

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000451/25
to the Commission
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(3 February 2025)**

Subject: Re-evaluating EU engagement in the Arctic: addressing strategic challenges and geopolitical tensions

The Arctic region faces significant political challenges. Competition between major geopolitical players, notably Russia, China, and the United States, is becoming increasingly pronounced. This situation highlights the complexities of regional geopolitics and the urgent need for the EU to re-evaluate its Arctic policy. As the EU emerges as a geopolitical actor and amid the rising tensions exemplified by recent discussions concerning Greenland, it is crucial for the EU to establish a strong presence in the Arctic.

The previous joint communication on the Arctic (JOIN(2021)0027) reflects an outdated view of Arctic exceptionalism. Given the current geopolitical landscape, it is essential to increase Europe's engagement in the Arctic and support the concept of a 'European Arctic'.

1. Given the Arctic's strategic significance amid the rivalry between major political powers, when does the Commission intend to publish a new joint communication on the Arctic?
2. Will the Commission be preparing a comprehensive Arctic strategy, recognising the critical need for the EU to strengthen its presence in the Arctic?
3. Considering the ongoing changes, does the Commission have a plan to bring Iceland, Greenland and Norway closer to joining the EU, and if so, how?

Submitted: 3.2.2025

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(1 April 2025)**

The Joint Communication ⁽¹⁾ remains valid in the areas that it covers. Its implementation continues to deliver on its goals and objectives.

While climate change remains the most comprehensive threat to the Arctic, the overall security and geopolitical context has changed significantly as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In this context, the question of an updated EU Arctic policy becomes relevant. However, such a decision would require careful reflection and any potential process to review and update the Arctic Joint Communication in the future will take time ⁽²⁾. The question of further enhancing the EU's presence is relevant.

The EU is a major player in areas such as Arctic sustainable fisheries ⁽³⁾, environmental protection, sustainable blue economy development, science and research, and regional development in the European Arctic.

Since 2021, the EU has been increasing its presence in other areas, including municipal cooperation, and support to Indigenous peoples and the youth ⁽⁴⁾.

In relation to Greenland, the EU operates long-standing relations with Greenland based on its status as an Overseas Country/Territory ⁽⁵⁾. The Commission opened an office in Nuuk in 2024.

In areas such as hybrid threats, critical infrastructures and demographic trends affecting also Arctic regions, the EU's actions are anchored in competences and policies set out in the Treaties.

EU relations with Norway, Iceland and Greenland are based on existing agreements and arrangements ⁽⁶⁾. Changes to those agreements and arrangements will require decisions in each country in line with their national rules and procedures.

⁽¹⁾ JOIN(2021) 27 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0027>

⁽²⁾ The decision must also take into account the civilian nature of the EU's engagement in Arctic matters and available resources.

⁽³⁾ This includes the implementation of the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement, to which the Commission is part on behalf of Member States, as well as EU fleets fishing in the Barents Sea or the deployment since 2023 of an inspection vessel to that area. The EU is also reflecting about additional areas where more presence could be of an added value.

⁽⁴⁾ This includes two new initiatives, namely the Arctic Youth Dialogue and the Arctic Urban and Regional Cooperation network.

⁽⁵⁾ In December 2024, the EU signed a new protocol of a duration of six years under the existing Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement concluded in 2021.

⁽⁶⁾ E.g. European Economic Area, Schengen area and other areas of cooperation as well as Greenland's association with the EU as an Overseas Country and Territory (OCT).