

European Union's Arctic policy

Norwegian perspectives

1. International interest in the Arctic is growing. The European Union's current Arctic policy, which focuses on climate change and the environment, sustainable development, and international cooperation, provides an overall balanced, comprehensive framework for action and partnership. It is a good starting point for continued cooperation toward an ever more innovative and sustainable Arctic. Safeguarding the Arctic will require policies that build capacity for sustainable development through science, research and education, emphasise engagement from local stakeholders and communities and support sustainable investments.
2. Norway gives high priority to cooperation and dialogue with the EU on Arctic issues. Norway supports the EU's application for permanent observer status in the Arctic Council. The EU's Arctic research programmes and cross-border/transnational regional programmes (Interreg) provide an important contribution to knowledge development and cross-border cooperation in the region.
3. Foreign and domestic policy converge in the Arctic. Although the geopolitical situation has grown more demanding, the Arctic still remains a "low-tension-high cooperation" area. International law is respected and multilateral cooperation through organisations such as the Arctic Council is constructive. The Arctic coastal states have a common interest in keeping the Arctic peaceful and prosperous. One of Norway's most valuable contributions to a stable, dynamic Arctic is to make sure that our northernmost areas are an attractive place to live, work and pursue an education.
4. Local stakeholders, governments, communities and indigenous peoples must be closely involved in the management of the Arctic. We appreciated the EU Arctic Stakeholder Forum initiative 2016-17, which links Arctic policy efforts from the European Commission directly to voices from local and regional actors in North Norway and other Arctic regions. We support continued facilitation of dialogue and local involvement in the development of EU's Arctic policy. It is crucial to engage the people actually living and working in the Arctic to achieve long-term sustainable development.
5. The accelerating impacts of global climate change are particularly pronounced in the Arctic, which provides a ringside view of its effects.
6. The Arctic is a priority area for the Norwegian Government, and a dedicated policy for the region has been established and operationalised. Central elements of this policy include presence, knowledge and sustainable development to promote economic growth and welfare to the benefit of the region and Norwegian society as a whole. Long-term, prudent management of natural resources, as an economic activity, is an important tool in realising this policy.
7. Norway supports the European Commission's comprehensive vision for a European Green Deal, and we wish to contribute to its implementation. Norway welcomes the strong signals that the EU will strengthen its 2030 target by the end of the year. Norway has already submitted an enhanced 2030-target under the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions by at least 50% and towards 55% by 2030, compared to 1990. We wish to cooperate with the EU to reach our strengthened target and see 55% as the best basis for our cooperation.
8. The Arctic is a net recipient of marine litter. The UN Environment Assembly in 2017 agreed on a vision to eliminate the discharge of litter and microplastics to the oceans over time. We appreciate the leading role of the EU in the work for a global agreement combatting marine litter.

9. The Norwegian Arctic is home to almost 10% of our population and comprises 35% of our landmass. Providing sustainable livelihoods for the people living in the Arctic is the cornerstone of Norway's Arctic policy.
10. Importantly, the Arctic states do not comprise a homogenous region, which makes each Arctic country's situation and priorities unique. Due to the Gulf Stream, the Norwegian Arctic has a relatively mild climate. Most of Norway's Arctic areas are relatively temperate and densely inhabited compared to many other Arctic regions. Svalbard is the exception, with its large areas of wilderness and a small population.
11. Increased economic activity will be essential to develop the region's potential, and efficient infrastructure and digital transformation in the Arctic will play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development.
12. Norway's overall policy goals for the Arctic place a premium on continuity: peace, stability and predictability; integrated, ecosystem-based management; international cooperation on the basis of the international legal order; and a strong and sustainable basis for employment, value creation and welfare.
13. The Agreement on the European Economic Area, which Norway includes Norway in the Single Market, is of central importance to employment and value creation. Norway's participation in a number of EU programmes, such as Interreg, Horizon 2020 and the outer space programmes, and the EU's contributions to the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation and the Northern Dimension, serve to enhance valuable research, science and innovation, as well as regional cooperation efforts.
14. Going forward, the EU should aim for continuity in its Arctic policy. Existing policy goals still very much apply. The particular emphasis on scientific research, innovation and regional cooperation should be maintained. The European Green Deal and digital transformation may prove useful in enhancing the EU's engagement in this regard.

An Arctic that provides for and contributes to solutions

15. The Arctic is a multifaceted place. It is not just a vulnerable, at-risk region; it is also a region with opportunities, knowledge, businesses and people that can provide solutions to pressing global challenges, including sustainable production and harvesting of food, energy and minerals.
16. For decades, the Arctic states have led the way and responsibly put in place bilateral and multilateral frameworks to manage issues of common concern in the Arctic. This network of Arctic cooperation and dialogue interacts productively with relevant international treaties, organisations and forums, and involves local government, local communities, indigenous people, the science community and civil society at large in addition to non-Arctic actors. The success of these efforts should be recognised and supported.
17. The Arctic shows great potential to contribute to green growth. Technologies deployed, and sometimes also developed, in the Arctic are already playing a key role in the digital transformation of our societies. EU space programmes and the European Space Agency are also important.
18. In 2024, the Norwegian town of Bodø will be the first European Capital of Culture located north of the Arctic Circle. This presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the connections between the Norwegian Arctic and Europe as a whole.

The legal framework and international cooperation

19. The single most important contribution any actor can make for the benefit of the Arctic, is to sustain and promote international cooperation and respect for international law. Norway considers the EU a principled and indispensable partner in the common global cause of promoting international cooperation and respect for international law.
20. The existing legal framework provides a robust foundation for responsible management by the Arctic states and other users of the ocean through national implementation and application of relevant international law provisions.
21. The Law of the Sea sets out important rights and obligations regarding freedom of navigation, marine scientific research, protection of the marine environment, delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf and other uses of the sea. Most general treaties and instruments apply to the Arctic as they do to other parts of the world.
22. Under the Law of the Sea, countries also have a duty to cooperate at the regional and global level to protect and preserve the marine environment. For the Arctic, the most important cooperation forums are the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Arctic Council, the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment in the North-East Atlantic (the OSPAR Convention), the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the bilateral environmental cooperation and fisheries cooperation between Norway and Russia. In addition, there is substantial research cooperation, for example under the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO).
23. Furthermore, an extensive legal framework for governance applies in the Arctic. This facilitates considerable practical cooperation under often difficult climatic and logistical conditions.
24. The Arctic Council is at the core of international cooperation in the Arctic as the meeting place for all the eight Arctic states, six permanent participants and 38 observers. The practical importance of cooperation in the Arctic Council has increased in recent years.
25. The Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation promotes good neighbourly relations and sustainable development in the Barents region, and there is particularly close collaboration between the national and regional levels. The main strength of the Barents cooperation is that it provides an arena for addressing common challenges through cross-border collaboration across the region. The Norwegian chairmanship for the 2019-2021 period, seeks to build a strong and resilient Barents region by pursuing an agenda based on health, people-to-people contact and knowledge.
26. The Northern Dimension serves as an important framework for cross-border cooperation in environmental protection, health, connectivity and culture. Norway has in particular invested in the environmental partnership, addressing the nuclear waste challenge.
27. Norway would like to further pursue the opportunities Nordic cooperation offers for growth and development in the Arctic. Key areas for cooperation include knowledge development, business development, infrastructure, climate change, the environment, security policy, and cooperation with the EU.
28. We appreciate the Kolarctic Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) and Interreg Baltic Sea Region programmes, which provide useful platforms for dialogue and cooperation with Russia based on real regional challenges and needs.

