North Norway and the EU’s Arctic Policy

November 2012

In June 2012, the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy published a joint communication, titled ‘Developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region: Progress since 2008 and next steps’.

In response to this, the North Norway European Office in Brussels, on behalf of the political leadership in the three northernmost counties of Norway, would like to highlight a few points with regards to the content of the communication and the role of the EU in the Norwegian part of the Arctic region.

The European Commission defines the Arctic as everything above the Arctic Circle. As indicated on the map above, the Arctic Circle includes North Norway, a highly developed and inhabited region. Given that North Norway is, together with North-West Russia, the only part of the European Arctic to fall under the Arctic littoral area, we believe it is of particular importance that the European Commission takes into consideration that:

- Any EU Policy for the Arctic region should be made with the intention of contributing to sustainable growth and development in the Arctic region.
- Maintaining liveable, sustainable, developed communities in the European Arctic should be of utmost importance to the EU.
- Dialogue with, and emphasis on, the regional political and administrative level in the Norwegian Arctic should be essential to the EU for developing legitimacy and establishing itself as an Arctic actor.
- Knowledge and competence building are crucial for the local communities in the Arctic region.
  - The North Norwegian Arctic is very different from the North American, Greenlandic or Asian Arctic in terms of climate, population, industrial activity and GDP per capita.
  - Almost half a million people inhabit North Norway, which represents 10% of the Norwegian population. The region spans from modern European cities and advanced industry to rural areas and indigenous people’s communities.
- Promoting and encouraging local competence and economic growth throughout North Norway will be important to maintain a responsible Norwegian presence in the area. This presence is crucial for Europe at large in terms of managing natural resources like hydrocarbons, fish stocks and minerals, and fostering a balanced and practical approach towards North-West Russia.

On this basis, we would like to highlight some aspects that need to be elaborated further, or were absent from the June 2012 Communication, concerning North Norway and the EU Policy for the Arctic. This will be achieved while addressing the initial three sections as put forward in the Communication.

Part 1 – ‘Knowledge’

Arctic Competence

The most important factor for development in the North Norwegian and the European Arctic is competence. How to establish, maintain, and expand competence in the region, across numerous fields, will determine much of the trajectory in North Norway in the next 20 – 30 years. Research should therefore focus not only on climate change and ice conditions, but also on the societal and technological development occurring onshore as well as offshore. Moreover, respect must also be paid to the value of traditional knowledge of Arctic indigenous peoples in the further development of the Arctic region.

Norwegian participation in the new framework programmes for research and innovation (Horizon 2020) and competitiveness (COSME) will enable close cooperation between the EU and North Norway. Specifying, improving and targeting this funding further should be of interest to the EU, as well as the Arctic region. It is also important to consider making use of Arctic research institutions when conducting research directed towards the Arctic region, so as to ensure that Arctic competence is developed and maintained in the region.

- The University of Tromsø is the largest and oldest research institution in the region, with 10,000 international and Norwegian students. Northern and Arctic issues, as well as maritime issues, are essential research areas at the university.

- The University of Nordland is a newly established institution with its main campus in Bodø and a total of 6,000 students. Economy, business, and aquaculture are fields of expertise at the University.

- Finmark University College is located in Alta and offers study programs on Arctic entrepreneurship and innovation, regional development and Northern issues in Norwegian and English.

- Nordland Technology University College, situated in Narvik, is the largest in North Norway in technology disciplines, comprising the Cold Climate Technology Centre.

- The High North Centre for Climate and Environment (FRAM), located in Tromsø, is a renowned research institution comprising multiple academic institutes, such as the Norwegian Polar Institute. Additionally, the High North Centre for Business, located in Bodø, the Nordland Research Institute and the Northern Research Institute (NORUT) are invaluable institutions providing specific knowledge in areas essential for the development in the Arctic.

Some specific points of importance to North Norwegian Arctic competence are:

1. Regional oil and gas development
   - Oil and gas activities in North Norway have been underway for decades due to favourable climatic conditions and shallow waters containing a vast amount of hydrocarbons. Of particular importance are the developments in the Barents Sea and North Sea. These activities are conducted with the utmost focus on safety and sustainability, contributing to growth and development for local and regional communities in the North.
   - As maritime traffic and petroleum activities increase along the coast of North Norway, developing local and regional competence centres for safety and preparedness based on established institutions will prove essential.
   - The new competence centre for Arctic Petroleum in North Norway should also be of relevance for Horizon 2020-programmes, as international agreements on search and rescue and oil spill response progress.
2. **Marine environment and aquaculture**
   - North Norway provides high level education and research within the aquaculture, seafood and biological science industries. In particular, the two universities in Tromsø and Nordland are regarded as world leaders in these fields and their competence is pivotal for future marine industry developments in the Arctic.

3. **Developing raw material resources efficiently and sustainably**
   - There is currently a great gap between relevant competence on mineral extraction and processing and projected future needs as the region develops further. By participating in joint projects at the European level, such as the Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials, Arctic actors can exchange information and competence across topics.
   - The EU should also take into account that raw material activities must provide local benefits.

