance”.

**Actors and interests: science before business**

Even if one bears in mind differences of the scale and potential between Poland and Arctic countries, like Russia, the USA and Canada, the number of Polish actors and their interests remain limited. The prominent exceptions are researchers and scientists. They remain traditionally important players in the process, vitally interested in developing the expertise on climate and environmental changes. The freedom of research in the region remains Poland’s main priority.\(^\text{15}\) Since 1957 the Polish Academy of Sciences has maintained a polar research station in Hornsund on Spitsbergen island in the Norwegian Svalbard archipelago. In 1978 it was changed into a permanent, year-round facility, and is now recognised as a European Marine Biodiversity Flagship Site. It is also an important European asset, being one of the two permanently manned stations out of the EU states.\(^\text{16}\)

There are also four more seasonal stations.\(^\text{17}\) Since January 2012 Poland has participated in the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks, sitting on its Board. A number of different Polish universities and institutions are involved in research in the Arctic region,\(^\text{18}\) and Polish scientists carry out regular research in the Arctic regions of Iceland, Greenland, Alaska, Canada and Russia. They are also taking part in numerous maritime polar expeditions organised by research units from Canada, USA, Norway, Denmark and Germany. Poland operates two research cruise ships in the Arctic: *Oceania* and *Horyzont II*. Polish scientists also participate in the International Arctic Science Council and European Polar Council. As recently as 2012 238 Polish scientists were involved in Arctic research for around 9,000 person-days and published more than 100 papers. Most of them worked at the Hornsund Polar Station, or on board research vessels. Additionally, the University of Poznań established a new base in Petuniabukta, the University of Lublin held two projects in Bellsund and the University of Toruń held a field activity in Kaffioeyra and PrinsKarlsForland. Moreover, between 2014 - 2016, together with Norway, Russia and Germany, Polish institutions will conduct the largest multidisciplinary project to be held at Svalbard, called POLARPROG.

In the private sector, resource exploration and production companies are mostly interested in resource management and extraction in the High North. So far, however, none of the companies has extracted minerals in the Arctic. Investments are limited by technological and financial constraints. Relative to their scale of operation, companies have a robust investment portfolio elsewhere (including the exploration and production of conventional and unconventional shale gas and oil in Poland).

Only one company aims at operating in the Arctic. KGHM International Ltd, the subsidiary of KGHM Polska Copper S.A., is planning operations with its license in Greenland (Malmbjerg). After taking over Canadian business Quadra FNX Mining Ltd in March 2012, the company now has operations in some Arctic states. It also has mines and exploration activities in Canada (McCreedy West, Levack, Podolsky and Victoria), and in the US (Robinson and Carlota).\(^\text{19}\)

\(^{15}\) All the detailed information on the activities of the Polish scientists has been retrieved from the MFA of Poland in September 2013.

\(^{16}\) Graczyk, “Poland and the Arctic: Between Science and Diplomacy”: 145.

\(^{17}\) At the Werenskiold Glacier (Wroclaw University), Oscar II Land (Torun University), Bellsund (Lublin University) and Billefjorden (Poznan University).

\(^{18}\) e.g. University of Silesia, Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Science, University of Gdans, Maritime Academy in Gdynia, maritime Academy in Szczecin, National Marine Fisheries Research Institute, North Atlantic Producers

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The remaining state owned oil and gas companies develop their operations on the Norwegian Continental Shelf, though not in its northernmost part of the Barents Sea. The Polish Oil and Gas Company (PGNiG) is the largest national gas exploration and production company. In 2007 it established its subsidiary, PGNiG Upstream International AS which carries out research, exploration and production on Norwegian Continental Shelf (NCS). It has shares in 10 licenses for the Norwegian Sea. For three of them, in Skarv field, production started in December 2012. Gas was found on another licence, and on another licence drilling is planned. Nevertheless, for half of the PGNiG licences (including the one where PGNiG is an operator) there are, as yet, no plans for drilling.20

Another Polish company which operates on the NCS is Lotos, with seven licences for the Norwegian Sea and North Sea.21 The company is determined to proceed with exploration, despite failure of production at the Yme field in 2013 caused by technical problems with the platform. Nevertheless, the company plans to use Norwegian tax benefits and to invest in the purchase of 14 new licenses.22

The transportation and marine sector in the north of Poland is also a prospective interest. Polish interest in sea routes is expected to rise and therefore the Northern Sea Route may be important. The main reason for that is growing trade with Asia. It is confirmed by data at Polish seaports, especially Gdynia, Gdańsk and Szczecin. Cargo turnover at ports in 2012 amounted to 58.8 million tonnes.

