The Council of Oulu Region is submitting a proposal for candidacy to the Chair of the Arctic task force of the Baltic Sea Commission for 2023–2024. Our candidate is Mr. Jari Nahkanen, member of the Board of the Council of Oulu Region.

Jari Nahkanen is very familiar with all the crucial policy sectors in the Baltic Sea Area, and he has been initiating the Arctic task force. Jari Nahkanen has very good contacts to national and European decision makers.

The supporting civil servant for Jari Nahkanen is Manager of International Affairs Hanna Honkamäkilä.

The Baltic Sea region is a powerfully developing region of well-being and prosperity. The Oulu region in northern Finland is a hub connecting the Arctic and the Baltic regions. The Arctic region is important in view of climate change, raw materials, energy as well as geostrategic influence.

What happens in the Arctic doesn’t stay in the Arctic. We are all concerned. But sharing concerns is not enough. We need concrete actions. We must increase our understanding and knowledge about the Arctic region, its history, culture and people, nature and ecosystems, economy, and technologies.

Given the current geopolitical and security situation in Europe, we need to ensure that our critical infrastructure in the Arctic Region is secure and resilient for the people. We need to enhance preparedness, the response and regional cross-border co-operation. It includes technological, physical, and digital infrastructure.

The Arctic region is strategic and should be followed by enhanced EU involvement in multilevel co-operation. EU is raising the profile of Arctic matters in the EU’s external relations by establishing a European Commission Office in Greenland. But EU should look the Arctic regions as its own region and increase the involvement of the local people using existing tools and EU programs and deeper involvement.

Pauli Harju
Region Mayor
Oulu Regional Council