

Cover sheet

Full name of Observer State or Observer Organization:

The European Union

Date of submission of regular report:

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Observer's website:

European Union	https://european-union.europa.eu/
External Action Service:	https://www.eeas.europa.eu/search_en?fulltext=arctic
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries:	http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/
Climate Action:	http://ec.europa.eu/clima/
Environment:	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/index_en.htm
Research & innovation:	http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm
Joint Research Centre:	https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en
Mobility & transport:	http://ec.europa.eu/transport/home_en
Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs:	http://ec.europa.eu/growth/
Defense industry and space:	https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/news-0_en
For Earth Observation (Copernicus):	https://www.copernicus.eu/en
For navigation (Galileo, Egnos):	https://www.gsa.europa.eu/search/node/arctic

Information for appropriate contact person

Full name:

Clara Ganslandt

Email:

clara.ganslandt@eeas.europa.eu

Telephone:

0032 584 8038 / 0032 460 84 8038

Organization or department:

European External Action Service

Job Title:

Special Envoy for Arctic matters / Ambassador at Large

Full mailing
address:

EEAS SCHU 04/599,
Rond Point Schuman 9A,
1040 Brussels,
Belgium

Observer Report

Please describe in no more than two pages your State's 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. Please detail any 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 in 2021, 2022 and early 2023. This report is submitted in line with the EU's application for observer status from 2012, which is maintained, and the Arctic Council's decision to extend a standing invitation for the EU to attend its sessions at all levels.

Joint Communication

On 13 October 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy published the Joint Communication on "A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic" (JOIN(2021) 27 final). The 2021 document constitutes an update to the 2016 Joint Communication on an integrated EU policy for the Arctic, which itself builds on previous versions of the EU Arctic policy, dating back to 2008.

Thus, the EU Arctic policy continues to focus on climate change/safeguarding the Arctic environment and promoting sustainable development in the region to the benefit of local inhabitants including indigenous peoples as well as supporting international cooperation on Arctic matters. The 2021 update highlights the defining role which climate change and its impacts play in Arctic affairs. Science, research and innovation continues to have a key role to play across these substantive areas. The document takes note of an increased interest in geopolitical issues that may affect Arctic regions. In all, the 2021 EU Arctic policy update presents a comprehensive approach to security, with a focus on environmental, socioeconomic and human matters, in a *whole-of-government* approach that fully engages the European Commission services and the European External Action Service.

The EU's engagement in the Arctic Council

In the reporting period, the Covid pandemic had a major effect on the work under auspices of the Arctic Council. Furthermore, the EU took note and agreed with reasoning underlying the decision from early March 2022 to pause that work.

The EU is committed to engaging in Arctic Council Working Groups, Task Forces and Expert Groups. The work by several European Commission services and/or EU agencies is of considerable value to the Arctic Council. The European Commission's experts provide unique support and bring in the vast amount of data and information the EU generates through its own programmes, such as Horizon Europe, or the policy-oriented research, as an example (responsible service: DG JRC).

Other observers

The EU is engaged in Arctic Council work also through OSPAR (the Convention for the protection of the northeast Atlantic marine environment and itself an observer to the Arctic Council) to which EU is a Contracting Party (responsible service: DG ENV).

In 2021, the European Commission participated in the Sustainable Arctic Observing Network (SAON) board that oversees SAON activities. It is also co-leader of the research on assessing societal benefits of Arctic observations and pilot services in the H2020 project Arctic PASSION that will contribute to SAON through the development of a well-integrated Arctic Observing System (responsible service: DG JRC).

Working Groups

AMAP - Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme:

The European Commission represented the EU at AMAP plenary meetings. It contributed to the AMAP study on impacts of short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs), such as black carbon, on Arctic climate, air quality and human health. The summary for policy makers was published in 2021 (<https://www.amap.no/documents/doc/impacts-of-short-lived-climate-forcers-on-arctic-climate-air-quality-and-human-health.-summary-for-policy-makers/3512>) (responsible service: DG JRC).

The European Commission further provided emissions inventories of atmospheric mercury and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) pollutants from the Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR) to AMAP studies on mercury (<https://www.amap.no/documents/doc/2021-amap-mercury-assessment.-summary-for-policy-makers/3510>) and POPs (<https://www.amap.no/documents/doc/pops-and-chemicals-of-emerging-arctic-concern-influence-of-climate-change.-summary-for-policy-makers/3511>) pollution in the Arctic published in 2021 (responsible service: DG JRC).

CAFF - Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna:

In 2021, the European Commission represented the EU as a member of the Arctic FIRE scientific steering committee and contributed to the project with its expertise in permafrost processes and remote sensing of greenhouse gases and land properties. The project aims to both improve the understanding of fire ecology and the impact of fires on communities in the Arctic, building on fire-related Indigenous Knowledge, and evaluate the impacts of wildland fires on Arctic ecosystems, air quality, and climate change (responsible service: DG JRC).

PAME - Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment:

The European Commission contributed to the PAME Action Plan on Marine litter (issued in 2021). The plan is now in the implementation phase, which the Commission is supporting with its tools and experience with the implementation of Regional Sea Conventions, the MSFD and its' Technical Group on Marine Litter.

The European Commission is further contributing to the joint PAME - CAFF Project on Marine Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in Arctic Waters. The project aims to improve the knowledge base for preventing, eradicating, and controlling IAS in the Arctic focusing on the unwanted potential transfer of marine invasive alien species by ships, through ballast water and biofouling. The European Commission provides expertise, scientific information, data and web services developed in the European Alien species Information Network (EASIN), which is the official information system supporting the European Commission and Member States in the implementation of the EU's Invasive Alien Species Regulation (Regulation (EU) 1143/2014) and which supports alien species monitoring and assessment obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) (responsible service: DG JRC).

