



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION  
DIRECTORATE B  
- POLICY DEPARTMENT -**

## **BACKGROUND NOTE**

**on**

## **THE NORTHERN DIMENSION**

**Abstract:**

*With a view towards the First Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum to be held in Brussels on 25-26 February 2009, the present note takes stock of the Northern Dimension policy, providing an overview of its mechanisms and substance as well as of the European Parliament's role in this context.*

Any opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament.

**FOR EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTERNAL USE ONLY**

**DGExPo/B/PolDep/Note/2009/26**

**30/01/2009**

**EN**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. ACTION PLANS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1. The First Action Plan (2000-2003).....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.2. The Second Northern Dimension Policy (2004-2006) .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2.3. The New Northern Dimension Policy 2006 .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. PARTICIPATING ACTORS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. FINANCING INSTRUMENTS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. PARTNERSHIPS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>7. POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE NORTHERN DIMENSION.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8.1. European Parliament resolutions on Northern Dimension issues.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>9. FUTURE PROSPECTS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Annex I: Address of Margot Wallström 2007 .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Annex II: Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension Statement 1 March 2007</b> <b>.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Annex III: First Ministerial Joint Statement, 2008.....</b>	<b>19</b>

## 1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Northern Dimension policy entered the European Union's agenda in 1997 in order to address the new challenges and opportunities that came along with the increase of the Northern presence within the Union. The Northern Dimension concept includes Iceland in the West across to North-West Russia, from the Norwegian, Barents and Kara Seas in the North to the Southern coast of the Baltic Sea. In this context the Northern Dimension *“is conceived as a way of working with the countries of the region to increase prosperity, strengthen security and resolutely combat dangers such as environmental pollution, nuclear risks and cross border organised crime”*. The Northern Dimension was designed to support the existing multilateral co-operation within the Northern Regional Councils and aims to maximize their synergies as well as those of all other Northern Dimension participants and actors. Through this policy the partners reaffirm their responsibility for the prosperity of Northern Europe, its sustainable development and the well-being of its population.

Northern Europe is of particular significance for the EU as it is a region of great natural resources, with considerable human and economic potential. However, it also faces great challenges in overcoming long distances, management of sparsely populated areas with harsh climate, bridging wide socio-economic gaps and ensuring preservation of cultural identities including minority languages. The region has approximately 84 million inhabitants of which 24 million live in the five Nordic countries, 7.8 million in the Baltic States, 38.6 million in Poland and approx.13.5 million in North-West Russia, including Kaliningrad. As of 2006, the New Northern Dimension also includes the United States and Canada as observers.

The Northern Dimension was first recognized at the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997. During the following years the concept gained support and developed into the coordinated policy it is today. In December 1998, the European Council of Vienna adopted a Commission Communication on a 'Northern Dimension for the policies of the Union'. Six months later, the European Council in Cologne adopted Guidelines for the implementation of the Northern Dimension. In December 1999, the European Council of Helsinki invited the Commission to prepare in cooperation with the Council and in consultation with the partner countries, an Action Plan for the Northern Dimension in the external and cross-border policies of the European Union. Finally in June 2000 the European Council in Feira adopted this first Action Plan for the Northern Dimension in the external and cross-border policies of the European Union for 2001-2003.

## 2. ACTION PLANS

### 2.1. The First Action Plan (2000-2003)

The Helsinki European Council in December 1999 invited the Commission to prepare, in cooperation with the Council and in consultation with the partner countries, an Action Plan for the Northern Dimension. At the Feira European Summit in June 2000 the Action Plan decided set out perspectives and objectives for actions in the following areas:

- Addressing the **environmental problems** in the region

- Improving the level of **nuclear safety and nuclear waste management**
- Facilitating cooperation in the **energy** sector.
- Developing efficient **transport and border-crossing infrastructure**
- Enhancing cross-border co-operation in **the fields of Justice and Home Affairs**
- Supporting cross-border **business cooperation and investment**
- Supporting **public health and social administration programmes**
- Improving access to **telecommunication and IT facilities**
- Enhancing **human resources development**
- Preserving the traditional ways of life of **the indigenous populations of the Arctic**
- Addressing the problems which **Kaliningrad** will encounter when it becomes a Russian enclave within the Union after the enlargement.

