Basic information

2020/2112(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
The Arctic: opportunities, concerns and security challenges **Subject** 6.40 Relations with third countries **Geographical area** Arctic area	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	FOTYGA Anna (ECR)	02/04/2020
	Shadow rapporteur KOKALARI Arba (EPP) SCHIEDER Andreas (S&D) PAET Urmas (Renew) ALAMETSÄ Alviina (Greens/EFA) VILLANUEVA RUIZ Idoia (The Left)	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Environment	SINKEVIČIUS Virginijus

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
17/09/2020	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
01/07/2021	Vote in committee		
04/08/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0239/2021	Summary
05/10/2021	Debate in Parliament		
07/10/2021	Decision by Parliament	T9-0413/2021	Summary

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2020/2112(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/9/03570

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE680.907	19/04/2021	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE680.908	11/05/2021	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0239/2021	04/08/2021	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0413/2021	07/10/2021	Summary

The Arctic: opportunities, concerns and security challenges

2020/2112(INI) - 04/08/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Anna FOTYGA (ECR, PL) on the Arctic: opportunities, concerns and security challenges.

International cooperation as a basis for a safe, stable, prosperous, accessible and peaceful Arctic

Recalling the political and strategic importance of the Arctic for the EU and for maintaining the environmental balance of the planet, Members considered it essential that all stakeholders, including the EU and its Member States, act to maintain peaceful and intense international and regional cooperation, scientific research, prosperity and low tensions in the Arctic, as well as to address the very alarming effects and consequences of climate change in the region.

The EU should contribute to strengthened **multilateral governance in the Arctic**, promote sustainable use of resources and protect and preserve the Arctic, together with its people. The EU's Arctic policy should include new actors such as China and consider the security dimension.

While recognising the sovereign status of the Arctic states and their sovereign rights under international law, the report stressed that the EU's capacity to provide solutions to **potential security challenges** should be fully exploited and that global, regional and local fora are needed for dialogue on the security needs of the region.

Climate change

Concerned by the IPCC's findings that global warming has led to widespread shrinking of the cryosphere in recent decades, with a mass loss of ice caps and glaciers, Members urged the EU to take a leading role in work to build an **ambitious climate action plan for the Arctic**. EU policies should ensure that the interests of the people of the Arctic region, including indigenous peoples, in protecting and developing the region.

Geopolitical developments in the Arctic

The Arctic has been relatively well preserved for a long time but is increasingly affected by the growing international interest in the region and by security developments, including the progressive remilitarisation of Russia in the region.

Stressing that a **secure, stable, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous Arctic** is essential for Europe's overall security, Members called for enhanced regional dialogue, cross-border cooperation and military restraint, and encouraged a process of negotiations and confidence-building measures to achieve the long-term objective of reducing military equipment in the region.

Safeguarding the freedom of navigation

Arctic coastal states are urged to take prompt action to fully implement the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Code on Polar Shipping. Members called for a shared responsibility for the safety of human life at sea and the sustainability of polar environments as polar shipping grows in volume and diversifies in nature in the coming years.

The Commission and Member States are called upon to play a stronger role in **promoting the effective implementation of international conventions**, such as the Paris Agreement, the Minamata Convention, the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Gothenburg Protocol, the Stockholm Convention, the Code on Polar Shipping, the Aarhus Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The report stressed the need to **strengthen maritime surveillance** and information sharing within the Arctic region and to respect the rights of foreign vessels in the Arctic under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including the right of innocent passage, the right of transit passage and freedom of navigation. The development of northern transport routes should be sustainable and contribute to a greener transition.

Sustainable development and exploitation of strategic resources

The report emphasised the sustainable and scientific exploitation of energy resources in the Arctic and stressed the need for a strengthened policy on domestically produced renewable energy and energy efficiency that will significantly reduce the EU's dependence on external sources and thus improve its security position.

In view of the environmental risk posed by the exploitation of oil and gas in the Arctic, Members called for **strict requirements to be introduced for the exploration and exploitation of new hydrocarbon reserves** in the region. They expressed concern about attempts, notably by Russia and private companies in other countries, to pursue large-scale development projects without assessing their environmental impact.

The Arctic is also expected to play a central role in the **European raw materials alliance**, boosting European production of key minerals and reducing dependence on China for rare earth metals.

Science and knowledge

The report called on all states to ensure that **indigenous and local Arctic peoples** are involved in the deliberation and decision-making processes of relevant international fora on climate diplomacy and biodiversity. Stressing that the EU is one of the main financial contributors to Arctic research, through programmes such as Horizon 2020, Members called for increased EU funding for Arctic research and development.

