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EU investments needed to unlock Arctic region's economic development

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A new report by the Arctic Stakeholder Forum, an initiative set up by the EU gathering public authorities and civil society, calls to strengthen EU investments in the world's northernmost region. Most pressing needs identified are digital infrastructure such as broadband coverage, as well as better transport connections.

The report was handed over by Finnish Ambassador for Northern Policies Harri Mäki-Reinikka on behalf of the Arctic Stakeholder Forum to Commissioner Karmenu Vella, responsible for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries in a meeting in Brussels.

Commissioner Vella said that *"the EU will continue to support the sustainable development of the Arctic. In doing so, we need to find the right balance between increasing the Arctic's economic potential, safeguarding its fragile environment and respecting local and indigenous peoples' rights. This report will help us with that delicate exercise."*

The main priorities for investment identified in the report are:

- to extend and improve digital infrastructure;
- to develop internal and external transport connections;
- to invest in education and skills;
- to support local business development, including into renewable energy production, bio-economy, sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable tourism;
- to support research into climate change, its mitigation and adaptation to it and into sustainable development opportunities.

At the same time, the report highlights the need to improve existing EU support programmes by reducing the complexity of administrative procedures and increasing access to information.

Investments will help the Arctic overcome natural constraints such as its remoteness and harsh climatic conditions, but also to ensure its sustainable economic development as the region becomes more accessible due to global warming.

As discussions on the next EU long term budget are taking off, Commissioner Vella has promised to look how the recommendations of the report could feed in this process to ensure that Arctic gets the investments that it needs.

EU recognised as major investor

The European Union already today represents a major source of support for the sustainable development of the Arctic. Between 2014 and 2020, the European Regional Development Fund alone will have invested roughly EUR 1.5 billion in the European Arctic region. Since 2014, the EU's Horizon 2020 Programme has funded more than 45 Arctic-related projects worth more than EUR 100 million. Moreover, EU services like Galileo and Copernicus provide researchers and other users with reliable navigation and monitoring tools, thereby contributing to key environmental, safety and security needs.

The European Commission will study the report closely and will build on its conclusions at a the first annual Arctic Conference still this autumn.

Background

The **Arctic Stakeholder Forum** is a temporary initiative, [set up by the European Union in 2016](#) [1] as part of the EU's Arctic Policy. Using a bottom-up approach, the Forum brings together regional and national authorities from European Arctic countries, the upper regions of Scandinavia as well as representatives from the Saami people. The European Commission intends to continue meeting with the Arctic Stakeholder Forum after its initial mandate, which ended end of 2017.

The 2016 Joint Arctic Communication also foresees the organisation of an annual Arctic Stakeholder Conference.

For more Information

[The Arctic Stakeholder Forum report](#) [2]

[EU Arctic Policy](#) [3]



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Links

[1] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=JOIN:2016:0021:FIN>

[2] <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6a1be3f7-f1ca-11e7-9749-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-60752173>

[3] https://eeas.europa.eu/arctic-policy/eu-arctic-policy_en