## 2.2. The Second Northern Dimension Policy (2004-2006)

The Second Northern Dimension Action Plan was conceived at the Ministerial Meeting held in Ilulissat, Greenland on 28 August 2002, at which event the Danish EU Presidency opened the "Arctic Window" as a political space within the Northern Dimension in which the EU and the Arctic nations can consult on matters of common interest. The conclusions adopted by the Conference laid the foundations for the discussions that took place in the following months: On 21 October 2002, the Danish Presidency held a second Ministerial Conference in Luxembourg, which adopted Guidelines that formed the basis for developing the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan. The document was endorsed by the EU General Affairs Council on 22 October 2002. At the conference the European Commission asked to table a proposal for the new Action Plan during the second quarter of 2003, and after the Luxembourg Ministerial Meeting, the Commission launched a wide-ranging consultation process. Important contributions to the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan were made by the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee as well as several other partners.

The Second Action Plan for 2004-2006 was agreed upon in October 2003 by the European Council in Brussels. The EU enlargement of 1 May 2004 modified the focus of the Northern Dimension policy considerably now that eight of the nine States on the Baltic Sea became EU Member States. As a result, this Northern Dimension policy focused greater attention to the Arctic and sub-Arctic areas (Indigenous Peoples) and the Kaliningrad region areas of the Northern Dimension region in terms of development needs. The strategic priorities and specific objectives for five priority sectors were economy and infrastructure, social issues (including education, training and public health), environment, nuclear safety and natural resources, justice and home affairs and cross-border co-operation.

In the implementation of the Second Action Plan particular emphasis was placed to the importance of the concepts of subsidiarity and synergy, ensuring the full involvement of all stakeholders. As such, The **Northern Dimension Information System (NDIS)** was launched in 2004 by the European Commission as a way to increase visibility of the Northern Dimension policy, and as a means of sharing information between the partner countries, stakeholders, regional bodies, local and regional authorities and civil society on the developing projects in the region.

### 2.3. The New Northern Dimension Policy 2006

The EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia adopted the new **Northern Dimension Political Declaration and Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document** at the first ever Northern Dimension Summit on 24 November 2006 in Helsinki. This document provided the basis for the new policy. Unlike the previous Action Plans which were limited to periods of three years, the new policy is permanent in nature, and subject to review.

The two main characteristics of the new Northern Dimension policy are:

- 1) the **co-ownership** of EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia as well as a frame of reference for intensified transatlantic cooperation of the Northern Dimension partners in matters concerning the northern regions of the world, through the observer status of USA and Canada.
- 2) the strong link between the Northern Dimension policy and the four **EU/Russia Common Spaces**, agreed in 2004 and specified in Road Maps adopted in 2005.

The six priority sectors identified by the Framework Document are:

- **Economic cooperation**, including promotion of trade, investments, customs, SMEs, business, innovation, well-functioning labour markets, financial services, infrastructure, energy, agriculture, forestry, transport and logistics, telecommunications and information technology.
- **Freedom, Security and Justice**, including facilitation of people-to-people contacts, development of border management, good governance, efficiency of the judicial system and judicial cooperation in criminal and civil matters, fight against organized crime, trafficking in human beings, drugs trafficking, illegal immigration and other cross-border crime.
- **External security**: civil protection.
- **Research, education and culture**, including increased cooperation in research and education exchange programmes, youth policy, promotion of people-to-people contacts, links between cultural and economic life, visibility of regional and local cultural identity and heritage.
- **Environment, nuclear safety and natural resources**, including reduction of the risk of nuclear and other pollution, maritime safety, protection of the marine environment in the Baltic and Barents Seas, biodiversity, forests, fish stocks and protection of the Arctic ecosystems; cooperation in the field of water policy, climate change, environmental legislation and administrative capacity building.
- **Social welfare and health**, including prevention of communicable diseases and life-style related diseases and promotion of cooperation between health and social services.

The Northern Dimension focuses increasingly on North West Russia, the largest territory covered by this policy, with its specific challenges and opportunities for the whole Northern Dimension region. The new ND policy has the following geographical priority areas: the Baltic and the Barents Seas, the Russian oblast of Kaliningrad and the Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas.

### 3. PARTICIPATING ACTORS

There are four Regional Councils that participate in the Northern Dimension Policy:

**The Arctic Council** was established in 1996 as a high level intergovernmental forum to provide a means for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. The member states of the Arctic Council are Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States of America.

**The Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)** was established in 1993 in order to provide impetus to existing cooperation and consider new initiatives and proposals in the Barents Euro-Arctic region.

**Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)** was established by the region's Foreign Ministers in Copenhagen in 1992 as a response to the geopolitical changes that took place in the Baltic Sea region with the end of the Cold War. The CBSS is an overall political forum for regional intergovernmental cooperation. The members of the Council are the 11 states of the Baltic Sea region and the European Commission. The heads of government of the CBSS Member States meet in the presence of the President of the European Commission and the Chairman of the European Council on an ad-hoc basis on a biennial basis.

