**Climate Change and Future Scenarios**

**in the Arctic Region**

**ROUND TABLE**

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**The European Union and the Arctic - The long march northwards**

The interaction of the EU (an entity with its center of gravity in mid-latitudes) with the Arctic has so far been a long, winding and complex process, which continues to develop.

1. The genesis

For a long time, the EU’s interaction with the Arctic was, scarce, occasional and often with negative connotations.

Greenland, the only really Arctic territory ever part of the EU, acceded to the EU in 1973, together with DK, but, soon after home rule in 1979, decided in a 1982 referendum to leave the EU.

In 1995 the accession of Finland and Sweden gave the EU a window north. Northern Dimension created in 1999 gave the occasion for a so called “Arctic window”, soon left somewhat aside as the relations with Russia became the main element of the ND.

In 1998, realization of threats of security implications of climate change suggested the opportunity to develop an EU Arctic policy , together with the realization that a consistent approach between internal and external action, linked to an integrated maritime policy, was needed to frame exploitation of resources and environmental concerns.

1. The elaboration of a policy

First document articulating a relatively clear approach to Arctic issues was the 2008 Commission communication (communications are acts not legally binding – expression of views and proposals for action), themost organic document so far with 3 priorities (*Protecting and preserving Arctic in unison with its population; Promoting sustainable use of resources; Contributing to enhanced arctic multilateral governance* each accompanied by proposals for action

2009 the EUCouncilof ministers followed with conclusions (acts not legally binding but expression of unanimous political agreement of Member States) broadly endorsing the Commission’s view

2011 European Parliament resolution (no binding value but giving political impulsion) more vague about priorities

Smooth going towards EU’s acceptance as an observer in the Arctic Council, as the EU had requested, was derailed by a complex of elements creating friction or unease for some AC members, the most visible being the EU’s adoption in 2009 of a ban on imports of seal products,

In an effort to gain acceptance, a second Commission communication (2012) contained a review of what it had done for the Arctic, plus rather general and vague commitments, expressed under the catchwords “*Knowledge, responsibility and engagement”*)

2014 Parliament resolution and new Council conclusions, were equally relatively general. The Council however gave a precise instruction to“*present proposals for the further development of a coherent and integrated Arctic policy by december 2015*

1. The present situation:

EU’s in the Arctic is not yet a fully-fledged policy. There are however elements for a policy or,in other words, there is an Arctic dimension in several EU policies

The EU is nevertheless already an important actor in the Arctic :

- it has legal competences in Arctic-relevant sectors such as environment, fisheries, transport, energy, competences sometimes exclusive, often shared with member States, which have to follow agreed lines (and this applies to the two ArcticEU Member States as well as in several cases to EEA states Iceland and Norway)

- it is a main actor in international for a in fields of importance for the Arctic, particularly climate change (EU has still a leading role internationally, not much for what it can deliver, but certainly in comparison with others),and , for ex, biodiversity, Stockholm and Minamata conventions.

- it gives a strong financial contribution to Arctic research, (in the period 2007/2013 20 M euro per year) . It also funds lavishly (1,4 billion euro for the same period) regional policies in the North, including the Arctic areas and particularly north-east Russia, under regional cooperation.

1. The EU and the Arctic Council

On both EU and AC side, there appear to be difficulties of communication and misunderstandings , fuelling a certain mistrust. This may be in part due to the particular, a-typical, nature of the two organisations. The EU is an organization of regional economic integration , a definition which makes it differ from other international organisations. The AC seems to be in a state of transition, from policy–shaping to policy- making organ, and, also following the admission of powerful observers ,may find it difficult to maintain the present structure and absolute primacy of its members.

This being said, the EU is certainly able and willing to make a contribution to the AC, and the AC will be well advised to take it up and use its influence and know-how to contribute to shaping EU’s Arctic policy and action. The fact that the Arctic is not and will probably not become for the EU a mainstream policy means scope for more flexibility.

1. EU/Arctic : what is needed /new departure?

-clear understanding /vision from the three EU institutions on the role of the EU and where it should be exerted. Priorities as clear as possible must be indicated. Arctic Member States, and other Arctic states, can help in this process

- need to work to obtain greater legitimization from below, stakeholders and above all Arctic inhabitants and indigenous peoples. Fostering participation in decision-making, facing the problem of the exploitation of living resources

- concentrate action and resources where it is most needed but also where it can be most effective.