

Reviewing the EU's Arctic Policy

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in The Hague, Netherlands. 13/04/2024

Recognizing that:

- The status of the Arctic has not been clarified in a special treaty and therefore amid uncertainty it may develop into a source of future tensions¹.
- The key document guiding the EU's Arctic policy is the Joint Communication on A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic published on 13th of October 2021².
- The illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 was a turning point in the EU's relationship with Russia. In addition, the regional cooperation with Russia in the Arctic has been for the most part suspended.
- The Russian attack was a catalyst for the Nordic countries of Finland and Sweden to apply for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Finland became a member of the alliance on 4th of April 2023³.
- The Arctic region has an increasingly important role in Russia's foreign, military, and economic policy⁴. Also, the People's Republic of China identifies itself as a near-Arctic state⁵.
- The EU's main interest is to ensure a safe, stable, sustainable, peaceful, and prosperous Arctic⁶. The EU aims to ensure peaceful cooperation and mitigation of the effects of climate change in the Arctic.
- The Arctic states have the primary responsibility to respond to the challenges within the territories but some issues, such as environmental questions, can

¹ TUIC Akademi, The Legal Status of the Arctic Region and Analysis of the Russia-USA Competition Under International Law: <https://www.tuicakademi.org/the-legal-status-of-the-arctic-region-and-analysis-of-the-russia-usa-competition-under-international-law/>

² European Commission, A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2_en_act_part1_v7.pdf

³ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Finland's membership in NATO: <https://um.fi/finlands-membership-in-nato>

⁴ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Russia in the Arctic-A Critical Examination: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/03/29/russia-in-arctic-critical-examination-pub-84181>

⁵ Istituto Affari Internazionali, China's Push-in Strategy in the Arctic and Its Impact on Regional Governance: <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/chinas-push-strategy-arctic-and-its-impact-regional-governance>

⁶ European External Action Service, The EU in the Arctic: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-arctic_en

be better addressed through regional or multilateral cooperation. The EU acts in the Arctic for instance with funding and programs.

Acknowledging that:

- The Arctic could be the next focal point of geopolitical competition. The role of the Arctic increases as the interest in Arctic resources and transport routes intensifies⁷.
- The Russian invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 has changed the geopolitical situation of Europe. Russia is perceived as a more relevant threat to the security of Europe than before the Russian full-scale operation.
- The expansion of NATO to the Nordic countries of Finland and Sweden is a shift in the geopolitical setting of the region⁸.
- Further cooperation between Russia and the People's Republic of China in the Arctic could challenge the EU's interests in the region.
- The ever-changing geopolitical situation, both inside and outside of the Arctic, requires continuous efforts by the EU to secure its interests in the area.

YEPP calls on:

- The EU to update its Arctic Policy to answer to the geopolitical movements that have taken place.
- The EU to assess its Arctic Policy in relation to NATO's Arctic Policy and to recognize the different responsibilities between the actors.
- The EU to secure its interests of peace, protecting the environment, and ensuring the rights of the indigenous population in the Arctic.
- The EU to support innovative technologies, research programmes and Arctic mobility projects to guarantee its competitiveness in the region.

⁷ European Commission, A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2_en_act_part1_v7.pdf

⁸ .The European Parliamentary Research Service, Russia's war on Ukraine: Implications for the Arctic: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/fi/document/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)754604](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/fi/document/EPRS_BRI(2024)754604)