

# Resolution on the EU strategy for the Arctic

2013/2595(RSP) - 12/03/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EU strategy for the Arctic. The resolution was tabled by EPP, S&D, ALDE, and ECR groups.

It welcomed the [joint communication](#) of the Commission and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 26 June 2012 as an important building block in ensuring the continuous development of the EU's Arctic policy. Members reiterated their call for a **united EU policy on the Arctic**, as well as a coherent strategy and a concretised action plan on the EU's engagement on the Arctic, with a focus on socio-economic and environmental issues.

Stressing the increasing use of the Arctic region's natural resources, they highlighted the **economic opportunities and the variety of industries in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions**, such as tourism, maritime industry and shipping, renewable energy, environmental technology and cleantech, gas and oil, offshore industry, forestry and wood-based industries, fishing and aquaculture, and traditional livelihoods.

**Ecosystem protection:** Parliament wanted to strengthen research in the Arctic and also called on the Commission to put forward **proposals as to how the Galileo Project or projects such as Global Monitoring for Environment and Security** that could have an impact on the Arctic could be developed. It stressed the need for reliable monitoring and observational systems that follow the changing conditions in the coastal, marine and terrestrial environments of the Arctic. Members reiterated that the serious environmental concerns relating to the Arctic waters require **special attention** to ensure the environmental protection of the Arctic in relation to any **offshore oil and gas operations**, and called on EU and EEA member states to assess the financial capacity of applicants to cover all liabilities potentially deriving from offshore oil and gas activities in the Arctic. They called on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to encourage and actively promote the highest standards with regard to environmental safety in the Arctic waters, and stressed the need to undertake investments in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

Parliament asked the Commission, in view of the huge number of scientific, economic and civic activities, in particular in the European Arctic, the Barents region and beyond, to develop practices aimed at better utilising existing EU funding and ensuring a proper balance in protecting and developing the Arctic region when channelling EU funds towards the Arctic.

**Regional cooperation:** Members stressed the vital importance of the EU regional and cohesion policy with regard to interregional and cross-border cooperation. They further called for the development of more effective synergies between existing programmes, for instance under the Interreg IV programme, the Northern Periphery Programme (NPP), Kolarctic, Baltic and the Blue Growth strategy, to enable the efficient channelling of funding, which should be made coherent. They emphasised that an EU-Arctic Strategy **required the appropriate budget support to be made operational**. The Northern Dimension policy served as a successful model of stability, joint ownership and engagement involving the EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia.

**Energy security:** Parliament considered that energy security must be improved by **reducing the EU's dependence on fossil fuels**. It highlighted the fact that the transformation of the Arctic represented one major effect of climate change on EU security, and stressed the need to address this risk multiplier through a reinforced EU strategy for the Arctic, and through an enhanced policy of EU-generated renewable energies and energy efficiency.

**Biodiversity and respect for local communities:** Members called on the Member States and the EEA states to support the international commitment under the CBD to protect 10 % of each coastal and marine region. It called for the EU to make all possible efforts to ensure a sustainable reconciliation between economic activities and viable socio-ecological and environmental protection and development, in order to safeguard wellbeing within the Arctic.

Parliament stressed that maintaining developed and sustainable communities in the Arctic with a high quality of life was of the utmost importance. It called for the EU, in this respect, to intensify its work in the areas of eco-system-based management, knowledge-based decision-making and close cooperation with local inhabitants and indigenous peoples. It acknowledged the **wish of the inhabitants of the Arctic region to continue to pursue sustainable economic development** while at the same time protecting the traditional sources of the indigenous peoples' livelihood and the very sensitive nature of the Arctic ecosystems. It confirmed its formulations on the rights of indigenous people in general and the Sami in particular, as the EU's only indigenous people.

**Maritime security:** Parliament stressed the major importance of the safety and security of new world trade routes by sea in the Arctic, in particular for the EU and its Member States' economies, these countries, which controlled 40 % of world commercial shipping. It called on the states in the region to ensure that any current transport routes – and those that may emerge in the future – were open to international shipping and to refrain from introducing any arbitrary unilateral obstacles.

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to focus on transport corridors such as roads, railways and maritime shipping with a view to maintaining and promoting cross-border links in the European Arctic and bringing goods from the Arctic to European markets.

Greenland: lastly, Parliament stressed the EU's strong relations with Greenland and the geostrategic importance of that territory. It asked the Commission and the EEAS to explore how the EU and EU-based actors from science, technology and business could contribute to and assist in the sustainable development of Greenland.