

Integrated European Union policy for the Arctic

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The European Parliament adopted by 483 votes to 100, with 37 abstentions, a resolution on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic.

Climate change effects and growing competition for access to the Arctic and its natural resources, and increasing economic activities, have brought risks to the region, including challenges to the environment and human security.

Given the **region's growing geopolitical importance**, Parliament stressed the important role of the Arctic Council for **maintaining constructive cooperation, low tension, peace and stability** in the region. It also called for a continued dialogue with Russia within the framework of Arctic regional cooperation, while noting the increase in the stationing of Russian military forces in the region.

Towards an integrated EU policy: Parliament stressed the need for more coherence between the EU's internal and external policies as regards Arctic matters, a comprehensive strategy and a concretised action plan on the EU's engagement in the Arctic, wherein the aim of preserving the vulnerable ecosystem of the Arctic should be the starting point.

Underlining the importance of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Members considered **respect for international law** in the Arctic essential. They advocated a strong role for the EU in promoting effective multilateral arrangements and a global, rules-based order. They also suggested reinforcing **multilateral Arctic governance** through the strengthening and consistent implementation of relevant international, regional and bilateral agreements, frameworks and arrangements.

Preservation and environmental protection in the region: the resolution stressed that in the last decades, the temperature in the Arctic has been increasing at about twice the rate as the global average and that the volume of sea ice present during the summer has fallen by more than 40 % in 35 years.

Parliament:

- called on the Member States to take a stronger role in the effective **implementation of international conventions**, such as Paris Agreement, Minamata Convention, Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, Gothenburg Protocol, Stockholm Convention, Århus Convention and Convention on Biological Diversity;
- supported the development of a network of Arctic **conservation areas** and called for any development of **commercial fishing** in the region to be carried out in a way that is fully compatible with the sensitive and specific nature of the region;
- reiterated its call on the Commission and the Member States to take all necessary measures to facilitate actively the **ban on the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil** as ship fuel in vessels navigating the Arctic seas. In the absence of adequate international measures, the Commission shall put forward **proposals** on rules for vessels calling at EU ports subsequent to, or prior to, journeys through Arctic waters, with a view to prohibiting the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil.

Parliament called for the adoption of a **precautionary approach** aiming to establish appropriate international measures to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of resources in the Arctic high seas.

Protecting local populations: given that some four million people live in the Arctic region, of which some 10 % are indigenous peoples, Members called for more stringent safeguards for the vulnerable environment as well as for fundamental rights of indigenous people, as well as their right to give their prior consent as regards the extraction of natural resources.

In this regard, Parliament called for special attention to be paid to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4.5**, which includes ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for indigenous peoples, also in their own languages.

Scientific cooperation: in order to improve knowledge in the Arctic, Parliament encouraged the promotion and facilitation of international scientific and research cooperation among all stakeholders active in the field of Arctic research. It called on the Commission to study and make proposals on the **strengthening of the Arctic telecommunications infrastructure**, including satellites, in order to help scientific research and climate monitoring.