**Nordic Council of Ministers** was formed in 1971 and is the forum for Nordic governmental cooperation. Overall responsibility for the Nordic Council of Ministers lies with the respective Prime Ministers, though in practice, responsibility is delegated to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) and to the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK). The Nordic Council of Ministers has supported 90 projects in the framework of the Northern Dimension.

In addition to the Councils there are also a vast number of other actors who participate within this framework. The regional and sub-regional organizations in the Baltic and Barents regions, the sub-national (regional and local) authorities, non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations (including notably indigenous peoples' organizations), universities and research centres, business and trade union communities. The Northern Dimension provides a valuable and useful framework for efforts to seek synergies in the region, though there is still scope for further coordination between these actors in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of activities.

### 4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

According to the New Northern Dimension Policy within the Framework Document which was adopted in 2006 in Helsinki, it was stated that there was a need to ensure a permanent flow of information as a key element of the Northern Dimension policy. Accordingly:

The first meeting of the **Senior Officials** of the New Northern Dimension took place in St. Petersburg on 21 November 2007. The Senior Officials noted a growing interest towards the ND policy from local and regional authorities, International Financing Institutions, the business community, NGOs and other civil society organizations. The meeting took account of the work carried out in the context of the existing two Partnerships, and further addressed issues such as cultural cooperation, energy efficiency, and the perspectives of a Northern Dimension Institute.

**Ministerial meetings** will take place with the participation of the four Partners at Foreign Minister or equivalent level of the EU Member States/Commission, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation, and will be held every two years at a location agreed by the partners. Extraordinary Ministerial meetings can be agreed by the Partners at any time. Senior Officials meetings, in a similar composition to the Ministerial level, are held whenever necessary and at least every alternate year between Ministerial meetings. Partners, observers and participants are invited to both Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings. The European Parliament's attendance at related Ministerials since 2001 will thus be formalised. Other actors may participate on the basis of a special invitation. The first ministerial meeting took place in **Saint-Petersburg on 28 October, 2008.**

A **Steering Group** is established at expert level to provide continuity between the high level meetings of the Senior's Officials' and Ministerial meetings. It is composed of representatives of the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation and normally meets three times a year. Invitations to Regional Councils, Partnerships and other interested organizations are issued on the basis of agreement of all Partners.

## **5. FINANCING INSTRUMENTS**

In terms of financing, the general rule is the principle of co-financing from Northern Dimension Partners, as well as from international and private financial institutions where appropriate. From 2000-2006, a community initiative named **Interreg III** aimed to stimulate interregional cooperation in the EU. It was financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). During that same period, another contributor was the **TACIS Programme**. This programme aimed to promote the transition to a market economy and to reinforce democracy and the rule of law in the partner states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Currently, the main International Financial Institutions are:

- the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- the European Investment bank (EIB)
- the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB)
- the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)

Priority is given to result-oriented proposals, seeking support from the European Union and national financing instruments, from international and private financial institutions as well as the private sector. The Northern Dimension will pay special attention to possible problems arising from the use of different financing instruments in regional and cross-border cooperation.



## 6. PARTNERSHIPS

In the experience of the partner countries, it has been found that an effective way to organize practical implementation of projects in the agreed priority sectors is through partnerships. Currently there are two partnerships: The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS).

The **Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP)** focuses on the north-west of Russia, however it is part of an integrated, long-term approach involving investments as well as promotion of awareness and development of environmental standards in the entire Northern Dimension area. The NDEP has promoted large infrastructure projects in the non-nuclear envelope using relatively small grants to leverage substantial funding from IFIs, Russian federal and regional sources as well as bilateral donors. In the non nuclear window of the NDEP Fund, there are 15 environmental projects in different stages of implementation, mainly focusing on the improved wastewater treatment.

The new Northern Dimension policy has also given a new impetus to the **Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS)**. The NDPHS fulfils its mandate from the 2003 Oslo Declaration by promoting co-operation and internationally coordinated actions in the area of public health and social well-being. The NDPHS is an effective mechanism for promoting the strategies and principles in the region, including promotion of the implementation of international commitments on health. In 2007 the number of partners grew to 22 after the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) joined the NDPHS in August. By having included the BSSSC into its framework, the NDPHS is able to better reach out to sub-regional authorities in the regions, enhancing its co-ordination capacity.

Professional expertise and input is provided by four expert groups on HIV/AIDS, Primary Health Care, Prison Health, Social Inclusion, and Healthy Lifestyles and Work Ability; and two Associated Expert Groups (CBSS Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk and the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Safety and Health). The expert groups facilitate professional exchanges, increase co-ordination among Partners and Participants and monitor joint activities within their area of expertise. Within its mandate, as given by the CSR, each expert group organises its own work.

At the first Ministerial meeting of the renewed Northern Dimension in Saint Petersburg on the 28 October, 2008, the Ministers decided to establish the **Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDTLP)**. The main goal of the new Partnership will be to improve, to stimulate sustainable economic growth at the local/regional and global level by focusing on a limited number of priorities that reflect both ND regional and national priorities.

There have also been talks on the potential of applying partnerships to other sectors such as culture, energy and efficiency, and sub-regional and sub-state cooperation. New themes and concrete projects with detailed financial and operational parameters can be approved at a meeting of Foreign Ministers or Senior Officials. Any new Partnership should be supported by the Northern Dimension Partners, ensure appropriate funding from the start, be self-sustainable in terms of management and supplement the efforts of national authorities.

## 7. POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS

As discussed at the **First Ministerial Meeting of the Revised Northern Dimension Policy** in Saint-Petersburg, October 28, 2008 (see Annex for joint statement), the following activities provide examples of the progress which has been achieved in the ND priority sectors:

- The new priorities for the TEMPUS IV programme agreed in October 2007 with the Russian authorities and development of educational exchanges, notably Russian participation in the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window programme.
- Establishment in May 2007 of a new EU-Russia Dialogue on Regional Policy.
- Agreement on a Joint Cooperation Plan for 2007-2010 between the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the EU's External Borders (Frontex) and Russia's Border Guard Service.
- Finalization of the cross-border cooperation programmes including the new multilateral Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013, the first programme to potentially combine ERDF funding, ENPI funding, Norwegian funding and Russian funding. The other ENPI CBC programmes relevant to the ND are "Karelia", "Kolarctic", "South-East Finland-Russia", "Estonia-Latvia-Russia", and "Lithuania Poland-Russia".
- Agreement signed between Denmark and Germany in September 2008 to build a multi-billion EUR bridge across the Baltic Sea which will improve road and rail links within the Northern Dimension.

## 8. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE NORTHERN DIMENSION

The **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** has participated in the development of the Northern dimension since the Helsinki Foreign Ministers' meeting (1999) on EU's Northern dimension. The first Northern Dimension Forum took place in Umea (Sweden) in 2001 in line with the recommendations from the Minister's meeting. The EESC organized its 2nd Northern Dimension Forum on 19th March 2003 in Brussels. It has tabled opinions in the topic, stressing the importance of the Northern dimension as a fundamental element for development in the Northern part of Europe and in the entire continent. In August 2002, the EESC issued a statement on behalf of civil society organisations in the countries concerned by the Northern dimension to the Ministerial Conference, stressing the need to begin preparations of a new action plan. This served as an important input for the Second Action Plan.

The **European Parliament** strongly supported the Northern Dimension policy from its inception. Its Members have been present at related Ministerial meetings since 2001, and took an active part in framing the Second Action Plan. From 28 February to 1 March 2007, the Parliament hosted the **Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension** in its Brussels premises. The event brought together members of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, of the Baltic Assembly, of the Nordic Council, and of the network of Barents parliamentarians, as well as MEPs, to debate the new Northern Dimension policy and to prepare for the arranging of a Parliamentary Forum. The two main themes for discussion were the Northern Dimension policies related to the Arctic Region

and to the Baltic Sea region. The Parliamentary Conference supported the objectives of the New Northern Dimension policy.

### 8.1. European Parliament resolutions on Northern Dimension issues

- European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2003 on *the Northern Dimension - New Action Plan 2004 - 2006*<sup>1</sup>
- European Parliament resolution of 20 November 2003 on *the Northern Dimension*<sup>2</sup>
- European Parliament resolution of 16 November 2005 on *the future of the Northern Dimension*<sup>3</sup>
- European Parliament resolution of 16 November 2006 on *a Baltic Sea Region Strategy for the Northern Dimension* (based on the STUBB report)<sup>4</sup>
- European Parliament resolution of 8 July 2008 on *the environmental impact of the planned gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea to link up Russia and Germany*<sup>5</sup>
- European Parliament resolution of 9 October 2008 on *Arctic governance*<sup>6</sup>

## 9. FUTURE PROSPECTS

On 20 November 2008, the European Commission adopted a **Communication on "The European Union and the Arctic Region"** which highlights the effects of climate change and human activities in the Arctic. The Communication emphasises the close link between the European Union and the Arctic. Apart from setting out EU interests and policy objectives, the text proposes a systematic and coordinated response to rapidly emerging challenges. The Communication is the first step towards an EU Arctic Policy and an important contribution to implementing the Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU.

Three main policy objectives are identified:

- Protecting and preserving the Arctic in unison with its population;
- Promoting sustainable use of resources;
- Contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance.

To achieve these objectives, the Commission makes a number of proposals such as:

- The creation of new research infrastructure;
- Screening and monitoring of chemicals;
- Increased cooperation on prevention, preparedness and disaster response;
- Engagement of Arctic indigenous peoples in a regular dialogue;
- Extension of existing regulatory framework on fisheries to the Arctic;
- Improvement of maritime surveillance;

---

<sup>1</sup> P5\_TA(2003)0020

<sup>2</sup> P5\_TA(2003)0521

<sup>3</sup> P6\_TA(2005)0430

<sup>4</sup> P6\_TA(2006)0494

<sup>5</sup> P6\_TA-PROV(2008)0336

<sup>6</sup> P6\_TA-PROV(2008)0474

- Promoting full implementation of the existing rules and enhancing environmental and safety standards of the International Maritime Organisation;
- Enhancing Arctic multilateral governance, including a broad policy dialogue, on the basis of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea;
- Putting Arctic issues higher on the international agenda and increasing the European Commission's contribution to the work of the Arctic Council by becoming a permanent observer.

The development of an EU Arctic policy dovetails with the Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU, which aims to coordinate all EU policies with a maritime dimension to ensure environmental sustainability and the quality of living conditions in coastal regions while promoting the growth potential of maritime industries.

---

## **Annex I: Address of Margot Wallström 2007**

(Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Institutional relations and communication strategy)

Speech on behalf of Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner

European Parliament Conference on the Northern Dimension  
**Brussels, 28 February 2007**

Mr. President,

Honourable Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to this important Conference.

As some of you may know, I have a particular interest in the Northern Dimension – I was born in Skellefteå in the far north of Sweden on the Bothnian Gulf, not far away from the Arctic Circle. That makes me one of the EU's northernmost citizens! It also gives me a personal insight into the problems and opportunities of this region; one of the most fascinating and challenging on earth.

Did you know that for most of the year this region is covered in snow and cloaked in darkness? And that the distances between points are vast? The special needs of this region require us to work cooperatively across national and sub-regional boundaries, and the Northern Dimension gives us a mechanism for doing just that and provides an exciting opportunity to take our cooperation to another level.

I'd like to use this occasion to make three points:

- first, the importance of bringing Parliamentarians into this policy;
- second, the wide number of areas that the Northern Dimension aims at tackling and in particular the greatest challenges facing the region – the environment.
- third, the value of common ownership and balance;

To start with the **Parliamentary dimension**: I hardly need remind this audience of the vital role played by Parliaments – we in Europe are more conscious than ever of the necessity for democratic legitimacy.

So I am delighted that you are considering establishing a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum. Mobilising support from Parliaments across the region will be essential to ensure the new Northern Dimension Policy's success.

I have found Parliament's particularly helpful in promoting the value of cross-border cooperation. It is the key to economic prosperity and to tackling the common problems faced by this region: environment, health, transport, security and energy. It is also important to encourage as many different linkages around the region as possible, to promote better understanding and contribute to a better life for its citizens.

This leads me to my second point on the wide number of areas that the new Northern Dimension policy aims to tackle.

Needless to say, **economic cooperation** is crucial for key sectors such as energy, transport and forestry. Cross-border cooperation here has much yet to offer and I would like to highlight innovation as a crucial objective for the dynamic economies of the High North in general.

Also in the area of **Freedom, Security and Justice**, we are all facing big challenges such as trafficking in human beings and organized crime. In these areas we have a good basis to build on; our existing cooperation across borders is already providing good results.

**Health issues** such as fighting particularly HIV and tuberculosis as well as educating people about the health and social dangers related to excessive alcohol consumption are very important.

The same goes for the **protection of Indigenous peoples**. In fact the Saami people are real Europeans, living across the borders of several countries of the continent - Sweden, Finland, Russia and Norway.

But perhaps the most important sector –and by far the most challenging – is the **Environment**:

Those of us who grew up around the Baltic Sea have seen for ourselves the deterioration of water quality over the years. And the neighbouring Arctic region has long been suffering the impact of climate change.

We are at long last seeing some of the positive effects of recent action. During a recent trip to Östersund in the north of Sweden I was told by locals that, thanks to reduced air pollution and acid rain, the snow this year is white again for the first time in many years.

Indeed, one of the Northern Dimension's major achievements has been setting up the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, managed by the EBRD. This provides seed money for large infrastructure projects in North West Russia, such as a new waste water treatment plant in St Petersburg.

But there is still a great deal of work to do.

We are particularly concerned by the state of the Baltic Sea - improperly treated industrial, agricultural and urban wastewater flows have had an enormous impact on the region. We are therefore strongly committed to regional efforts to restore the Baltic Sea to good ecological health.

As some of you will be aware, the Commission adopted in 2005 a Thematic Strategy on the Marine Environment. With this Strategy the European Union is putting in place a policy framework which specifically addresses the vital issue of protecting Europe's seas and oceans in an integrated manner, looking at all pressures and impacts.

The Commission is determined to continue to play its part in the region to deliver on our common objectives – and in particular to climate change impacts.

As recently highlighted in the much publicised report of the International Panel on Climate Change, on average, climate warming of the Arctic region is two or three times more marked than elsewhere on the planet, with a 3° C increase over the past 50 years. Without entering into technical details, I think it is worth keeping in mind that Arctic pack ice has already shrunk by 15 to 20 % over the past 30 years.

If this is not urgently addressed, there will be disastrous consequences for arctic ecosystems as well as for already fragile indigenous communities. Most importantly, through sea-level rise and increased temperatures, arctic changes will impact the planet as a whole. Safeguarding the Arctic's marine environment and climate is therefore not only essential for its own sake. It is also an absolute priority if we are to avert climate change at global level.

The Stern report on the costs of climate change has very clearly indicated that we will pay dearly if we do not act now to avert and adapt to inevitable climate change now. Clearly, therefore, the priority cannot be to revive the old myth of the Northern Passage. Not only would this be incompatible with the objectives our climate policy but it would also be seeing only the tip of the iceberg!

It is our common duty to make the case for stricter protection of the Arctic before it is too late. We are therefore committed to stepping up our efforts to further protect the Arctic with all partners in the region.

That brings me to my third and last point on the value of **common ownership and a balanced geographical approach**. What makes the new Northern Dimension so special is its common ownership by the EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia. We could not hope to make any serious contribution without the support of all four, and I am delighted that we have come together in this way.

It is also a means of avoiding duplication, competition and neglect of important issues. Common ownership means also a commitment by all partners including Russia to keep the Northern Dimension as the permanent forum to discuss Northern challenges and subsequently adequate Northern policies. Relevant projects may come as a logical outcome of this permanent dialogue. In this context we specially welcome the now established principle of co-financing.

I would also like to stress the importance of the partnership between the Regional Councils in the North and the International Financing Institutions in implementing the Northern Dimension.

That balance is also reflected in the approach to the different sub-regions. The Northern Dimension partners have ensured all geographical areas of the broader region are included - whether it be the Baltic Sea Region as a whole, Kaliningrad oblast, the Barents Sea or the vast Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas.

It's in the spirit of ensuring a balanced and comprehensive approach that we have invited Canada and the USA to remain as observers in the new Northern Dimension. That way all the relevant partners are gathered around the same table and we can make sensible decisions on the part of the region we all share. We hope that the International Polar Year in 2007-2008 will reinforce our links; particularly on issues such as indigenous peoples' heritage and climate change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Northern Dimension is now as much a policy of the EU, as it is of Russia, Norway and Iceland. Common ownership is the key to this new phase in the Northern Dimension and this means that our citizens expect from all of us our engagement and commitment to its success.

Thank you for your attention.

## **Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension**

### **Conference Statement**

**1 March 2007**

Members of the European Parliament, of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, of the Baltic Assembly, of the Nordic Council, and of the network of Barents parliamentarians, met at the Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension in the European Parliament in Brussels on 28 February - 1 March 2007 to debate the new Northern Dimension policy and to prepare for the arranging of a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum.

The two main themes for discussion were the Northern Dimension policies related to the Arctic Region and to the Baltic Sea region.

The participants of the Conference having regard to the Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document and the Political Declaration on the Northern Dimension Policy approved on 24 November 2006, welcome the updated, more permanent, high profile, and structured Northern Dimension Policy that came into force on 1 January 2007 and support the suggestion to hold a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum which could improve the role of the parliamentarians of the Northern Dimension region in the implementation of the new Northern Dimension Policy.

The Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension:

1. supports the increased focus on a joint ownership of the new policy by all actors involved; emphasizes, in this context, the importance of Iceland, Norway and Russia being active partners of the new Northern Dimension policy; further notes that the principle of joint ownership should not only apply to the Northern Dimension partners, but to all stakeholders in the region including the regional councils of the North and their parliamentary bodies;
2. supports the overall aim of the Northern Dimension to provide a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation, strengthening stability, well-being and intensified economic cooperation, promotion of economic integration and competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe;
3. considers the desire to make the Northern Dimension policy a regional expression of the four EU/Russia Common Spaces a constructive and much wanted step forward; believes that it is important that the Northern Dimension aims at filling the four EU/Russia Common Spaces with concrete content, while at the same time focusing on other issues of specific relevance in the North such as its fragile environment, indigenous peoples' issues, cultural diversity and health and social well-being; calls on, to this end, all owners of



the Northern Dimension policy to actively work towards achieving the Northern Dimension objectives, as they also are expressed in the Northern Dimension Arctic Window;

4. draws attention to the priority areas for the Northern Dimension policy: the Baltic Sea, the Kaliningrad oblast with its opportunities for development given its particular geographical situation, as well as the extensive Arctic and Sub-arctic areas including the Barents Region;
5. underlines the role of the Arctic as an early warning area for global climate change; stresses that rapid Arctic warming is likely to have major implications for the whole planet and needs to be addressed globally; emphasizes that climate change and increased ultraviolet radiation in the Arctic have a major impact on the social, cultural and economic well-being of Arctic people; notes, in this context, the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region's call for, in its resolution of 4 August 2006, the adoption of a clear cut, visible and dynamic Arctic policy within the Northern Dimension; underlines that mapping, recognizing and use of indigenous peoples traditional knowledge as a basis for developing the principles of vulnerability and adaptation capacity as a possible tool for future spatial planning, institutional frame working and mitigate measures, to prepare all residents of the High North for the new situation on climate change;
6. recognizes the significance and the potential that the International Polar Year 2007/2008 holds for the promotion of the Arctic region and the development of Arctic science, as well as for the possibility of creating a Charter for Arctic Governance;
7. emphasizes the importance to ensure that the exploitation of the resources and the management of the marine environment in the Barents Sea area is done in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner;
8. underlines the economic significance of the Baltic Sea region with its high growth rates, strong science base and high innovation potential to Europe as a whole; supports, to this end, the work for a Baltic Sea Strategy for the Northern Dimension in order to create favourable conditions for a prosperous, socially balanced, and ecologically sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region; calls attention to the fragile environmental status of the Baltic Sea;
9. emphasizes that the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership is a successful example of practical achievements within the Northern Dimension, stresses the importance of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Health and Social Well-Being; asks, in this context, all Northern Dimension partners to examine the possibility of applying the Partnership model to other priority areas such as transport and logistics, as well as energy;
10. calls on closer cooperation regarding marine security, especially regarding search and rescue matters;

11. calls attention to the principle of co-financing from Northern Dimension partners, as well as from international and private financial institutions where appropriate, as the general rule of funding Northern Dimension activities; asks all owners of the Northern Dimension policy to ensure that sufficient means are allocated to Northern Dimension projects and actions; welcomes in this context the streamlining of the EU funding of the Northern Dimension policy under the new European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI); encourages strong involvement of international regional organizations, international financial institutions, regional and local public organizations, other public bodies and private sources in the implementation of the Northern Dimension policy;
12. welcomes the clearer institutional set-up for Northern Dimension cooperation, coordination and consultation; emphasizes, in this context, that it is of crucial importance for the credibility and implementation of the Northern Dimension to strengthen coordination and cooperation at various levels among European, national, regional, sub-regional, and local authorities, based on the principle of subsidiarity;
13. recognizes the somewhat unstructured overlap of competencies between parliamentary fora in the northern regions; calls for, to this end, the arranging of a recurrent event, a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum, with a flexible structure and ownership, to promote the coordination and exchange of views between different institutions for regional cooperation in the North;
14. highlights that a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum would provide representatives of the parliaments of the EU Member States, the European Parliament, the parliaments of Iceland, Norway and Russia, together with the parliaments of the Northern Dimension observer states Canada and the USA and the elected representatives from indigenous peoples' and regional parliamentary assemblies, opportunities for discussion, new initiatives and oversight; emphasizes that it would further bring about a greater democratic legitimacy to the Northern Dimension as it would constitute an essential component in facilitating democratic parliamentary monitoring of the Northern Dimension policy;
15. emphasizes that a Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum could improve the role of the parliamentarians of the Northern Dimension region from the Ural mountains to the Atlantic Ocean in the implementation of the new Northern Dimension policy, including the improvement of the conditions for border crossing of people and goods;
16. calls on the President of the European Parliament and the Speakers of the parliaments of Iceland, Norway and Russia to prepare for the arranging of the Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum to be held every two years in order to discuss issues of common concern and examine the evolution of the new Northern Dimension policy.

## **Annex III: First Ministerial Joint Statement, 2008**

### **THE FIRST MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE RENEWED NORTHERN DIMENSION (Saint-Petersburg, October 28, 2008)**

#### **JOINT STATEMENT**

The first Ministerial meeting of the renewed Northern Dimension took place in Saint-Petersburg on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 2008. The Russian Federation, as the host party chaired the meeting.