Cargo turnover of European countries accounted for 80.8 percent of turnover for international (European Union countries - 57.2 percent), Asia – 6.6 percent, Africa – 4.6 percent, North America - 4.3 percent, and Central and South America – 3.6 percent. This means the Arctic (Northern Sea Route) has the potential today to take over close to 7 percent of cargo coming to Poland, shipped from these ports.

Although the overall scale is dominated by goods shipped to and from Russia (15.5 percent), Sweden (14.2 percent) and Germany (11.4 percent), in the case of containers the import from China is 19.7 percent of the total cargo shipped this way. Currently the number of containers shipped to and from Poland is steadily growing. The forecast for container handling in Polish sea ports23 by 2020 is expected to rise from 60 percent to 80 percent. In 2011, Polish ports handled 94 000 tonnes of containerised cargo, and in 2020 there will be an estimated 21-28 000 tonnes (an increase from 1330 to 3000-4000 TEU24), including those from Asia and especially due to increased trade with China.

In 2012, Polish container terminals documented a record 1,658,100 TEU of containers. Compared to 2011 (1,341,000 TEU) this represents an increase of 23 percent. Such a performance is possible thanks to investments which repeatedly increased handling capacity at Polish container terminals. The most significant increase of reloading was reached by the newly built Deepwater Container Terminal (DCT) at Gdańsk. In just four years since its establishment, it has become the largest terminal in Poland in terms of the volume of reloaded containers. DCT does not only support the domestic market – the containers are also discharged into smaller vessels which go to ports in Russia and Finland. Thus, Gdańsk serves as a transshipment hub terminal to other ports of the Baltic Sea. Some cargo from the Gdańsk terminal also goes by land rail and road to Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

Moreover, there are plans for further expansion of the container terminals at Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Świnoujście. The completion of the planned

22 Hilde Øvrebekk Lewis, “Lotos spends NOK 1 billion on the NCS following Yme delay”, Aftenbladet, Nov 6, 2013.
23 http://morzaioceany.pl/inne/archiwum/14-porty-morskie/1450-ro%C5%9Bnie-znaczenie-polskich-port%C3%B3w.html.
24 The twenty-foot equivalent unit (often TEU or teu) is an inexact unit of cargo capacity often used to describe the capacity of container ships and container terminals.
expansion of the Gdańsk terminal will likely increase the importance of this port. According to an announcement by the DCT board in 2013, the terminal has achieved throughput capacity of 1.5 million TEU per year.

Poland’s oldest container terminal - Baltic Container Terminal (BCT) in Gdynia, was built in 1979, and reached a 750 000 TEU capacity. Ultimately, the capacity of the terminal is to increase to 1.2 million TEU. The new 2012 Gdynia Container Terminal handled more than 267 000 TEU. In April 2012 a new container terminal was opened in Szczecin. Its maximum capacity after all the investment is estimated at up to 200 000 TEU per year. Soon the Commercial Port of Świnoujscie OT Logistics plans to begin construction of a container terminal. Work is scheduled for late 2013 or early 2014, and the government’s estimate of its capacity is 200 000 TEU.

As shown in the report of Jones Lang LaSalle, published in August 2013, the growing level of cargo handling in container ports and the ability to handle the largest ships (in the case of DCT Gdansk ships of 18 000 TEU) makes possible a re-routing to Poland of the flow of goods transported by sea, currently handled in Western Europe. Thereafter, improvement of port infrastructure may lead to strategic changes in the supply of goods by companies within Poland and region; they can guide these goods to Polish terminals.

