



Key Challenge 10: EU Arctic Governance

Toward Just, Ethical and Sustainable Arctic Economies, Environments and Societies

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KEY CHALLENGES IN SERIES

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KEY CHALLENGES SERIES AUTHORS

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Due to the significant interplays between EU activity and sustainability and the changes and challenges happening in the Arctic, a broader consideration of potential impacts of overall EU decisions and policies on the region would be positive. Impact assessments for policy options are already routinely conducted by the European Commission. A required consideration of potential consequences on the Arctic specific context would ensure that this interplay is adequately addressed and that the EU takes its responsibility in Arctic change and preservation seriously. Policies concerning maritime governance, transport, climate change or energy seem especially relevant to the region. The identification of these local impacts of EU policy and regulatory development requires the participation of Arctic stakeholders in the process. However, EU institutions were often perceived by JUSTNORTH stakeholders as a “black box”. Although seemingly inviting the participation of interested parties, EU decision-making processes were seen as complex and thus inaccessible to most. Yet, at the same time, many considered EU institutions as a stage to make grievances public beyond national borders and to put pressure on issues not adequately tackled by the member states. However, on top of procedural complexity, the limited human resources and financial capacities of Arctic stakeholders/rightsholders and of their organisations is an additional limit to their adequate and sustained participation. The EU inviting approach and relative openness needs to be complemented with financial support for effective participation.

On the other hand, the EU could improve its involvement in Arctic governance. The expected establishment of an European Commission office in Nuuk (Greenland) demonstrates the EU will to strengthen its Arctic presence. However, while EU officials participate in the Arctic Council working groups, this participation is often discontinuous and responding to personal interests or to the needs of particular working groups. For the EU to assume a greater role in Arctic governance, an integrated and continuous participation in the Arctic Council is a key step. This would allow the development of EU long-term interests and long-term strategy in its involvement in the region. A continued EU presence in the Arctic Council could also be a crucial way to influence Arctic governance towards sustainability and justice goals, and thus a crucial way to carry out many of the policy orientations and recommendations presented in this document. Overall, this would likely benefit and strengthen both the Arctic Council and the EU. However, the current diplomatic context may require more than a mere EU participation in the Arctic Council. The EU, along with other countries, need to actively assess and assert their positions in terms of where the future of the Arctic Council lies, considering that its premise is the cooperation of the eight Arctic nations, which at present includes the Russian interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1

Ensure that the potential impacts of EU policies and regulations on the Arctic region are systematically addressed both during the development phase and during implementation

R2

Allocate support towards resources and capacity-building for Arctic actors to effectively and adequately participate in EU governance

R2

Implement a more sustained and coordinated EU participation in the Arctic Council

Risks, Challenges and Barriers to Implementation and Effectiveness

A systematic consideration of EU impacts on the Arctic will likely slow down the regulatory process and incur in additional costs. Besides, critiques may be made that one particular region is receiving special consideration (R1; R2).

Ensuring that Arctic stakeholders/rightsholders not only participate but also exert influence on EU decision-making processes can be challenging, owing to the potential presence of cultural and linguistic barriers, as well as prevailing asymmetries in power dynamics (R2).

The coordination of the different EU agencies that would participate in the Arctic Council may be challenging. Especially regarding the question of who is to have general oversight over said participation (R3).

Opportunities and Facilitators for Implementation and Effectiveness

The establishment of simulation models to assess the impact of EU policies and regulations on the Arctic region can facilitate estimations and prognostications of medium-to long-term effects. Cooperation efforts involving research institutions, industry sectors, and governmental agencies can facilitate data compilation and analysis (R1).

The EU could lead other states and/or global actors by example in being responsible with their Arctic policy and considering how their general policies affect the region (R1).

Dialogues with national and regional actors can lead to the identification of alternative funding opportunities as to diversify funding sources beyond the EU budget (R2).

A coordinated EU participation in the Arctic Council would enable a more consistent, effective and visible involvement in Arctic issues (R3).

These policy orientations and recommendations would lead to improvement in regard to the following justice considerations:

- In terms of procedural justice, these recommendations would ensure an equal access to the EU institutional landscape for Arctic stakeholders/rightsholders through the mitigation of human and capital barriers. Similarly, through more systematic impact assessments and a stronger stakeholders/rightsholders participation, they would lessen existing biases in institutional operations that hinder procedural justice.
- Policy impact assessments reaching beyond economic or environmental considerations can foster recognition and restorative justice if they takes into consideration social and cultural aspects, e.g. acknowledging the intrinsic value of Arctic traditional livelihoods, land uses and cultures. A stronger participation of Arctic stakeholders, especially of vulnerable groups, in EU Arctic governance would also likely enhance these two forms of justice.
- Strong, consistent and continuous assessments of the impacts of the EU Arctic policies would play a crucial role in ensuring distributive justice across the region and its different stakeholders/rightsholders.





Integrated Arctic Policy Analysis Report and Recommendations - Key Challenges



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