

*The regions of North Finland, East Finland, North Norway, North Sweden and Mid Sweden have many common circumstances such as sparse population, harsh climate and long distances. This part of Europe is also specifically affected by globalisation, energy-supply, climate change and demographic change. The region has a population density of only 4.9 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, something that cannot be found in any other part of the European Union.*

*The NSPA network consists of 14 regions in three countries sharing common circumstances and objectives, working together to raise awareness of the region in the EU institutions, influence EU policy and to provide a platform for best practise.*

## **Non-paper on EU Arctic Policy**

The development of an EU policy for the Arctic area, defined as the area above the Arctic Circle, is for understandable reasons of great interest for the regions in the northernmost part of Europe. For the northern regions in the EU member states, Finland and Sweden, and the EEA member state, Norway, European Arctic policy will in many cases overlap with other policies for the region.

### **Arctic and Regional policy**

We will therefore strongly urge the European Commission to develop a holistic approach in Arctic policy. An Arctic policy should also include a strategy for regional development in the Arctic area. But it should also be recognised that the Arctic area is vast and differentiated. The areas of the Arctic which are located in the northern part of Europe are in many ways different from the other parts of the Arctic. That the Arctic both consists of highly developed industrial and knowledge based societies and vast uninhabited areas and the ocean must also be recognised in a holistic, but differentiated political approach. We think that one important step in this direction is to include the Arctic perspective in other EU policies like the regional/cohesion policy, energy policy and transport policy.

A part of this is the need to strengthen the human dimension in policies for the high north, and include both indigenous and non-indigenous people in the Arctic in the policy shaping and making. The concept of subsidiarity should also be a part of policymaking for the Arctic. According to our view, a vital part of this process is to include regional governments in the political processes.

### **NSPA in the Arctic, an area of rich opportunities**

The Arctic is not only rich in terms of raw materials, fish and energy. In some of the regions in the high north one will find the world's leading research institutions and universities, high tech

companies in, among other things, the marine sector and telecommunication. An Arctic policy should therefore strive to include these differences when approaching the potential of the Arctic.

We want to underline the importance of regional development as part of the policy concerning extraction of natural resources. The Arctic, and the NSPA area, must not only serve as a resource base for the rest of the world. There must also be a significant focus on, and holistic policy for, local processing of the resources. Local processing, with reduced energy consumption and pollution concerning transport, should also be seen as a part of the strategy for a sustainable approach for use of Arctic resources.

Improved transport and logistics system in the European Arctic areas is important to fulfil the potential of sustainable extraction and transportation of the regions raw materials. Such investments, at both the EU and national level, could also be seen as part of a strategy to secure both ownership and access for us in Europe to resources which will be more and more demanded on a global scale with increasing population and development. But improved east-west transport routes are also important to secure good cooperation, both politically and business oriented, in the NSPA area.

### **The Arctic and environmental issues**

The regions in the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas of Europe are highly concerned about the environmental challenges in the Arctic. Many of the environmentally related changes which we are likely to experience in the years to come will have a major effect on the local level and can influence our way of life. But we would also like to stress that only a limited number of the sources for these changes have their origin in the region. It is therefore important that the solutions and mitigations concerning environmental changes must be shared proportionally in terms of caused effects.

As shown above, the Arctic is an area where people live and which have a huge potential for both resource extraction and processing. The Arctic must therefore not be looked upon “as a museum” but as an area of opportunity where the highest environmental standards should be set to secure a sustainable and safe use of resources.

### **Arctic, an area of cooperation and stability**

The northern part of Europe is characterised with good and close cooperation. Not only between the regions in the three countries of the NSPA network, but also with North-West Russia. We will therefore encourage the European Commission to include policies and instruments to further strengthen this cross-border cooperation in the EU Arctic Policy. Such initiatives could, among other

things, be strengthening of the Interreg programmes, The Northern Dimension cooperation and the ENPI programmes. We would also like to see the EU's future Arctic Information Centre located in the Arctic itself.

### **Conclusion remarks**

We hope that the European Commission will take the above mentioned considerations into account when finalizing the EU Arctic policy. The NSPA network hopes that we can strengthen our dialogue also with the Arctic inter service group in the European Commission, since all policy areas concerning the northernmost parts of Europe is of great interest for us.

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