Is the European Union still interested in obtaining status as an Observer of the Arctic Council?

☒ Yes ☐ No
Observer Report

Please describe in no more than 2 pages your state or organization’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council’s Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. If applicable, please include mention of collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

The EU avails itself of this opportunity to update the Arctic Council on the EU’s Arctic Policy and the EU’s engagement in the work of the Arctic Council and subsidiary bodies. This report is submitted in line with the EU’s application for observer status and the Arctic Council’s decision to extend a standing invitation for the EU to attend its sessions at all levels.

Joint Communication on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic

On 27 April 2016, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy published the Joint Communication on an integrated EU policy for the Arctic (see attachment). This Joint Communication has 3 main pillars: climate change/safeguarding the Arctic environment; promoting sustainable development in the region; and supporting international cooperation on Arctic issues. Science, research and innovation have a key role to play across these substantive areas. The EU is engaging with all Arctic partners including indigenous peoples.

While the Arctic states have primary responsibility for tackling issues within their territories, many of the issues affecting the Arctic region can be more effectively addressed through regional and multilateral cooperation. In many regional and multilateral fora the EU and its Member States are working together on data collection, setting objectives, negotiating agreements with international partners of relevance to the Arctic.

The EU's engagement in the Arctic Council

The EU is engaged in many Arctic Council Working Groups, Task Forces and Expert Groups. This work is being conducted by staff from several Directorate-Generals (DG) of the European Commission and EU agencies, currently including DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), DG for Climate Action (DG CLIMA), DG for Environment (DG ENV) and the European Environment Agency (EEA), DG for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), Joint Research Centre (DG JRC), DG for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

Working Groups

- **AMAP - Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme:**
  - An expert from DG JRC is participating in the work of the Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic (AACA) assessment for the Barents Region. Experts from DG JRC and EEA have participated in the Drafting Committee of the Arctic Resilience Action Framework (ARAF).
  - The EU-PolarNet initiative supports 22 European research institutions to develop an integrated EU Polar research programme and facilitates the coordination of data and infrastructure between all partner organisations. AMAP sits on the steering committee of this initiative and is a beneficiary of EU-PolarNet.
  - The EU adopted in November 2016 a decision on a project to be financed by its Partnership Instrument to contribute to the development of collective responses to reduce black carbon emissions in the Arctic and to the reinforcement of international cooperation to protect the Arctic environment. The Secretariat of AMAP has been identified as a possible implementing organisation with which the EU (FPI/DG ENV/EEAS) could negotiate a grant agreement.
CAFF - Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna:
EEA provided input to the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative on bird populations gathered under the EU Birds Directive to support the work of this Initiative, and in particularly the European Flyway.

PAME - Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment:
- EEA has been participating and engaging in PAME meetings, including sharing European experiences at the Marine Protected Areas Science Workshop arranged by PAME.
- DG MOVE has been engaging in the work of the Shipping Expert Group.
- In the recently published Joint Communication on an International ocean governance agenda for the future of our oceans, the European Commission (lead: DG MARE) outlines key issues related to the protection of the marine environment, proposing concrete actions to be undertake, such as a strategy on plastics, addressing marine litter.

SDWG - Sustainable Development Working Group:
- EU 2014-2020 Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) Programme provides support and funding for projects to develop competitive and sustainable communities in the Arctic region, examples of which have been presented to the SDWG. A number of projects involving Arctic Partners are included in the current programme.
- DG MARE has set up an Arctic Stakeholder Forum to identify joint investment priorities for the coming years and to better streamline EU funding programmes for the Arctic region. The EU would be pleased to share the outcomes of this initiative with the SDWG.
- DG MARE continues to work on boosting the blue economy through targeted activities in relevant maritime economic sectors and would be pleased to share information and knowledge with the SDWG.

Task Forces
TFAMC - Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation:
- DG MARE has participated in TFAMC since its initiation and contributes its experience to the discussion. In addition, the recently published Joint Communication on Ocean Governance addresses some of the key issues dealt by the Task Force, such as marine stewardship.

SCTF - Scientific Cooperation Task Force:
- DG RTD represented the EU at meetings of the SCTF.