Outside the expert community, public and social awareness on changes and developments in the Arctic remain negligible. “The North Pole seemed to be as far as the moon,” commented Marek Kamiński, the first person to reach the two Poles of Earth in one year. This happened in 1995 and not much has changed since then in Poland with popular perception of the Arctic. This situation, however, might gradually change with Polish citizens migrating to Northern countries and gaining greater awareness of developments in the Arctic. Today Poles have already become the largest group of immigrants in Norway (120 000) and in Iceland (9300).

Although the topic of the Arctic hardly makes it into news headlines, the case of the Arctic Sunrise ship and the Greenpeace protesters arrested in Russia’s Barents Sea in September 2013 hit the headlines as one of the activists, Tomasz Dziemanczuk is a Polish citizen. Environmental issues in Poland are considered increasingly important, and although did not play a particular role in Polish politics (the Green Party obtained in the general elections less than 1 percent of the vote, however, Greenpeace Poland is a very active organisation, engaging more and more volunteers. The COP 19 (19th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC), organised in Warsaw, November 2013, might also contribute to discussions about Arctic issues.

International cooperation: towards multilateralism

In an effort to strengthen its voice on Arctic matters, Poland in recent years has increased its diplomatic presence on the international stage for dealing with the region. The country gives a priority role to the Arctic Council, and international law, and supports the view that the United Nations’ Convention on the Law of the Sea should be the act to regulate existing border disputes in the region. Poland actively participates in the reform of management model in the AC, trying to secure better dialogue with observer countries, and advocating for greater participation of the EU within the organisation. As an observer country it has tried to act as an intermediary and bridge dialogue between observers and the AC Presidency in a “Warsaw Format”. The dialogue with observers also takes place alongside meetings of the under secretaries of states (Tromsø 2009, Copenhagen 2011).

Poland actively supports activities of the Arctic Council and supports current Canadian Presidency efforts in presenting indigenous peoples’ needs and protecting their rights. Poland participates in Senior Arctic

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25 "Polish container ports: a multipurpose logistics market developments."

26 http://www.mojanorwegia.pl/polacy_w_norwegii/liczba_polakow_w_norwegii_zestawienie_danych_ilu_tak_naprawde_nas_jest.html.

disputes among major stakeholders. Although all Arctic states have assured stakeholders that they are determined to solve problems through dialogue, one cannot exclude future rivalry and military tension. Limited transparency and the lack of an international forum where Arctic security matters can be discussed only increase the chance of negative security developments.

For the time being there is no consensus among NATO members regarding the Alliance’s Arctic policy. On May 8, 2013 NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, during his visit in Oslo, stressed that NATO has no intention to increase its presence and activity in the High North.29 According to the chief of the Polish presidential Bureau of National Security, General Stanislaw Koziej, it will be a challenge for NATO to deal with the different interests of stakeholders in the region. Nevertheless, the chief of BNS claims the Arctic has already become a third strategic area of interest for the NATO, after the South and the East.30

Poland is potentially one of those countries which may support a greater presence of the Alliance in the region. Both Poland and Norway - the Arctic littoral state, which has come to a forefront as a staunch advocate for a bigger NATO presence in the region - have already indicated they share the same vision of NATO offering credible territorial defence guarantees to the member states.31 Poland has also developed

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close defence cooperation with Norway, which opens the way for political and military cooperation regarding Arctic matters.

Similarly, there seems to be a political will for stronger cooperation between Poland and Denmark - the only Arctic state which mentions Article 5 security guarantees in its Arctic policy. Both countries are framework nations for the Multinational Corps North-east stationed in Szczecin and already explore the possibility of greater flexibility in this NATO force structure for collective defence purposes.

Nevertheless, the Arctic is far from being at the core bilateral relations interests. There is a significant, unexplored potential for bilateral cooperation between Poland and other Arctic states, as well as countries of the Baltic Sea region interested in taking a more active policy towards the High North. The first contacts have already been developed on an expert level i.e. within the framework of the “Declaration on Political Cooperation in Areas of Strategic Importance between Poland and Sweden” of May 4, 2011. The Foreign Minister of Poland, Radoslaw Sikorski, has also prepared a letter to his Swedish counterpart, Carl Bildt, on strengthening mutual cooperation in the Arctic.

