

A POSITION PAPER

THE ARCTIC FIVE VIEWS ON THE STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS AND FUTURE PRIORITIES OF THE HORIZON EUROPE STRATEGIC PROGRAMME 2025-2027

Two of the biggest threats to humanity are the climate and biodiversity crises. To address these issues, the United Nations has established the Agenda 2030 sustainability goals and the European Union the European Green Deal. However, implementation of these ambitions often creates policy solutions that lead to conflicts for local communities and peoples.

A region that exemplifies these challenges is the Arctic. This region is often seen as sparsely populated and an important source for green energy and natural resources. Geopolitical tensions exasperate the challenges in the Arctic. Therefore, the Arctic is of growing global importance that requires leadership to ensure a *just* green transition. The European Union should take the lead in providing the expertise for adapting and mitigating the impacts of these crises and the inevitable issues created by top-down policies. These challenges require support and knowledge-based decision-making across the EU member states and beyond. Thus, joint managed development and co-created solutions benefit the Arctic, Europe, and the World.

Knowledge production facilitated by high-quality research, citizen science, and science policy form crucial links to ensure a *just transition* and the achievement of goals established by EU and UN actions. Key Arctic stakeholders and their capacities should be leveraged to support adaptation and mitigation solutions.

The Arctic Five¹ is a partnership between five research universities in the Finish, Norwegian, and Swedish Arctic. These institutions actively develop innovative research and education relevant to the Arctic. Together, they represent the most comprehensive research and education infrastructure, including, over 10,000 researchers and 90,000 students, in the European Arctic.

The aim of our partnership is to use cross-border cooperation as a tool for achieving ground-breaking research that benefits peoples across the Arctic and globally. We have built long-term institutional capacity and are tirelessly strengthening our international competitiveness. The fact that we are embedded within the European Arctic secures commitment and direct links to regional decision-makers, business leaders, and local communities. Thus, we represent a world-leading Arctic research hub committed to cooperation and alignment with the European Union's Northern Sparsely Populated Area Network².

We suggest that the EU recognize its current contribution and role in the development of the Arctic especially as coordinator and main international funder of Arctic research. Research projects in a variety of fields can support the development of the Arctic, although the majority of the 300 Million Euros invested by the EU to Arctic research has been dedicated to a narrow scope for Arctic research - we emphasize that Arctic research is not limited to climate research. This approach has left the sustainable development of the Arctic without support and benefits from prior research investments. We argue that there are important reasons to address challenges, linked to geopolitics, security, sustainability, health, Indigenous rights, extractive industries, mobility, tourism, and space in an Arctic perspective - with Arctic people and societies at the center.

¹The members are Umeå University (SE), Luleå University of Technology (SE), The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø (NO), University of Lapland (FI), and University of Oulu (FI). <https://arcticfive.org/>

²<http://www.nspa-network.eu/>



With this position paper we, **The Arctic Five** partnership, recommend that the European Union:

- Continues to give high priority to Arctic issues and implement the new Arctic Policy³ through the strategic Programme of the Horizon Europe as follows:
 - The European Union develops a long-term strategy for Arctic research in collaboration with the people, researchers, industry, NGO's and policy makers in the region.
 - Russia's attack in Ukraine requires shift, in addition to European, also in Arctic geopolitics. This is amplified by Finland's and Sweden's request to become NATO members.
 - The need for a holistic approach to security in the Arctic, including energy, food, work, health and wellbeing and transport in addition to the hard security, to name a few.
 - The necessity of a broad understanding of Arctic Research with inclusion of societies and people with their interests and needs.
 - There is a need to develop a joint co-created understanding and agreement on research ethics, methodology, data management and ownership, the FAIR principles and IP management that defines Arctic and Indigenous Knowledge, including the *Sámi* and other Indigenous research.
 - Investments in the Arctic driven by the EU Green Deal and global ambitions to shift from carbon-based fuels to renewables is creating 1) a growing need for more people and skilled labor in the Arctic, b) conflicts between different sustainability goals that needs to be harmonized, and c) tensions over land use and regulatory (legal) framework.
- Expands its role as a global leader in the development of the Arctic and recognizes the power of science diplomacy;
- Takes a vital role in returning the Arctic to a peaceful, sustainable and at the same time thriving place for its peoples;
- Integrates a new Arctic cross-cutting theme into the Horizon Europe (HE) Strategic Plan 2025 onwards and recognize the Arctic in a prominent and a holistic position in the forthcoming Horizon 2025-2027 Strategic Plan as follows:
 - indicates a clear role for the Arctic in the Work Programmes of the six thematic clusters of the HE Programmes and the Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area Work Programme
 - the Missions Work Programme should aim at a European Arctic Lighthouse, as HE Missions support regional engagement and cooperation through area-based "lighthouses", that also connects the European Arctic with Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands; and finally
- Recognizes **the Arctic Five** as a vital information provider and utilized to assist in strengthening the position and capacity of the European Union interests in the Arctic;
- Recognizes **the Arctic Five** as a key partner and stakeholder in tackling major challenges ahead, such as sustainability, social sustainably and inclusivity, climate change, safeguarding the Arctic environment and biodiversity, digitalization, green transition, geopolitics, connectivity, transport, aging societies, trading systems, and the rise of new dominant countries).

³https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-arctic_en



Arctic people and societies should be the center of future Arctic research

The fact that around 10% of the EU geographical area is within the Arctic comes with opportunities and responsibilities. It is important to see the Arctic as a region with several million people⁴ living in both remote communities and large cities. Too often the Arctic is understood merely as a pool of natural resources, melting ice, and Indigenous Peoples.

The Arctic is a place of skilled knowledge and sustainable solutions of global interest. The region will continue to develop and attract new companies and businesses to meet a growing demand for renewable energy and natural resources. Beyond these needs, the region will become a focal point for migration as the climate continues to warm.

These futures need to be reconciled with climate action, environmental protection, and security that supports the well-being of Arctic citizens where sustainability is at the core. Because of the colonial history of the region, it is of uppermost importance that efforts to achieve this are co-designed with indigenous peoples, other minority groups, and all other Arctic citizens.

The question is how we meet these demands and, at the same time protect the interests of local and Indigenous peoples, also recognizing the vital role of rights holders in the Arctic. **The Arctic Five** can provide many robust solutions, as **the Arctic Five research** and its' *research centers focusing on indigenous research* have built substantial competence to address these complex challenges.

The Arctic Five is a vital local knowledge provider, key partner and stakeholder to the European Union

The advantageous condition that all three countries of **the Arctic Five** are members of the Arctic Council and Sweden and Finland as EU member states gives us strategic position to develop partnerships in the Arctic and with actors external to the Arctic. We have leading positions in all three science organizations with observer status to the Arctic Council (UArctic, IASC and IASSA), we have well-developed collaborations with USA and Canada (unfortunately our deep Russian cooperation has come to a halt).

The Arctic Five institutions are well positioned, not only to develop relevant and required capacities through advanced education and research, but have excellent *Sámi institutions* and *research centers* within our institutions. These are built on trust-based cooperation with indigenous communities, national minorities, and other local communities. Our Arctic experiences matter far beyond the Arctic region. Thus, **the Arctic Five** aims to make substantial contributions not only to a sustainable future in the Arctic, but also to a global just green transition.

The Arctic Five makes extensive contributions to the Arctic knowledge production. In this position we will negotiate and communicate a shared understanding of the desired future of the Arctic.

⁴The circumpolar north is a vast and diverse area with a population of about seven million people, including approximately 1.1 million Indigenous people in eight Arctic nations (U.S., Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, which includes Kalaallit Nunaat [Greenland] and Faroe Islands, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia) (Young & Bjerregaard, 2019).