Expert Groups
EGBCM - Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane:
- At expert level, DG JRC has previously contributed to the Task Force on Methane and Black Carbon and continues to contribute to the EGBCM.
If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state or organization’s future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council’s Working Groups, Task Forces and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

Continuation of the aforementioned activity/contributions.
If applicable, please describe in no more than 1 page your state or organization’s contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years.

The EU’s general engagement in Arctic-relevant issues

Beyond the Arctic Council, the EU also engages in other contexts focusing on Arctic matters, including the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Northern Dimension framework (ND). Moreover, the EU is engaging in a number of contexts which address Arctic matters as a part of general activities. This relates to a number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), e.g. UNFCCC, CBD, Montreal Protocol and OSPAR. The EU is also engaged in a number of fora which touch upon Arctic matters in some of their work, e.g. IMO, OSPAR Commission and UNEP.

Acknowledging the important role of the Arctic indigenous peoples, the EU organizes its own Indigenous Dialogue to exchange views and agree on areas for further cooperation, particularly in relation to sustainable development and human rights. All Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council are invited to participate in this dialogue. The EU continues to provide funding for various initiatives to support indigenous peoples in the Arctic region (e.g. the Saami) especially through the Interreg Nord programme.

The European Commission (lead: DG RTD) and the European Environment Agency (EEA) both have a seat on the board of the Sustained Arctic Observer Network (SAON), and EEA has representatives in both of SAON’s sub-committees (Arctic Data Committee (ADC) and Committee on Observation and Networks (CON)). Furthermore, EEA actively took part in the recent external review of SAON.

The EU is providing finance for research and activities and supporting trans-national access to research infrastructures which are of general relevance to the Arctic. Several Directorate-Generals (e.g. DG MARE, DG MOVE, DG ENV etc.), as well as the EEA, use and promote scientific findings in their assessment products where Arctic aspects are addressed.

The EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme ‘Horizon 2020’ is funding a €40 million Arctic research package for the years 2016-17. Within this package, Arctic observations are the key element. Three main projects of this package have already been selected; a project to extend, improve, and unify Arctic observation systems, creating an integrated data access platform (INTAROS); two projects exploring the predictability of the Arctic climate and its impact at lower latitudes to improve models and contribute to the design of appropriate observing systems and better climate services (APPLICATE and Blue-Action); a new call in 2017 will explore challenges linked to permafrost.

Moreover, a new phase of an existing project to provide scientists with access to a network of research and observation stations across the whole Arctic (INTERACT) has been recently funded under Horizon 2020; and EU Earth observation programmes are providing new, powerful observation coverage and operational services in the Arctic (Copernicus and Galileo).

The EU (lead: DG REGIO) is investing over €400 million in four INTERREG programmes to support regional development and international operation in the Euro-Arctic Region. Cooperation in innovation, entrepreneurship, energy efficiency, natural and cultural assets, transport and common labour market are the main aims. Two programmes are cross-border (Finland, Sweden and Norway) and two cover larger areas; one involves 11 countries around the Baltic Sea, whilst the NPA programme stretches from Western Russia to Eastern Canada passing by Fenno-Scandia, Ireland, Scotland, Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland.
EU Cohesion Policy significantly supports investments in the Arctic region, in particular through a strong emphasis on research and innovation, SME competitiveness and supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy. Through the regional Structural Funds programmes 2014-2020 for Övre Norrland and Mellersta Norrland (Sweden), DG REGIO has allocated €236 million to regional projects, and further investments are being co-financed in transport and broadband, whilst the Finnish Cohesion policy programme will see an invest €882.3 million in the Arctic. These investments build on national and/or regional growth and smart specialisation strategies.

With regards to maritime aspects of the goals of the Arctic Council, since 2007 the EU’s European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) has been delivering CleanSeaNet; a satellite-based oil spill detection service covering all European sea areas, as well as waters around Greenland (funded by Denmark). EMSA’s other pollution response services (e.g. oil spill response vessels, Equipment Assistance Service (EAS), information services in case of chemical incidents) can be requested by the EU and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) coastal Member States of the Arctic region.

Moreover, the EU (lead: DG MARE) will develop a multi-resolution map of the entire seabed and overlying water column in seas and oceans around Europe by 2020, which will include the Barents Sea from 2018.