Security and safety in the North

29. While the broader geopolitical situation affects the Arctic, it is important to note that tension remains low. The Arctic continues to be a region characterised by cooperation and predictability. Our practical cooperation with Russia, including on management of the border and fish stocks, contributes to the stability of the region.
30. At the same time, Russia's more assertive behaviour and increased military activity in the Arctic has led to greater awareness of the region's importance and increased Allied presence in the north.
31. Norway is investing in strategic capabilities in order to underpin situational awareness, interoperability and deterrence. For Norway, it is important that an increased focus on enhanced national and collective defence continue to be combined with dialogue and transparency measures to avoid misunderstandings and unintended escalation.
32. Norway follows increasing Arctic engagement closely, including military activity. It is important that engagement in the Arctic take place in accordance with international law and within existing governance structures.
33. Norway participates in the EU Earth Observation Programme, Copernicus. Using data from the Sentinel satellites, among other things, the programme helps to ensure development of European services that are of high relevance to the Arctic region. These include disaster management, marine monitoring and security related services, which all rely on timely and detailed information, delivered from reliable sources. Copernicus is particularly important for safe winter navigation in the Arctic. The further development of the EGNOS programme is also crucial for safety through precise satellite navigation services in the region. Programmes such as these are crucial for the Arctic.
34. The importance of the Arctic Council is illustrated by the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, concluded by the Arctic states in 2011, and the Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic. The Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation serves as the enabling framework for Barents Rescue, a civil international crisis management exercise. The Arctic Security and Emergency Preparedness Network, hosted by the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre for Northern Norway, and supported by the EU, builds preparedness.
35. The EU Union Civil Protection Mechanism serves as an important mechanism for financing disaster exercises and relevant projects to improve security and safety in the Arctic areas.
36. More than 80% of the shipping traffic in the Arctic today passes within the Norwegian waters. As a responsible flag and coastal state, it is important for Norway to balance the opportunities and challenges in the Arctic in a safe and environmentally sound way. The increase in shipping activity in the Arctic constitutes a risk to the Arctic environment and must be met by relevant measures to reduce the risk of accidents and pollution and ensure high global standards.
37. The Polar Code is an important development as a global standard setter. Cooperation with the IMO and the Arctic Council is key to the success of the Polar Code and for solving the challenges ahead. It is important to ensure that seafarers have the knowledge they need about conditions in the Arctic waters they operate in, and that they are trained to handle the specific challenges these entail. The Norwegian Government works closely with the shipping industry on this issue, and a new knowledge hub for Arctic maritime knowledge has recently been established.

38. Surveillance and control of shipping traffic, nautical charting of polar waters, satellite-based infrastructure, port reception facilities, port infrastructure, and search and rescue capacity are all of special importance in the Arctic.
39. In view of the still increasing maritime activity in the Arctic, it is critical to further develop infrastructure in these areas. Cooperation with the EU on the remaining challenges relating to shipping in the Arctic would be of great value.

Climate change and the environment

40. It is possible to strike a balance between sustainable development of resources and protecting the environment to ensure economic and social development for future Arctic generations. Norway has an excellent track record in sustainable use of its resources. Harvesting natural resources is of fundamental importance to the population living in this region and to the national economy. Norway and the Norwegian people have a longstanding tradition of sustainable economic activity along the coast and in the Arctic.
41. The Arctic is experiencing rapid and dramatic changes in ice conditions, sea levels and air temperatures. These very worrying developments are caused by global climate change, predominately due to activities outside the Arctic. This is why we need global solutions, such as the Paris Agreement. Norway's current target under the Paris Agreement is to reduce emissions by at least 50%, and towards 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.
42. A high level of ambition, a collective effort and urgent action are needed to speed up the transition to a sustainable, climate-neutral and environmentally friendly future that will enhance the health and well-being of citizens. The ambitious agenda of the European Green Deal has the potential to contribute significantly to the Arctic environment as well. Our cooperation extends beyond Europe and is part of a common effort to strengthen multilateralism and promote climate-friendly policies, including in developing countries.
43. Norway will do its part. We work to develop ambitious common rules and standards in a wide range of areas; promote sustainable mobility; produce and provide clean and affordable energy; develop and share climate-friendly technologies; promote an inclusive green transition throughout Europe; and cooperate with the EU at the international level to encourage the sustainable use of oceans and forests. The green transition should be based on a scientific, fact-based and cost-effective approach.
44. Natural gas, also from the Arctic, can be an affordable and flexible source of energy when pursuing emissions reduction from coal-based power generation, or seeking to balance intermittent renewable energy production, for instance solar and wind power.
45. Reducing pollutants in the Arctic region will require international measures in addition to actions by the Arctic states. Assessments of Arctic pollution show that national and international controls on pollutants have led to lower levels of regulated contaminants in the Arctic, and have proved effective in improving the health of people and wildlife. Documentation of the effects of long-range pollution on the Arctic environment has been instrumental in developing global agreements.

Sustainable development

46. People have lived and worked in the Arctic for a very long time. This is certainly true for the local communities and indigenous peoples in the Norwegian Arctic, which benefits from the warm waters carried across the Atlantic by the Gulf Stream, providing ice-free harbours year-round. Some of the country's most innovative businesses, jobs and knowledge institutions trace their origins to human settlements along the coast and ocean-based activities going back centuries. Longstanding historical and cultural ties mean that cross-border cooperation and people-to-people contact are well developed in the Arctic.
47. There is substantial potential for sustainable development of the blue economy in the Arctic. Growth and job creation, whether in established ocean industries such as oil and gas, fisheries, aquaculture and shipping; other industries such as coastal tourism and space-related activity; or emerging industries such as offshore wind power, seabed minerals and marine biotechnology, can be developed sustainably and with appropriate consideration of the environment.
48. Norway has developed integrated management plans for all its sea areas. The first integrated management plan was for the Barents Sea and the Sea Areas off the Lofoten Islands 15 years ago. The purpose of the management plans is to facilitate value creation while also maintaining biological diversity.
49. The use of LNG and electric ferries supplemented with hydrogen minimise climate emissions in the ferry sector and Norway is investing in hydrogen-powered ferries in the Arctic to reduce climate emissions. The investment will also open up opportunities for production and development of hydrogen infrastructure in the north and provide incentives for industrial investment in hydrogen technology.
50. The High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, which is co-chaired by the Norwegian Prime Minister, will present its conclusions 3 December 2020. The main recommendation is that all coastal states should develop sustainable ocean management plans. Norway would like to cooperate with the EU on the implementation of this priority.
51. Cutting-edge technological development and science have been and continue to be necessary to achieve policy goals in the Arctic. Increasing access to data about the ocean, space, climate and health offers new opportunities for sustainable use of natural resources and increased value creation. More data sharing within and across sectors foster data-driven innovation.
52. The EU's Horizon 2020 programme is among the most important mechanisms for financing Arctic research and innovation. The Erasmus programme is the framework for much of the educational exchange and youth cooperation in the Arctic.
53. The EU Interreg programmes constitute an important contribution to innovative, cross-border solutions in the areas of health, environment, entrepreneurship, research, education, transport and sustainable energy. Norway intends to continue to participate in Interreg VI for the period 2021-2027, and, with a view to the Arctic in particular, in the Kolarctic, Sweden-Finland-Norway, and Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) programmes. The transnational NPA programme covers almost the entire Arctic geography, including Russia and Atlantic parts of Canada as observers, as well as the Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat. We support continuing the pilot Arctic Cooperation activity led by the Interreg NPA programme, which was set up in the 2016 EU Joint Arctic Communication. The Arctic Cooperation network now include the four programmes mentioned above, as well as CBC Karelia. This cooperation promotes better coordination and synergies between programmes and projects in the Arctic, leads to more concrete and relevant project outputs that meet the needs of Arctic stakeholders, encourages better stakeholder involvement and facilitates direct implementation of the EU Arctic Policy on the ground. There is potential for the Arctic Cooperation to develop and

include other regional programmes and networks in the Arctic as well, which would further enhance the results.

54. Municipalities, local communities and indigenous peoples in the Arctic face many common challenges. Cooperation across borders can be a useful tool for addressing these, as well as a way to share experience, build knowledge and capacity, and promote trust and people-to-people cooperation.
55. Cooperation on indigenous issues in the Arctic is important to increase awareness and respect for the culture and rights of indigenous peoples. Direct cross-border contact between indigenous peoples also helps to strengthen mutual support and assistance efforts.
56. A fundamental prerequisite for a viable community is that its youth wants to invest its future there. The Government established an advisory youth panel for the White Paper on the Arctic. Key factors highlighted by the youth panel are education and job opportunities, culture and sports, infrastructure, diversity, and local ownership and opportunities in the northern areas of the country.

Final comments

57. Norway is an Arctic state and has a close relationship with the EU through the EEA Agreement. Thus, the EU Arctic policy is particularly relevant for us. We welcome an EU policy based on existing priorities and remain ready to participate in further cooperation and engagement.
58. In the late fall of 2020 the Norwegian Government will present an updated Norwegian policy on the Arctic to the Storting. This will provide further information on Norwegian Arctic policy and includes an update on the geopolitical situation in the Arctic. We hope this will also be useful to the EU and will make an executive summary available in English.