



2021-11-12

The European Commission
The European External Action Services
The European Parliament
The Swedish Government
The European Parliament

Europaforum Northern Sweden welcomes 'A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic'

Europaforum Northern Sweden (EFNS) is a network of politicians on local and regional level from Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen och Västernorrland. EFNS is a knowledge arena to aimed to analyze EU policies and discuss how they affect Northern Sweden. EFNS monitors European issues in order to influence EU legislation, EU strategies and action programmes, as well as the EU Budget. The objective of EFNS is to safeguard the interests of northern Sweden in EU policies with communication aimed towards both the European institutions and the national level.

EFNS welcomes the updated EU Arctic Policy launched on October 13, 2021. The European Union is an important actor on Arctic issues together with its regional partners and stakeholders in the European Arctic of North Sweden, East and North Finland, as well as the close neighbours in North Norway. EFNS welcomes the recognition of the NSPA network of elected representatives from the regions of the European Arctic as a constructive dialogue partner for the implementation of the policy, together with the Arctic Mayors Forum, the Arctic Economic Council, and the Sámi Council.

In line with the previous policy position paper on the revision of the EU Arctic Policy adopted by EFNS on November 6, 2020, EFNS would like to share the following views.

- EFNS welcomes the recognition of the NSPA network as a constructive dialogue partner, and the EU engagement with a broader approach to Arctic challenges.
- EFNS believes the EU should continue to use its soft power to be a relevant partner in the Arctic by providing regions with adapted support schemes and tailor-made policies.
- EFNS welcomes the EU to invest in the future of people living in the Arctic and to promote sustainable use of natural resources to contribute to the European Green Deal.

EFNS welcomes EU's broader approach to the Arctic, as the northern territories faces a wide range of complex challenges covering several different policy areas. The revised EU integrated policy for the Arctic is more comprehensive than before with concrete commitments for sustainable regional development. However, EFNS would like to underline that the Arctic needs to be embraced by the EU in a greater holistic manner than the new policy manages to deliver. The knowledge and understanding of the rich diversity of environments, cultures, peoples, businesses, and perspectives needs to be developed further in close dialogue with Arctic stakeholders.

The EU should continue to use its soft power to be a relevant partner in the Arctic and can do so well by investing in the European Arctic, improving conditions for growth in the EU regions and the neighbouring areas. EU has great potential to be a facilitator for the Arctic to be a peaceful, sustainable, and thriving place, by investing in research, collaboration, and development on a people-to-people, researcher-to-researcher, and business-to-business basis across borders in the European Arctic, whilst also giving EU the needed legitimacy concerning the larger Arctic.

It is crucial that the European Arctic can be an attractive place for people to live in and give stability to the region and beyond. The regional economies remain vulnerable due to demographic challenges and the lack of own critical mass, although the European Arctic has comparatively populated and advanced communities with Arctic know-how and ability to deliver smart solutions on many global challenges, as well as highly competitive businesses in sustainable tourism.



Nonetheless, adapted support and tailor-made policies to fit the Arctic challenges are still needed to further unlock the potential for regional diversification and economic growth. Additionally, social sustainability and inclusion in the Arctic need to be promoted through continuous public support for education, culture, health, and social innovations.

The increasing demand for raw materials due to the green shift in technology will increase the pressure on sustainable extraction and refinement, all for which the regions in the European Arctic are at the global frontline with skills and competence for resilience throughout the whole value chain. The sustainable use of natural resources, such as forests and minerals, is a precondition for attractive livelihoods and need to be in line with the highest environmental, social and governance standards. The utilisation of raw materials is not only to the benefit of the inhabitants of the Arctic but contributes to the realisation of the European Green Deal and profits all of Europe.

EFNS welcomes the TEN-T corridor extensions to improve transport connectivity in the European Arctic and beyond. The green industrial transition with investments of more than 100 billion euros planned for the next decade in northern Sweden, needs to be met with fast development of sustainable transport modes to accelerate the shift from road to rail and maritime transport. Equally important in remote areas with low population density is well-functioning aviation to guarantee regional accessibility, and northern Sweden is in the forefront of developing sustainable aviation. The TEN-T corridor extensions connects the EU to the emerging Northern Sea Route, which in turn creates new conditions and opportunities for shipping, fishing, and energy extraction, while reducing the transport time of goods significantly. However, unpredictable seas, severe climate conditions, and lack of infrastructure in the northern territories continues to offer many structural obstacles for economic development.

EFNS welcomes the EU commitment to address digital imbalances in the sparsely populated northern regions. The expansion of regional digital networks connects communities and facilitates the development of digital services such as distance studies, e-health, electronic commerce, tourism, and knowledge-intensive businesses, as well as digitalising industries and boosting productivity. The access to reliable broadband also bridges innovation systems independent of distance, linking businesses with academia and the public sector enabling smart specialisation and regional development. The need for continuous public support to invest in ICT and promote digital cohesion is critical for businesses to stay competitive and to improve the conditions for people living in the European Arctic.

EFNS welcomes the EU emphasis on research, knowledge, and science for continued sustainable development of the Arctic that is present throughout EU Integrated Policy for the Arctic. However, the policy has a narrow approach that captures the EU contribution to polar and climate research but overlooks the wider scope on research linked closer to regional development, such as, social sciences, forestry, energy, food, creative and cultural industries, indigenous issues, raw materials, and space infrastructure. The research actors in the European Arctic should be involved more in the dialogue with the EU on shaping and implementing Arctic research policy.

The EU needs a continuous ambitious investment policy for the Arctic to boost innovation, create growth and jobs, competence, and skills, increase accessibility and connectivity, while transforming industries and promoting sustainability through more multilateral cooperation and multi-level governance. The European Structural- and Investment Funds and state-aid regulations have been, and will continue to be, key instruments for EU to facilitate these actions together with the stakeholders in the European Arctic.



The new EU instruments for digital and green transition launched through the Next Generation EU must be better adapted to the territorial conditions of the Arctic regions to have a meaningful impact. Additional financial possibilities such as Invest EU, possibly facilitated through the Arctic Investment Platform, needs to be explored further to cater the major investment needs for sustainable development, industrial transformation, and economic growth.

North Sweden is ready to take a global lead in the green transition, building on the statements presented in the communication. In the light of this, EFNS welcomes the new EU Arctic policy and looks forward to a continued and deepened dialogue with the EU on how to implement the policy together, raise awareness and build a peaceful, prosperous, connected, and attractive Arctic.

Adopted by Europaforum Northern Sweden on November 12, 2021, Brussels.

Glenn Nordlund (S)

Ordförande EFNS
Region Västernorrland

Jonny Lundin (C)

Region Västernorrland

Erik Lövgren (S)

Kommunförbundet
Västernorrland

Åsa Ågren Wikström (M)

Vice ordförande EFNS
Region Västerbotten

Rickard Carstedt (S)

Region Västerbotten

Ann Åström (S)

Region Västerbotten

Nils-Olov Lindfors (C)

Region Norrbotten

Britta Flinkfeldt (S)

Norrbottens Kommuner

Anders Josefsson (M)

Norrbottens Kommuner

Elise Ryder Wikén (M)

Region Jämtland Härjedalen

Robert Uitto (S)

Region Jämtland Härjedalen

Daniel Danielsson (C)

Kommunerna i Jämtlands län

Jonas Andersson (S)

Kommunerna i Jämtlands län