EPPR – Emergency Prevention Preparedness and Response:

The European Commission contributed to the EPPR Circumpolar Wildland Fire Project. The Project aims to enhance coordination and cooperation on EPPR for wildland fire events in the Arctic. The European Commission operates the Global Wildfire Information System (GWIS) (<https://gwis.jrc.ec.europa.eu>). GWIS is currently the only system able to provide harmonised wildfire information to all Arctic states (responsible service: DG JRC).

The European Commission has provided analyses of wildfire trends and impacts in the Arctic region, also through its Emergency Response Coordinating Centre (ERCC) (responsible services: DGs JRC and ECHO).

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's 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.

SDWG - Sustainable Development Working Group:

In 2021, the European Commission represented the EU at SDWG plenary meetings and contributed to the development of the Arctic Resilience Action Framework (<https://sdwg.org/what-we-do/projects/arctic-resilience-action-framework-araf/>). In 2021, the European Commission further proposed a contribution to the roadmap for the development of resilience indicators and monitoring systems useful to Arctic societies in a new project proposal on Advancing Arctic Resilience. The Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL) was provided to produce a dedicated Arctic settlements and population data set and develop socio-ecological resilience indicators based on these and Digital Observatory of Protected Areas (DOPA) products adapted to the Arctic (responsible service: DG JRC).

Expert Groups

EGBCM - Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane:

The European Commission contributed to 2021 EGBCM "Summary of Progress and Recommendations" reports for Arctic Council Ministers and high-level policy makers' fora, providing conclusions and recommendations to reduce black carbon and methane emissions from specific sectors, together with actions to be adopted by Council members and observers, including the EU. In particular, the European Commission prepared and submitted the biennial EU report, containing updates of EU policies and upcoming strategies that contribute to the overall reduction goals, ensuring that EGBCM is aware of all EU actions (responsible service: DG JRC).

The EU is committed to engage in Arctic-related work in general for instance through funding of Arctic research under Horizon Europe (supporting organisations and projects that in turn benefit the Arctic Council Working Groups, Task Forces and Expert Groups), or through making available and free of charge the observation data gathered through the Copernicus Programme, which is essential for Arctic research, in particular on climate matters.

The EU also engages regularly with Permanent Participants, most specifically the Saami Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Council. The EU for example supports capacity-building and outreach activities in and by the Saami Council. The EU's regular Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue (last held in Nuuk in February 2023) is another example of regular engagement with and support to Permanent Participants.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's or Organization's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the

The EU's general engagement in Arctic-relevant issues (beyond the Arctic Council)

The EU engages in many different contexts focusing on Arctic matters or relevant to the Arctic, for example the Agreement to prevent unregulated fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean, or the global processes on the Global Biodiversity Framework or the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). Closer to the Arctic region, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Northern Dimension framework (ND), which are Arctic cooperation structures independent from the Arctic Council, can be mentioned. The EU is also engaged in a number of forums which touch upon directly Arctic matters in parts of their work, e.g. IMO, OSPAR and UNEP.

In May 2021, the EU participated at the Third Arctic Science Ministerial, co-hosted by Iceland and Japan.

In June 2021, the European Commission published an overview of EU policies, initiatives and projects that are of relevance for the Arctic. It covers both Arctic-specific actions as well as the broad spectrum of EU general policies that affect the way the EU influences the Arctic region as a major economy, market for Arctic resources, polluter and a research powerhouse. The work is primarily a synthesis of existing knowledge and information, although some new data has been generated as well. A summary can be found here: [Introduction \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

In February 2023 in Nuuk, the EU organised the EU Arctic Forum and the EU Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue, following the edition in Brussels in November 2021. During the period 2021-2023, the EU participated as well in major Arctic conferences, including Arctic Futures, Arctic Circle Assembly, and Arctic Frontiers, promoting and fostering Arctic cooperation.

The EU is a major supporter and funder of Arctic research through its Horizon programme, of regional development in the European Arctic through Interreg, and supports the education and green economy sectors in Greenland.

The EU continues to provide funding for various initiatives to support indigenous peoples in the Arctic region (including the Sami) especially through the Interreg cooperation programmes: Aurora and The Northern Periphery & Arctic.

Black Carbon

From January 2018 to June 2021, the EU-funded Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic (EUA-BCA), financed from EU's Partnership Instrument, contributed to the development of collective responses to reduce BC emissions from a number of sources in the Arctic and to reinforce international cooperation to protect the Arctic environment. This is line which is a central theme running through all three priorities of the 2016 integrated EU policy for the Arctic. A follow-up project (ABC-iCAP), building on the previous project started in December 2021. The focus of the new project is on stakeholder engagement, awareness building and knowledge sharing. It will continue to address the sources of Black Carbon that are of particular relevance to the Arctic, i.e., sources associated with gas flaring, wildfires / open burning, transport and residential heating.

Work under the ABC-iCAP will: promote national, regional and international collaboration to build and share relevant knowledge, raise awareness, conduct communications and outreach, and perform expert analysis with strategic partners and stakeholders; enhance collaboration with non-EU Arctic countries, in particular Canada and the USA; contribute to work addressing Black Carbon and Methane under the Arctic Council, UN ECE Air Convention and Barents Euro-Arctic Council; and increase awareness and knowledge sharing in cooperation with international and regional actions to reduce black carbon emissions under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), OECD, UNFCCC / IPCC, World Bank's Global Gas Flaring Reduction (GGFR) partnership and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). The project is implemented by Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) Secretariat in cooperation with Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) and Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL).