

## **Sustainable European Future and Arctic Security**

*Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Stockholm (Sweden), 09/04/2022*

Climate change has become a security issue and as we march towards a greener future, we have an opportunity to increase security, fight climate change and transform our industry for future generations.

The European Union has a golden opportunity to create and implement necessary reforms in order to create opportunities for the businesses of tomorrow. As the EU is heavily dependent on Russian fossil fuels, structural reforms to incentivize businesses to become carbon-free in order to create a more secure Europe.

As Russia wages war against Ukraine, we must act in several ways to counter these acts and bring peace to Europe. The EU needs to be foresighted on issues regarding the Arctic as there are apparent risks of new conflicts emerging in the region.

### **YEPP calls for:**

- Member States to include forest management in efforts to fight climate change
- The EU to pursue a stronger position in the Arctic and consider Arctic policy a priority for the Union.

### **Arctic Security**

The question of the Arctic holds multiple geoeconomic and geopolitical dimensions. Yet, Arctic strategic and policy considerations have long been a blind spot in the EU and for many European states. Much of the EU's strategy and communications regarding the Arctic has been incohesive, inconsistent and not comprehensive. This is not sustainable. Russia's increased militarization and People's Republic of



HEAD OFFICE  
10 Rue du Commerce  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
+32 2 285 41 63  
yepp@epp.eu

China recent proclaimed right of presence in the region as well as climate change is leaving the region more vulnerable for seabed claims.

Russia has in the last decade aggressively expanded its military presence in the arctic region by holding military exercises, constructing military infrastructure, and placing different types of military units in the region despite that no official borders have been ratified yet. People's Republic of China has made the Northern Sea Route part of its Belt and Roads Initiative and deployed their own icebreakers to clear the route for civilian, and potentially military, purposes.

The territorial question of sovereignty, seabed claims, and sea routes is becoming more pressing by the day as territorial treaties are violated and hydrocarbon resources are becoming more accessible - increasing the risk for conflict. To halt the increasing geopolitical contention in the Arctic, the international treaties on fishing and mineral extraction need to be respected until the Arctic states contesting seabed claims have found agreement.

To further limit geopolitical strain in the Arctic, climate change mitigation is essential. The Arctic region experiences global warming twice as rapidly as the rest of the world, leading to a massive loss in sea ice. For longer periods of time, the retreat of the sea ice alters the Arctic geography to enable new sea routes, causing international contention. One should also note that certain state actors approach the Arctic to exploit its resources and potential sea routes, often with the intention to achieve goals that can only be achieved through continuous global warming.

The issues of territorial claims and climate change in the Arctic do all require a strong and unified response from the EU. European states would enjoy greater economic benefits from a closer European cooperation in the Arctic.

**YEPP calls for:**

- Climate change considerations to be part of all Arctic Strategy.
- All countries active in the Arctic Region to respect and uphold international treaties in place;
- The EU to gain observer status in the Arctic Council to increase its presence and influence in the Arctic region, especially to support EU and EEA states in their Arctic territorial claims;[
- Increased European military capability and presence in a defensive purpose to protect the European Arctic border;
- Increased cooperation between the EU and NATO countries in the Arctic's proximity to prevent military conflict;

**Forestry**

Many people see the forest as this beautiful place, great for hiking, adventures, and mindfulness. The trees, animals, lakes, and people are sharing this fragile eco-system together and for the sake of the climate crisis, we should act aim to target emissions with those means accessible to us. The forest is a good way of capturing carbon emissions, i.e., 70 percent of Sweden's total emissions are captured by Swedish forests. This is much thanks to all private forest-owners and their sustainable forestry. Therefore, we do recognize the forests' potential as a commodity, renewable qualities, and the necessity for long term policy stability for companies and forest owners of Europe.

38 percent of the European Union's land area are covered by forest.<sup>1</sup> In the northern part of Europe this numeral is 54 percent. <sup>2</sup> Sweden has its land area covered up to 69 percent by forest, a figure that has been growing since the year 2000.<sup>3</sup> The forest sector is also a large employer which means that an increase of forests in the EU would create thousands of new jobs – without a need of subsidies or other governmental involvement.