More EU in the Arctic, more Arctic in the EU

Members considered that the EU, as a global player, should engage in active political dialogue, react to the growing strategic importance of the Arctic and continue to play its role as an accepted and credible actor in the region. They called on the Commission to set up a working group covering all issues related to Northern Europe and the Arctic. The Arctic should also be given a more prominent place in Parliament, including through the creation of a specific interparliamentary delegation.

The Arctic: opportunities, concerns and security challenges

2020/2112(INI) - 07/10/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 506 votes to 36, with 140 abstentions, a resolution on the Arctic: opportunities, concerns and security challenges.

International cooperation

Parliament recalled thatthe Arctic is of strategic and political importance to the EU. It underlined the EU’s commitment to being a responsible actor, seeking the long-term sustainable and peaceful development of the region by fully cooperating with international partners. It is crucial that all stakeholders, including the EU and its Member States, act to maintain peaceful and intense international and regional cooperation, scientific research, prosperity and low tensions in the Arctic, as well as to respond to the very alarming effects and consequences of climate change in the region.

The EU should contribute to strengthened **multilateral governance in the Arctic**, promote sustainable use of resources and protect and preserve the Arctic, together with its people. The EU's Arctic policy should include new actors such as China and consider the security dimension.

While recognising the sovereign status of the Arctic states and their sovereign rights under international law, the resolution stressed that the EU's capacity to provide solutions to **potential security challenges** should be fully exploited and that global, regional and local fora are needed for dialogue on the security needs of the region.

Climate change

Concerned by the IPCC's findings that global warming has led to widespread shrinking of the cryosphere in recent decades, with a mass loss of ice caps and glaciers, Members urged the EU to take a leading role in work to build an **ambitious climate action plan for the Arctic**. EU policies should ensure that the interests of the people of the Arctic region, including indigenous peoples, in protecting and developing the region.

Sustainable development and exploitation of strategic resources

The resolution emphasised the sustainable and scientific exploitation of energy resources in the Arctic and stressed the need for a strengthened policy on domestically produced renewable energy and energy efficiency that will significantly reduce the EU's dependence on external sources and thus improve its security position.

In view of the environmental risk posed by the exploitation of oil and gas in the Arctic, Parliament called for **strict requirements to be introduced for the exploration and exploitation of new hydrocarbon reserves** in the region. It expressed concern about attempts, notably by Russia and private companies in other countries, to pursue large-scale development projects without assessing their environmental impact.

Funding

Noting that the EU has been a major financial contributor to Arctic research through programmes such as Horizon 2020, Parliament stressed the need to **increase EU funding** for Arctic research and development. It also called for an ambitious investment plan for the Arctic.

Indigenous people

The circumpolar Arctic is home to over four million people, including over 40 different indigenous peoples and local communities and half a million EU citizens. The EU's only recognised indigenous people, the Sami people, live in the Arctic regions of Finland and Sweden, as well as Norway and Russia. Recognising that the effects of melting ice and milder temperatures are displacing indigenous populations and thereby threatening the indigenous way of life, the resolution stressed that the EU should pursue policies that ensure that measures to address environmental concerns take into account the interests of the inhabitants of the Arctic region, including its indigenous peoples, in protecting and developing the region. There is a need to ensure the preservation of indigenous peoples' cultures, traditions and languages by establishing capacity building programmes to increase awareness about the diversity, history and the rights of indigenous peoples.

Russia and China

Parliament expressed its regret at the Russian Government's efforts to subordinate civil society, which is having a very negative impact on indigenous peoples by limiting the autonomy of their representations and partnerships in international forums, blocking access to external funds. It is also concerned about the progressive Russian military build-up in the Arctic, which it considers to be unjustified as it significantly exceeds legitimate defensive purposes.

Parliament considered that the inclusion of the Arctic by China in its economic development programmes, with the aspiration of integrating the Arctic's Northern Sea Route into its Belt and Road Initiative (as a 'Polar Silk Road'), needs to be closely observed by the EU. It also expressed concern over China's investment attempts in the seaports along the Northern Sea Route and its attempts to obtain mining rights. The Arctic is also expected to play a central role in the **European raw materials alliance**, boosting European production of key minerals and reducing dependence on China for rare earth metals.

More EU in the Arctic, more Arctic in the EU

Parliament considered that the EU, as a global player, should engage in active political dialogue, react to the growing strategic importance of the Arctic and continue to play its role as an accepted and credible actor in the region. The resolution noted that the best reply to growing Sino-Russian cooperation in the Arctic is greater coordination at EU level. Moreover, the Commission is called on to set up a working group covering all issues related to Northern Europe and the Arctic. The Arctic should also be given a more prominent place in Parliament, including through the creation of a specific interparliamentary delegation.