

## CPMR Baltic Sea Commission contribution to 2020 EU Public Consultation on the Revision of the Arctic Policy

### Introduction

A substantial part of the Baltic Sea Region is referred to as the European Arctic, comprised of the northernmost regions in Finland, Sweden and Norway. Since the Arctic is a part of the Baltic Sea Region, their development is closely interlinked. In a Policy Position adopted by its General Assembly in 2017, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) already affirmed its commitment to work closely with Member States, the Arctic Council and the European Union for the sustainable development of the Arctic. With this contribution to the EU Public Consultation, the CPMR BSC recalls its commitment to continue a constructive dialogue with the European Union and also Arctic stakeholders on how to develop the Arctic in a sustainable way that benefits the Baltic Sea Region and the European Union. The CPMR BSC supports a strong involvement of regional authorities in the development of Arctic Policy.

### 1. Arctic development concerns us all and obliges us to act

- The impacts of climate change are particularly pronounced in the Arctic. The northern regions are warming more than the global average. However, the causes are often linked to actions taking place outside the Arctic region. Also, the effects of a shifting Arctic climate are felt beyond the Arctic with global environmental, economic, and social implications. For example, climate change intensifies storms and the melting of the polar ice caps which lead to rising sea levels and increasing coastal floods. The melting of the polar ice caps also has a negative impact on the Earth's climate since the Arctic sea ice also reflects the sun's heat back into space and thus cools the Earth's climate. Another issue linked to global warming is the reduction of Arctic permafrost. As the climate gets warmer, the soil does not freeze as deep as it should. The consequence is thawing soil, which may be weaker, and the release of methane, which contributes to an increased rate of global warming. Also, the CPMR BSC considers that efforts to reduce black carbon emissions should be strengthened since it accelerates the melting of the sea ice in the Arctic, thus speeding up global warming. Cutting down black carbon emissions is essential to combating climate change, to save the Arctic and the globe.
- Arctic environmental, social and economic state of play is closely linked with the Baltic Sea Region, the European Union and overall, all parts of the world. The Arctic situation demands overall attention from the European Union. The EU has a significant role to play in climate issues, as well as the ability to support the regions to manage the impact of climate change and promote sustainable growth, especially via the new Agenda for the Green Deal. The Arctic dimension should be integrated in the new Green Deal Agenda.



- The focus on Arctic Policy should also be on promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency. Integration of renewable resources and supporting technologies into communities' power generation capacity has the potential to generate local employment, decrease air pollution, and reduce dependency on fossil energy sources. Regions that manage to offer low-carbon energy solutions will attract the CO<sub>2</sub>-aware industry of the future, which represents a potential for economic development in Arctic regions. Furthermore, the potential of using Arctic solar and wind large-scale power generation should be further developed as sources of renewable energies, such as hydrogen.

## **2. The European Union must step up its engagement for the sustainable development of the Arctic and beyond**

- New transport routes, supplies of raw materials, sensitive environments and current security policies make the Arctic of major interest to the European Union but also to the international community. The complex geopolitical situation requires strategies that enable multi-level cooperation to safeguard a safe, stable, sustainable and prosperous living environment.
- To maintain the Arctic as a low-tension area, the EU should increase its presence in the Arctic through investments for sustainable development, as well as encourage more people-to-people, research-to-research and business-to-business cooperation.
- In terms of the visibility of Arctic Policy, developments have been in the right direction in recent years. The open and transparent stakeholder's consultation process on the Arctic (2017-2019) that was established by the European Commission was important to enable dialogue between a wide range of actors. The European Union has issued a total of three Arctic communications, the most recent of which was in 2016.
- Besides providing support in key investments areas in the Arctic, the European Union must continue to play a major role in promoting dialogue and cooperation between a wide range of public and private actors on how to develop the Arctic and promote better cohesive support for regional development. This should continue and be strengthened in the future, and the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission recalls its commitment to be part of this dialogue.
- The European Union must continue to have a role in the development of a coordinated Arctic Policy which should be a tailor-made policy to fit the Arctic challenges for enabling a sustainable place, and for the sakes of communities living in the Arctic and beyond. The CPMR BSC believes that a more prosperous Arctic will benefit the Baltic Sea Region, since it is a part of it, and overall, the European Union's development.

## **3. Multi-level governance and a strong role of the regions are needed to promote development in the Arctic Region**

- The CPMR BSC welcomes the current public consultation on the Arctic as it enables not only regional authorities but also a wide range of actors to be part of the development of the future Arctic Policy. It is important that regional and local authorities help to identify key investment priorities and ways to develop a sustainable Arctic Policy that benefits all. The CPMR BSC also



underlines the importance of including Indigenous people in the dialogue and design of future EU actions and policies related to the Arctic.

- The CPMR BSC believes that regions at sub-national level play a pivotal role in the development of Arctic Policy, as they are the focal point for cooperation patterns, are close to citizens and are responsible for regional development. The on-going dialogue on future investment priorities for the Arctic is a positive action that promotes subsidiarity and multilevel governance.
- The CPMR BSC is convinced that there can be strong synergies between the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and an integrated EU Policy for the Arctic. The Regional Authorities that are part of the Baltic Sea area and the European Arctic will have to relate and foster territorial cooperation and seize opportunities to further develop transnational cooperation between regions in both the Baltic and the Arctic. The CPMR BSC is calling on regional stakeholders in both geographic areas to enhance their cooperation in order to foster the effectiveness and possible spill-over effects of European funding.
- The CPMR BSC welcomes the EU's emphasis on deepening the dialogue on sustainable regional development with the help of EU instruments such as the European Structural and Investment Fund, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Interregional programmes (Interreg), programmes for cross-border cooperation with Russia (CBC), Northern Dimension Partnerships, and other financial instruments for more efficient and focused investments in research, innovation, connectivity and accessibility are decisive instruments for continuous multilateral efforts.

#### **4. Opportunities for research, technology, innovation and promoting accessibility for sustainable growth in the Arctic and beyond**

- Increased support for strategic investments in knowledge, technology and innovation is essential for sustainable development of the Arctic and beyond through multilateral cooperation and multi-level governance. The CPMR BSC wants to highlight key investment areas, the need for investments in ICT for increased connectivity, integration of regions and sustainable Arctic communities. Investments in broadband enable the public and the private sectors to provide services in distant, sparsely populated areas with harsh climates.
- The CPMR BSC stresses the significant role of the EU in promoting research and innovation related to the Arctic. It contributes to develop the businesses and industries of the region and deliver a great European added value in the Arctic, via programmes such as Horizon 2020. This should be strengthened in the new programming period. The EU should foster collaboration between universities, businesses, and research actors of the EU Arctic and beyond, including the Baltic Sea Region, to tackle major challenges. The CPMR BSC also emphasises the importance of applying a broad scope of Arctic research, understood as all research activities that contribute to sustainable development and the benefits of the people of the Arctic, and not only Polar research. Furthermore, the establishment of a Baltic Sea Region ecosystem based on smart specialisation strategies should benefit the regional development of the EU Arctic and be seen as a potential to exploit further innovation and cooperation opportunities.



- The CPMR BSC stresses the importance in investing in human capital and communities in the Arctic Region to enable the development of this area and maintain specific know-how. Fostering entrepreneurial discovery and innovative process is crucial in the Arctic Region, as well as knowledge and technology exchange between different business sectors across borders.
- The CPMR BSC demands that sufficient support for safer and more sustainable shipping and maritime technologies should be encouraged further by the EU in the Arctic Region.
- Accessibility and connectivity are essential for the development of the Arctic. The CPMR BSC welcomes the extension of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean (ScanMed) and North Sea-Baltic Sea (NSB) corridors northwards and with that a connection to the European Arctic under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and the possibility of working with other regions and countries to implement European Transport Policy. The CPMR BSC would also like to stress the importance of synchronised implementation and geographical adaptation of the Rail Freight Corridors (RFC) and core network corridors, to achieve the best possible coordination of rail freight transport.
- The CPMR BSC would like to highlight that the TEN-T Regulation needs to be optimised to achieve the greatest European added value. The comprehensive network is in this context important to ensure access to the EU's internal market for all regions, but in the Arctic, there are several important links and routes missing. Therefore, in order to increase the efficiency of interaction between different modes of transport in the overall network – based on real transport functionality – they also need to be complemented by important routes, terminals and ports that are not currently TEN-T-classified. Investment in these ports and terminals would accelerate the transfer of goods to environmentally friendly modes of transport, in line with the ambitious climate targets of the Green Deal.



The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in Geographical Commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies. One of these Commissions is the Baltic Sea Commission, made up of 20 Regions from Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Germany.



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