The forestry industry is devoted to the circular green movement of carbon. This means that trees and other vegetation that exists through the photosynthetic can be refined as product of biomass, with little

---

<sup>1</sup> Forest Europe (2020) *State of Europe's Forests 2020* Bratislava: Forest Europe p.32

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 32

<sup>3</sup> SCB (2019) *Skogsmarken dominerar Sverige* <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/miljo/markanvandning/markanvandningen-i-sverige/pong/statistiknyhet/markanvandningen-i-sverige2/> [2022-03-05]



HEAD OFFICE  
10 Rue du Commerce  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
+32 2 285 41 63  
yepp@epp.eu

effect on the environment. This carbon cycle is naturally climate neutral. Our woodlands are therefore an undeveloped source of fossil free commodities that can reduce the effects of climate change around the globe. But this is not possible without sustainable private forestry.

Each individual actor within the forestry industry of each country is the best actor of maintaining this fragile eco-system that is the forest. Most companies that have made a business out of managing our woodlands have been around for a long period of time. This includes family enterprise that has been managing their woodland for generations and the bigger companies active on the world market. These people have the best understanding for the sustainable forest management that is needed to be conducted in their backyard/forest. Therefore, we in YEPP should work for the fact that the silviculture of each country keeps being a national competence within our union.

#### **YEPP Calls for:**

- Member States to privatize public forests in and promote active forestry with Nordic countries serving as examples;
- The EU to acknowledge that the forest industry plays a crucial role in our joint effort of managing the global climate crisis;
- Member States to promote active and sustainable the forest management by their private forest-owners;
- Strengthening knowledge of forest management across the EU;
- Extending the knowledge that well-managed forests tend to be more efficient in creating biodiversity rather than a government owned forests.

#### **A Green Industry Transition**

In the wake of the Paris Agreement, COP 26, and other international agreements prior, the focus on sustainable environmental- and climate policy is at the forefront of the European political agenda. Moving toward sustainable growth and making more from less are long held virtues of center-right policy makers. This does, however, contrast the dominating narratives professed by many green- and socialist politicians in Europe. Concepts like de-growth, downsizing, rewilding, anti-capitalism, and



HEAD OFFICE  
10 Rue du Commerce  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
+32 2 285 41 63  
yepp@epp.eu

anthropocentric criticism commonly professed by these movements must be shunned and replaced by alternatives which protect personal freedom, property rights and free market values.

The EU provides an excellent framework for instituting such change, one of which being the European Emissions Trading System (ETS). Businesses and industries have shown great willingness to make a sustainable transition. However, they lack many of the tools and legal frameworks to do so in a manner in which fair competition is preserved and predictable risk-mitigating policy is ensured. It is only within such a market innovation and sustainable business models have the means to thrive.

A cap and trade on emissions in addition to domestic carbon taxes have proven to be cheap and efficient methods of reducing emissions. Furthermore, in recent years great strides have been made in the development of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology where some projects have been shown to be commercially viable - an example being Stockholm Exergi in Sweden. The ability to not only reduce, but even remove atmospheric carbon will be vital to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Bearing in mind the importance of the EU being a global frontrunner in the green transition without compromising its industrial, financial or energy relevance in the world, we must recognise the possible difficulties in such combination highlights the importance of targeted reforms.

**YEPP calls for:**

- The green transition must take place with preserved competitiveness by enabling growth through fitting incentives. Empowering innovation and new business models such as, but not limited to, Carbon capture and utilization (CCU);
- Allow for flexibility in sectors to ensure cost-effective emissions reduction and CCS / CCU;
- Initiate a life cycle analysis for all energy sources and means of transport within the EU (including solar, wind, biomass, batteries, nuclear power, hydrogen);



HEAD OFFICE  
10 Rue du Commerce  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
+32 2 285 41 63  
yepp@epp.eu

- The European Union to be careful not creating too strong incentives for industries to move outside the EU to bypass ambitious emission targets;
- Secure access to critical raw materials in order to ensure raw material security in an increasingly unstable geopolitical time;
- The European Union to ensure access to important raw materials and production of crucial components within the Union in order to decrease geopolitical risks.

### Conclusion

The EU and its member states have a great opportunity and a responsibility to achieve several important goals through structural reforms and strategic decisions. A safer EU depends on creating opportunities and incentives for businesses to become carbon-free as well as ensuring strategic superiority in the Arctic region. The Youth European People's Party calls on the European Union as a whole and the European governments to act on our calls for a safer and greener Europe.