

Proposed joint Report on the 'Arctic Environment: European Perspectives'. Information document on the proposed joint report from EEA, UNEP/GRID-Arendal and AMAP for presentation at the Arctic Council SAO meeting, Rovaniemi, 12-13 June 2001.

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Proposed joint Report on the 'Arctic Environment: European Perspectives'

**Information document on the proposed joint report
from EEA, UNEP/GRID-Arendal and AMAP**
for presentation at the Arctic Council SAO meeting, Rovaniemi, 12-13 June 2001

Aim of the report

It is proposed to develop a joint report between the EEA, UNEP/GRID-Arendal and AMAP. The report will aim to make existing information on the relationship between the environment in the European Arctic and the rest of the Arctic, and the impact of Europe on the Arctic environment available in an understandable form to a wide audience. The main results and conclusions of several existing reports on developments in the Arctic environment will be synthesised and presented in a form relevant for both the environmental policy debate within Europe, and the Global environmental discussions where Europe constitutes an important regional player¹.

Background

The development of the ideas for such a report on Europe's impact on the pan-Arctic environment is a follow up to discussions concerning the EU Northern Dimensions initiative and circumpolar cooperation with Canada introduced under the Finnish Presidency. The aim of the report is to support and strengthen these EU activities. Despite all the existing reports on this topic, it is apparent that there is little appreciation within Europe as a whole, outside of expert circles, of the environmental issues faced by the Arctic and the communities living in this region. Since the Arctic and the communities living there are mainly the victims of external factors outside their area of control (e.g. chemicals, climate change, ozone), it is important to raise awareness of these issues more broadly and to provide the policy makers with an understandable summary of the situation. There is a large amount of existing information on this topic. Given the series of upcoming meetings on the Northern Dimension and Arctic environment in particular over the next two years, there is an opportunity to develop a summary for policy makers and for raising general awareness in a 20-30 pages report modelled on the joint EEA/UNEP messages reports.

¹ A relevant model for such joint report on the Arctic environment is e.g. the ‘joint EEA-UNEP messages’ (ref. 1,2,3).

What has happened so far?

A series of informal preparatory meetings and contacts have been held to develop the idea of the Joint Arctic Environment Report further:

1. Joint meeting on Circumpolar Co-operation and the Northern Dimension in Ottawa, Canada, 18-21 October 1999, which demonstrated the need for broad awareness raising of the Arctic environment issues.
2. Meeting at the Nordic Council Offices 10 May 2000. Attendees: Goran Lungberg (Nordic Council) and Lars Kullerud (UNEP, GRID Arendal), David Stanners (EEA).
3. Meeting on 7 June 2000. Attendees: Rudy D'Alessandro (Arctic Council), Nickolai Denisov (UNEP/GRID Arendal), Lars Kullerod (UNEP/GRID Arendal) and Göran Lundberg (Nordic Council), David Stanners (EEA), Anita Künitzer (EEA).
4. Meeting at EEA on 15 December 2000. Attendees: Lars-Otto Reiersen (AMAP), Simon Wilson (AMAP), David Stanners (EEA), Anita Künitzer (EEA).
5. Contacts between Swedish EU Presidency (Mats Ekenger, Swedish Ministry for Environment) and EEA (Ebbe Kvist, Anita Künitzer) in February-April 2001.
6. Agreement of AMAP Board to support this joint report.

Follow up and proposals from these meetings

As result of these meetings, it was agreed between EEA, UNEP/GRID-Arendal and AMAP that:

- While there was, in some areas and among some groups, a clear understanding of specific environmental issues of importance to the Arctic, there was not one global synthesised view of the issues, particularly among decision makers and especially those outside the Arctic region.
- The main added value of a cooperation between the involved Arctic parties would be the development of a short (20-30 page) awareness-raising document laying out the main environmental issues of concern for the Arctic, and their relationship and relevance to Europe. This document would be based on relevant existing in-depth work by other bodies, in particular by working groups under the Arctic Council (AMAP, CAFF, PAME, EPPR, Sustainable Development), the Nordic Council, and relevant national institutes in Arctic and European countries, but brought together and synthesised for ease of understanding.
- The report will focus on the state of the pan-Arctic environment and Europe's impact on this. It will consider changes in the Arctic and their effects on Europe, and vice versa. The ‘Northern Dimension’ of policies developed within the EU will be one of the major political activities of relevance for the report, in particular highlighting the fact that policies that are not at all ‘northern related’ can adversely affect the Arctic.

Contributors

Following the above discussions and findings, it is proposed to develop and publish a joint report authored by EEA, UNEP/GRID-Arendal and AMAP. The report could be prepared along the same lines and format as the EEA-UNEP messages (see ref. 1,2,3). Other contributors to the report could be:

- other Arctic Council working groups: CAFF, PAME, EPPR, Sustainable Development),
- other Arctic organisations
- Norwegian Polar Institute.

Content

Summary in a condensed and easy to understand form of available information on:

- state of, and impacts of Europe on the pan-Arctic environment,
- sectoral driving forces in Europe and their pressures on the Arctic,
- changes in the Arctic and their influence on Europe, and vice versa,
- existing policy framework and responses at the European level.

Timing of preparation and launch

To assure the report responds to the needs, it will be prepared in collaboration with the Nordic Council, the Arctic Council and the European Commission and relevant non-governmental organisations. The launch of the report should be further linked to a relevant political process on the Arctic to ensure the appropriate policy makers are addressed and appraised on the current state of knowledge on the Arctic Environment. There are several options for the launch of the report like the RIO+10 meeting in mid 2002, the Arctic Council meeting in September 2002 and the Kiev meeting in May 2003. It is planned to have discussions on this report with the forthcoming Danish Presidency (2nd part of 2002) as soon as possible.

An implementation plan for the production of the report will be developed by the author organisations before summer 2001. The report itself would be produced between June 2001 and mid 2002.

References

1. EEA/UNEP, 1997. *Water Stress in Europe – can the challenge be met?* 1997 New Year Message prepared jointly by the European Environment Agency and the United Nations Environment Programme: 15pp.
2. UNEP/EEA, 1998. *Chemicals in the European Environment: Low Doses, High Stakes?* The EEA and UNEP Annual Messages 2 on the State of Europe's Environment. UNEP Regional Office for Europe, Châtelaine and European Environment Agency, Copenhagen: 32pp.

3. EEA/UNEP, 2000. *Down to earth: Soil degradation and sustainable development in Europe*. Environmental issues series No. 16. Luxembourg, Office for Publications of the European Commission: 32pp. (http://reports.eea.eu.int/Environmental_issue_series_16/en)

Action for the Arctic Council meeting, 12-13 June 2001

This information document presents the background, proposed content and joint contributions and responsibilities for the production of the report. The Arctic Council meeting is invited to comment on the proposed report in order to seek guidance and support for the report.