4. **Satellite systems and monitoring needs**
   - North Norway strongly agrees on the need for monitoring and observational systems that provide reliable information about the changing conditions in the region.
   - Institutions in the North, such as the University of Tromsø, have developed a specific competence on satellite monitoring in relation to the GMES-programme. Additionally, the Barents Watch system is an important tool for Arctic surveillance.

5. **Societal change and community development**
   - As the presence of natural resource industries increase in North Norway, knowledge about how this influences societies, and how one can maintain a high quality of life, is critical.

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**Part 2 – ‘Responsibility’**

**Regional and local growth and development**

Industrial activity and regional development in North Norway is conducted in accordance with the precautionary principle, with the highest regard for environmental safety and the society at large. Making sure that tools and measures are in place to promote continued growth is also essential for the EU to maintain and develop its legitimacy as an Arctic actor.

**Fostering growth**

- Ensuring that Regional Aid Guidelines (RAG) under the next programming period (2014-2020) enables regions in the North with special characteristics and challenges to use appropriate mechanisms to foster innovation and growth, is of prime importance.

- We recognise and welcome the Communication’s emphasis on mechanisms that target regional and local development in the European Arctic, through funds like the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund, as well as the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) and the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENI).

- It should, however, be in the interests of the EU to use ETC programmes, like the trans-national Northern Periphery, cross-border Nord and Botnia-Atlantica, and ENPI Kolarctic, to contribute even further to regional development through targeted funding and an emphasis on Arctic topics in the next programming period.
Seafood Industries and Marine Production

- Seafood and aquaculture constitute important industries for inhabitants in the Norwegian Arctic, and play a strong role in ensuring economic growth in the Arctic communities. Benefits for local communities ought to be ensured on the basis of these industries and their extended value chains.

- Norwegian management of fisheries is regarded as an example of best practice, and experiences from the successful cooperation with neighbouring states ought to be used in future development in the Arctic.

Tourism

- Tourism is an important business in North Norway as it contributes to employment and economic development throughout the region.

Infrastructure

- As the EU develops its transport infrastructure network (TEN-T) further, the link to the European Arctic region needs to be improved. We welcome the corridor from Luleå to Narvik in the proposal for the Core Network of TEN-T.

- Corridors North-South, in terms of maritime shipping, roads, and railroads, will be essential to bringing goods from the High North to the European markets. Specialised products, raw materials and fish are just some of the goods that Europe relies upon, as highlighted by the imports of iron ore from the Barents region through ports in North Norway. The Finnish initiatives on new railway lines from Rovaniemi serve as an example, with the potential to create new regional opportunities.

- Additionally, East-West corridors are becoming important to promote cooperation across borders for businesses and regions alike in North Norway, North Sweden, North Finland and North-West Russia. The traditional North-South thinking needs to be supplemented with this new approach to modern infrastructure development in the European Arctic. Here, the work done in the new Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDPTL) is of particular interest.

- The development of the Single European Sky (SES) and a more effective European airspace, which covers most of the European Arctic, presents an opportunity for the EU. By making use of the highly developed competence on such matters that exists in North Norway, Arctic surveillance cooperation between the EU and North Norway can be maximised.

Part 3 – ‘Engagement’

Regional dialogue

As the EU aspires to a role in the Arctic development through bodies like the Arctic Council, ensuring that the regional level is represented and listened to is a key factor. The Arctic itself is only comprised of regions, and particularly in Norway, these are strong and promising, with specific interests that sometimes supplement those at the national level.

- The June 2012 Communication emphasises that:

  “It is critically important that the views of Arctic inhabitants are taken into account on issues of economic development. The EU will look at appropriate ways of ensuring that the representatives of Arctic indigenous peoples are informed and consulted on the EU policies that affect them, and are given appropriate platforms to present their particular concerns to EU institutions and audiences.”
It is indeed critically important that the views of the Arctic inhabitants are considered when developing policies that influence our societies at large. Finding appropriate ways to include the regional level, as well as representatives of Arctic indigenous peoples, should also be incorporated into the future EU Policy for the Arctic.

- We suggest that the EU works towards creating a forum where regional and local stakeholders can interact with the EU-level on Arctic topics.
- We would also like to suggest that such a regional dialogue can complement the already existing cooperation in the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and other appropriate arenas.

The region of North Norway would appreciate your consideration of these opinions and pieces of information as you continue your work on the development of an Arctic Policy for the European Union. The regional governments also appreciate the European Union’s newfound interest in these areas. The chance to develop our region in a sustainable and appropriate fashion is of utmost importance to the population of North Norway. Continuing the dialogue with the European Commission is of high value to us, as the Arctic remains a key item on the public agenda.

For any questions or further information, please contact the North Norway European Office located in Brussels. We look forward to continuing a close and positive dialogue.

Yours Sincerely,

Odd Eriksen
President of County Government
Nordland County Council

Pia Svensgaard
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Troms County Council

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The North Norway European Office
North Norway European Office was established 1 January 2005 and is owned by the three northernmost counties in Norway: Nordland, Troms and Finnmark. The office is located in Brussels and serves as a door opener and an arena maker for Northern Norwegian actors in relation to the European Union. The office holds an informational role, with particular focus on the European Arctic policy, regional policy, current industrial policies and Northern European cooperation.

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