The meeting took place with the participation of the four Partners at Foreign Minister or equivalent level of the European Union Member States/Commission, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation. Also representatives of the Regional Councils in the North, the International Financial Institutions (IFI) and other institutions and bodies participated. Representatives of the USA and Canada took part in the meeting as observers.

The Ministers took note of the Conclusions of the first Meeting of the ND Senior Officials (Saint-Petersburg, November 21, 2007) and the Progress Report submitted by the ND Steering Group.

They particularly noted that the period, which had passed since the renewed Northern Dimension policy was launched at the Summit in Helsinki on the 24th of November 2006, witnessed considerable intensification of the Northern Dimension policy and growing interest towards it from local and regional authorities, IFIs, the business community, NGOs and other organizations of the civil society, universities and research centers. The Northern Dimension being a regional expression of the EU-Russia Four Common Spaces with full participation of Norway and Iceland has become an efficient political tool for the implementation of the four road maps in matters relevant to the Northern Dimension area.

The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the level of cooperation between the Northern Dimension and the four Regional Councils in the North: the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) and the Arctic Council (AC).

There was general agreement that current funding mechanisms for the ND work well. Co-financing should continue to be the rule for the renewed ND policy. The International Financial Institutions continue their roles as major lenders in the region. The Ministers underlined the importance of the joint Cross-Border Cooperation programmes as among the main instruments of the practical implementation of the Northern Dimension policy.

The Ministers took note of the information of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as the Chair of the Steering Group of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) and as the manager of the NDEP Support Fund on the

activities of the Partnership. The positive steps in disbursements, management and implementation of the NDEP projects were noted. The Ministers expressed their hope that the replenishments recently made by the donors and contributors to the Fund would result in successful accomplishment of the on-going projects and that new projects would soon be added to the NDEP project portfolio.

The Ministers acknowledged the work carried out since the Senior Officials meeting in St. Petersburg in 2007 on how energy efficiency could be fostered by the Northern Dimension and encouraged further ways for the ND to facilitate progress in this area.

The Ministers took note of the report of the Norwegian Presidency of the ND Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS). They welcomed the steps which have been undertaken to intensify the activity, visibility and effectiveness of the Partnership, including the launching of the project and publications data-base and the creation of a 'project pipeline', which matches donors with project ideas. The participants of the meeting welcomed the measures undertaken by the governing bodies of the Partnership to reach an agreement on the legal status of the NDPHS Secretariat which would make it independent. In particular, the decision reached at the latest meeting of the NDPHS Committee of Senior Representatives, aimed at further reinforcing the Partnership was praised by the Ministers. In this regard, they underlined the importance of continued efforts to deliver concrete results based on the principle of co-financing from the ND Partners. Finally, they expressed the appreciation of the support which the CBSS provided to the Partnership Secretariat and welcomed the substantial contributions that have recently been made toward the NDPHS activities.

The Ministers made a decision to establish the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics (NDTLP), based on the recommendation of the ND Steering Group and the conclusions of the *ad-hoc* working group of experts.

The main goal of the new Partnership will be to improve, in compliance with the ecological needs of the region, the major transport connections and logistics between the ND Partners to stimulate sustainable economic growth at the local/regional and global level by focusing on a limited number of priorities that reflect both ND regional and national priorities in a balanced way. The participants of the meeting noted the importance of IFIs in the new Partnership. The Ministers instructed the ND Steering Group to convene a Preparatory Committee to finalize the organizational structure and other remaining work of the NDTLP with the aim to make it operational as of 1 January 2010.

The Ministers emphasized the considerable potential for cultural cooperation in the area of the Northern Dimension. They appreciated the contribution by the Nordic Council of Ministers into the ongoing discussion on perspectives of such cooperation in the ND framework including the possibility to create a Partnership. They instructed the ND Steering Group to set up an *ad-hoc* expert group to examine the issue and to assess the feasibility of such a Partnership. The conclusions are to be reported to the next meeting of the ND Senior Officials that will be convened in the second half of 2009.

The Ministers took note of the ongoing work within the EU to create an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and underlined the importance that the Northern Dimension can play i.a. in terms of information sharing and transparency of the process.

The Ministers also underlined the growing importance of the Arctic Region and instructed the Steering Group to consider further ways in how the Northern Dimension could contribute.

The Ministers acknowledged the importance of sub-regional and sub-state cooperation between local and regional entities and actors. The fostering of direct links and contacts between these actors should be further encouraged.

The Ministerial Meeting concluded that the successful re-launching of the Northern Dimension policy has shown that through co-ownership constructive cooperation is possible on a range of projects producing benefit to citizens of the Partners and that the ND retains much potential for future development.



© 2001. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, Natural Resources Canada. / Sa Majesté la Reine du chef du Canada, Ressources naturelles Canada.