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Arctic Cooperation in Education

Education as a Priority

Education is a key component in pursuing sustainable development. One of the goals of UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development is to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (Goal 4: Quality Education).

The Arctic states have recognized the need for international cooperation in education and research as an indispensable element of sustainable development in the region. It is essential that education takes into consideration the values and needs of the region’s inhabitants including indigenous peoples. Education from early childhood to higher education promotes resilience, active citizenship and empowerment of the Northern communities.

Finland wants to highlight the importance of education and to assess how Arctic cooperation could further support educational opportunities and capacity building in the Arctic.

Arctic Council Work in Education

SDWG represents the human dimension in the Arctic Council work. Thus, the efforts addressing educational opportunities and capacity building take place mainly under the auspices of the SDWG.

One of the priority areas of the SDWG is: “Educational opportunities: develop circumpolar networks and harness innovative technologies to build knowledge and develop skills needed to maintain vibrant communities in a changing region” (SDWG Strategic Framework, 2017).

The SDWG work plan for 2017-19 includes three projects under the priority area of education:

- Teacher Education for Diversity and Equality in the Arctic
- Arctic Children – Preschool Education and Smooth Transition to School
- Arctic Generation 2030

Teacher Education for Diversity and Equality in the Arctic aims to enhance understanding of the teaching profession in the Circumpolar North, and highlight ways in which pre-service and in-service teacher education can help teachers contribute to a sustainable future in the Arctic. UArctic network on *Teacher Education for Social Justice and Diversity in Education* is the main driver of the project.

Arctic Children studies and disseminates best practices in early childhood education. Its focus is in improving the quality of preschool education for Indigenous peoples and in preservation of native languages. *Arctic Generation 2030* promotes partnership between the private sector and academia in building sustainable Arctic.

From the earlier education-related projects in the SDWG could be mentioned *Future of Children and Youth of the Arctic* (1998-2006) and *Capacity Building Overview* (2002-2004). Many SDWG projects, such as projects concerning reindeer herding youth – current project name *EALLU* – have consisted of educational activities. The *Arctic Human Development* reports (2004 and 2015) have assessed status and trends in education in the Arctic.

It should be noted that the priority area of education concentrates on providing opportunities for good basic education to all children Arctic. Production of education materials and awareness-raising on Arctic issues are part of the regular work of all Arctic Council Working Groups.

UArctic

University of the Arctic, UArctic, is an initiative of the Arctic Council. In the Iqaluit declaration (1998) the Ministers welcomed the establishment of the University of the Arctic. UArctic was formally launched in 2001 and it became an observer to the Arctic Council in 2002. The University of Lapland hosts the UArctic International Secretariat in Rovaniemi, Finland.

The UArctic is a cooperative network of universities, colleges, research institutes and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North with a membership of over 180 organizations in Arctic and non-Arctic countries. UArctic's vision is "An Empowered North – With Shared Voices".

UArctic's Thematic Networks and Institutes are active in the work of Arctic Council Working Groups and Task Forces. The UArctic works with the governments to achieve a mobility program for the north that covers all of the Arctic eight countries. It has partnerships with the Permanent Participants and the IPS.

UArctic has demonstrated successful work in the field of education. Early on UArctic developed a circumpolar Bachelor-level curriculum, the Circumpolar Studies Program, delivered both on-site and online, in which tens of thousands of students across the north have participated. As a follow-up to this initiative, a Massive Open Online course (MOOC) that provides basic learning about the Arctic is in production under the leadership of The Arctic University of Norway and the University of Alberta.

UArctic hosts many activities related to education, e.g. EU-funded *Arctic Pedagogy* -project led by Sámi Education Institute in partnership with the University of Lapland, and the *Biegga Njunazat*, a pan-Nordic reindeer education project, as well as partnerships with Russian institutions in reindeer husbandry.

In order to pursue the engagement of students in Pan-Arctic dialogue, the past several years, the *Model Arctic Council* thematic network has run several sessions engaging youth in understanding the Arctic Council. Other UArctic initiatives include e.g. the Student Forum component of the Rectors' Forum and the UArctic Student Ambassador program.

UArctic organizes an international congress every second year. The next UArctic Congress will be held in September 3-7, 2018 in Oulu and Helsinki. The science section will feature keynotes and sessions based on the themes of the Finnish chairmanship, including education. UArctic will invite the Senior Arctic Officials, Permanent Participants and Observers.

Questions for Consideration

The SAOs may wish to discuss the future development of education-related activities in the Arctic Council and cooperation with the UArctic and other partners, also considering the role of education in the long-term work of Arctic Council.