To a limited extent, the Arctic is a subject in Polish bilateral cooperation with its two biggest neighbours: Russia and Germany. In the case of Russia, the Arctic appears occasionally in talks at the Northern Dimension. The topic which is of the utmost interest for the Russian side, namely the mining of raw materials from the Arctic seabed, is not likely to be the subject of joint discussions. The main reason for the restriction of dialogue is modest Polish possibilities to operate in the Arctic and (especially in the case of Russia) discrepancies about concrete proposals of cooperation. One can, however, expect a discussion on scientific cooperation and common debate on the Northern Sea Route.

However, in the case of Germany, most important are the joint actions between international institutions, mainly in the European Union (creating the EU Arctic Policy) and the Arctic Council. Practically, Poland does not observe cooperation on Arctic issues with Canada, except for a few common scientific conferences, such as the one organised by the Canadian Embassy in Poland and the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) titled: “The more accessible Arctic. Myths, facts and issues ahead.” in March, 2011. The cooperation at the meeting of AC observers within the Warsaw Format during the Canadian AC Presidency is an exception.

Conclusions: seeking the balance

Polish activities in the Arctic have focused on science, and diplomacy. At the same time, the private, public and social players have lagged behind in grasping opportunities which lie in the region. Achievements in the scientific field give ground to much more decisive and active Arctic policy. It is vast. Its scale generates freedom to pursue research in the Arctic, a priority of Polish policy for the region. Further development of research is also necessary to provide for sustainable development of new sectors in the region, such as minerals and trade. In hoping for greater financial support, Poland could advocate for the increased presence of the EU in the Arctic. This would enhance sustainable development expertise, and give greater access to research and development funding in the region as per the 2014 - 2020 financial programme which includes the European Regional Development Fund, the European Science Foundation, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Marine Fund.

Poland should also be actively involved in the formation of an efficient international governance system in the High North, which would encompass the security domain. A strong Arctic Council, whose governance structure would emphasise the role of observer countries, will remain a Polish priority. At the same time, Polish authorities are likely to advocate for an increased role for the EU, and possibly NATO, in the region. Poland should also strengthen bilateral ties with Arctic countries as a sup-

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32 Graczyk, “Poland and the Arctic: Between Science and Diplomacy”: 148.

33 http://www.pism.pl/index/?id=60c97bef031ec312b512c08565c1868e.
plement to the still relatively weak governance network of international organisations there.

One of the biggest challenges regarding the security domain will be determining to what degree, and in what form, NATO engages the Arctic without provoking a negative response from Russia.

The lowest common denominator of NATO's presence in the Arctic should be based on the credible Article 5 guarantees, supported by planning and exercises. To this end member states should look to the possibilities offered by the Connected Forces Initiative (CFI) – a new project of the Alliance, focused on increasing interoperability and readiness through exercises and the use of advanced technologies.

The Alliance could also contribute to overall security in the Arctic by taking advantage of already functioning forms of practical NATO-Russia cooperation, which could be broadened to the Arctic region. They include “The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre” (EADRCC) which would serve as a valuable asset for the coordination of rescue and relief operations in the European part of the Arctic. The centre, which was originally set up at the request of Russia, is composed of 28 NATO member states and 22 partner countries. Today it coordinates relief operations in regions affected by natural disasters and has a mandate to deal with the consequences of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents. Additionally, the NATO–Russia Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI), created in 2002, could become a platform for extended monitoring of the airspace over the Arctic. NATO and Russian cooperation enables early notification of incidents such as the hijacking of planes. The coordination of airspace surveillance and air traffic control is guaranteed by three paired centres— Bodo–Murmansk, Warsaw–Kalinigrad and Ankara–Rostov-on-Don. All three are responsible for different geographical areas and are interconnected via coordination centres in Warsaw and Moscow. The centres in Bodo and Murmansk could monitor Arctic airspace, increasing the trust between NATO and Russia in the region. Moreover, declassified NATO archives containing hydrographic maps from the Cold War era could be used for the preparation of new navigation maps, improving safety for transport in the area. Such forms of cooperation would be mutually beneficial as they would contribute to greater transparency and increase security in vast Arctic areas without altering the balance of power.

