

THE EU IN THE ARCTIC



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THE EU ARCTIC POLICY

In October 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative updated the EU's Arctic Policy under a joint communication titled "**A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic**".

The update sets out the EU's commitment to strengthening its Arctic engagement through the following three priorities:

- maintain **peaceful and constructive dialogue** and cooperation in a **changing geopolitical landscape**, to **keep the Arctic safe and stable**;

- address the **ecological, social, economic and political challenges** arising as a consequence of climate change and environmental degradation;

- support **inclusive and sustainable development** in the Arctic, focusing on Indigenous Peoples, women and the youth, and **investing in future-orientated jobs** and the blue economy.

Engagement with local stakeholders, in particular local communities and Indigenous Peoples, is paramount for the EU. This is well reflected in the EU Arctic policy.



The EU Arctic policy is cross-sectoral, tackling matters including climate change and its linkages to:



People living in the Arctic



Sustainable economic development



Research and innovation



Regional cooperation



Marine and ocean affairs



Civilian safety



Natural resources



Biodiversity loss and pollution



Geopolitical developments

WHO DOES WHAT IN THE EU ARCTIC POLICY?

The EU Arctic policy is implemented by relevant departments in the **European Commission**, depending on the issues. The overall coordination falls with the **Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries** of the European Commission (DG MARE) together with the **European External Action Service**. The European External Action Service nominates a **Special Envoy for Arctic Matters**.



THE EU ARCTIC FORUM, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DIALOGUE, AND ARCTIC YOUTH DIALOGUE

The **EU Arctic Forum**, **Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue**, and **Arctic Youth Dialogue** are an integral part of the EU Arctic policy, and illustrate the EU's **engagement** in and for the Arctic as well as its continued **commitment** to enhance regional and international cooperation on Arctic matters. Alternating between Brussels and Arctic locations, these are the main EU events on Arctic matters.

With the **Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue**, the EU brings together Arctic Indigenous Peoples and EU decision-makers, identifying matters that affect them in a co-creation approach, and discussing how the EU can support them in facing such matters.

The **EU-Arctic Youth Dialogue** is implemented with Arctic and European youth as co-creators, with notable involvement of Arctic Indigenous youth.



EU INVOLVEMENT IN ARCTIC-RELATED PROCESSES

The EU, as part of the Arctic, is a constructive, reliable and enabling player when it comes to Arctic processes, or **international processes** that impact the Arctic. The EU engages regularly with the **Arctic Council**, the Arctic's most prominent cooperation forum, as a de facto observer. The EU funds **research activities** notably under the auspices of the Arctic Council, for example on **black carbon**, and participates in its working groups.

On behalf of its 27 Member States, the EU is part of the **Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean** (CAOFA), promoting the effective and sound implementation of this unique agreement. The EU is also party to the **Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic** (OSPAR Convention), encouraging marine protection within the Convention areas, including Arctic waters.

The EU promotes the swift ratification and early entry into force of the **Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction** (known as BBNJ), an Agreement of interest to the Central Arctic Ocean.

ARCTIC INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE EU ARCTIC POLICY

The EU believes that **effective and inclusive engagement** with Arctic indigenous peoples is key to ensure that their views are promoted, and rights are respected. The EU fully supports and promotes the use of the free, prior and informed consent notion.

The EU regularly holds the EU Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue and supports the Sámi Council in building their own capacities, while promoting the empowerment of **Arctic Indigenous youth** through the EU-Arctic Youth Dialogue. The EU also engages with the **Inuit Circumpolar Council** and the different **Sámi parliaments**.

LISTENING TO ARCTIC INHABITANTS

Engagement with **local stakeholders**, in particular **local communities** and **Indigenous Peoples**, including **EU citizens**, is paramount for the EU. The EU also engages regularly with **key Arctic players**, such as the Arctic Economic Council, Arctic Mayors' Forum, or the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas network.

EU ACTIONS IN THE ARCTIC

Whether in the EU Arctic regions in Northern Sweden and Finland, in the larger European Arctic as part of the European Economic Area, or from a pan-Arctic perspective, the EU has a strong presence in the Arctic.

€1.6 billion

provided by the European Investment Bank between 1994 and 2023 to foster the **development of renewable energy and green transition projects**, including a battery cell plant in Northern Sweden.

€372 million

provided for **Arctic research and innovation** under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe (until mid-2024) programmes, in addition to projects covering both poles.

€273 million

Interreg Northern Periphery & Arctic and Aurora programmes (2021-2027) invest €273 million in the **Arctic cooperation projects** focused on sustainable development, climate change, innovation, SMEs, culture, mobility, education, and cross-border governance.

€225 million

for 2021-2027 to **support education and green growth activities** in Greenland, funded by the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation instrument – Global Europe.

2019-2022

11,000 people from the Arctic participated in the Erasmus+ programme, with **26,800 persons** going to the Arctic.

Arctic Urban Regional Cooperation

A **first urban regional network**, bringing together local representatives to exchange good practices and foster peer discussions, was launched in 2024, with a budget of up to **€2 million**.

Copernicus Arctic Hub

A **one-stop-shop** of Arctic-driven Earth observation for policy users around the world to support science, research, innovation, economic development, urban planning, etc.

Science Diplomacy Networks

The EU supports Arctic science diplomacy via the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA) and the Arctic Science Ministerial meetings.



The **Union Civil Protection Mechanism** coordinates disaster prevention, preparedness and response activities of EU countries and 10 participating states, including Iceland and Norway, and can be activated for emergencies by any Arctic country.

The EU in the geopolitical Arctic

The EU has a strong political and diplomatic presence in the Arctic, which includes European Commission Representations and EU Delegations in all Arctic States, plus a new Office in Greenland. The EU is a de facto Observer in the Arctic Council, and six EU Member States (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain) are full Observers.



6

EU Member States are Observers in the Arctic Council



3

EU Member States are Arctic States



Between 2016 and 2023, around **25,000 publications**

on Arctic topics were co-/authored by scholars based in EU Member States

Ottawa

Washington D.C.

EC Office

EU Delegation

EC Representation

EC Representation

EU Delegation

EU Delegation

EC Representation

EU in the Arctic through the years

2008
First EU Arctic policy

2016
EU Arctic policy update

2018
EU Arctic Forum in Brussels, Belgium

2021
EU Arctic Forum in Brussels, Belgium

2024
EU Arctic Forum in Brussels, Belgium

Launch of the **EU-Arctic Youth Dialogue** and the **Arctic Urban Regional Cooperation network**

Opening of the **European Commission's Office** in Greenland

Opening of the **European Polar Coordination Office** for research in Umeå, Sweden

2026
Oulu, Finland is European Capital of Culture

2012
EU Arctic policy update

2017
EU Arctic Forum in Oulu, Finland

2019
EU Arctic Forum in Umeå, Sweden

EU Arctic policy update

2023
EU Arctic Forum in Nuuk, Greenland

Bodø, Norway is European Capital of Culture

2025
EU Arctic Forum in Kittilä, Finland

Tromsø is European Youth Capital.



The EU is committed to a peaceful and prosperous Arctic. The EU promotes sustainable economic development that puts Arctic people first, while supporting the protection of the Arctic's unique environment for future generations.



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