On the industry side, for the time being the direct Polish industrial presence in the Arctic is limited to KGHM. However, interest from other companies is rising. A long term perspective providing beneficial financial and technological conditions, would see activities of Polish gas and oil companies (Lotos, PGNiG) currently operating in the North Sea and Norwegian Sea move further North to the Barents Sea Region.

It must be underlined, however, that although on a high political level, Poland recognises the new, prospective sectors of development, such as exploitation of minerals and natural resources, construction, new sea lanes, tourism and services, there is neither a coherent national strategy, nor industrial interest on this side, yet. This might be seen as the biggest weakness of the Polish Arctic policy. In light of the rapidly increasing presence of transnational companies and state-owned majorities in the Arctic, Poland faces the challenge of how to join this industrial Arctic playground with limited resources at hand. A coherent national Arctic strategy could further enhance an industrial presence, and support industrial interests in the region.

With regard to trade, seaports are, and will be, very important for Polish international trade. The route across the Arctic can be an important part of growth in maritime transport. Poland can contribute to the safety and security of the Northern Sea Route, freedom of the seas and rights to free passage through international waters, perspectives on regular shipping, and researching the effect of climate change for Arctic navigation and shipping passages. Moreover, the sea bed mapping and navigation maps will be crucial for the safety of navigation in the Arctic. It can also help protect the environment, minimise negative effects of climate change, and support sustainable use of natural resources, tourism, and fisheries.

Provided there is further reduction of ice cover in the Arctic, wider use of the Northern Sea Route may be possible. It is important that use of the NSR is also profitable. Costs could be reduced by limiting the need
to use icebreakers, or by subsidising shipping companies that use them. In addition, it will be possible for Polish fishing vessels to be increasingly present in Arctic waters, with, of course, careful observance of the environmental protection principles. The Polish deep-sea fishing fleet currently operates fisheries in the Antarctic, east Atlantic and sometimes in the South Pacific, and although it consists of only a few vessels there is willingness to expand its fleet.

To become more involved in Arctic issues it is necessary for Poland to trigger discussion and at the same time develop a coherent Arctic policy. Completing the Polar Strategy of Poland would be a good starting point. A current agenda for public dialogue, namely the promotion of research, seems inadequate for triggering interest and raising awareness of Polish society in Arctic matters. Greater communication could be done with support and by coordinating with the Permanent Secretariat of the Arctic Council in Tromsø.

To make this happen, there is a need on one hand to simplify different kinds of procedures, and on the other hand, infrastructure development - both in ports and by improving the situation of Polish roads and railway lines because they limit the practical possibilities of using ports.

The development of bilateral cooperation in the Arctic with neighbouring countries could benefit Poland. Germany is a country which could face similar opportunities, and challenges. Like Poland, it is an observer in the Arctic Council and the German government is seeking a greater role for observers and supports the European Union’s engagement with the organisation.34 As one of the larger member states of the European Union, Germany is also strongly involved in the ongoing development of the EU policy for the Arctic, where the Polish-German dialogue could strengthen the efforts.35 Germany has considerable interest in NSR because they have positive trade with China. Since the rules, costs, management, monitoring and crisis management of the route will have an impact on Polish trade, Poland should make efforts to strengthen cooperation with Germany on the matter. At the same time, Poland should seek to raise the topic of the Arctic more often in bilateral cooperation discussion with countries who are permanent members of the Arctic Council.

The Arctic is not likely to become a hot issue in Polish public opinion. Nevertheless, this should not stop policy-makers from assessing the risks and opportunities that come with the geopolitical and environmental changes in the Arctic. The first step to make is to define country interests, and adjust the policy tools required to achieve them.

In an effort to seek balance in the region and provide for its sustainable development, Poland needs to act more decisively beyond the scientific field. Changing geopolitics in the region are likely to result in a shift of influence toward big industry. The time to “govern the ungovernable” – the great powers of the Arctic – and provide appropriate regulations for sustainable development of the region is ripe. Passiveness may result in Poland being too late for the game.

34 http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Europa/Reg-Nord/Arkt_Rat/Arkt_Rat_node.html.