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EU Arctic Policy – Call for Evidence (2026)

From West-Finnmark Council – same as KS Finnmark (Vest-Finnmark Rådet, sak 9/26)

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - QUESTIONNAIRE (14 questions)

QUESTION 1: To what extent are these priorities still relevant?

Priority area 1: International cooperation on Safety & security = 5/5

Explain (≤500 chars):

Since 2021, security in the Arctic has become more urgent due to Russia's war, closed borders, hybrid threats and NATO enlargement. For KS Troms, societal security, protection of critical infrastructure, secure supply chains and resilient dual-use transport are essential for both civilians and allied mobility. EU soft power plus targeted investment and coordination adds clear value.

Priority area 2: Environmental protection and mitigation and adaptation to climate change = 3/5

Explain (≤500 chars):

Environmental protection remains vital, but the 2021 framing risks being perceived as insufficiently place-based and sometimes disconnected from inhabited Arctic realities. The updated policy should focus on fewer measurable “footprint” reductions (gas production, microplastics, clean shipping) and stronger support for adaptation, climate-resilient infrastructure and a just transition—so climate goals also strengthen livelihoods and trust.

Priority area 3: Inclusive and sustainable Arctic development to the benefit of Arctic inhabitants = 5/5

Explain (≤500 chars):

This priority is central and even more relevant now. Demography, skills shortages, service capacity, connectivity gaps and housing pressures threaten viable communities in Arctic Europe. EU Arctic engagement must benefit residents through territorial cohesion tools, tailored state-aid/program design for sparsely populated areas, easier access for SMEs/municipalities, and strong regional, indigenous and youth participation.

QUESTION 2: Taking into consideration developments since 2021, should the EU address additional issues and if so which ones and why? (≤700 chars)

Yes. The revised policy should add/strengthen: **societal security and preparedness** (hybrid/cyber threats, critical infrastructure, supply chains); **dual-use connectivity** (east–west corridors, redundancy, climate-resilient transport); **people and place-based instruments** (demography, skills, housing, service delivery capacity); **space and monitoring** as backbone (maritime awareness, SAR, climate and secure comms); and a clearer **European Arctic/NSPA focus** with tailored cohesion/state-aid solutions and stronger cross-border Nordic cooperation.

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

QUESTION 3: What measures can be implemented at the EU level and/or through its external relations and partnerships to help monitor and protect the Arctic environment, including the Arctic Ocean? (≤500 chars)

Strengthening Arctic monitoring via Copernicus/European Space Program and networks; fund long-term marine/coastal observation and pollution tracking. Support clean and safe shipping, stronger SAR/environmental response capacity, and joint EU–Nordic standards for maritime preparedness. Use partnerships with Arctic cities/regions, universities and local knowledge holders.

QUESTION 4: Taking the EU’s climate law and current efforts as a starting point, what else could the EU do to enhance its efforts to combat climate change in the European Arctic? (≤500 chars)

Prioritize funding for adaptation: climate-resilient roads/ports/airports, landslide/flood risk reduction, energy resilience, and digital connectivity. Create Arctic-fit funding and state-aid flexibility for sparsely populated regions and support a **just transition** with skills/retraining and new green jobs in affected communities.

SUSTAINABLE & INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

QUESTION 5: In your view, what are the three main economic areas with the most potential for sustainable development and/or economic diversification in the Arctic?

Between 1 and 3 selections

Tourism

Maritime transportation and infrastructure

Renewable energy

QUESTION 6: What are the most prominent socio-economic challenges in the Arctic and how can the EU support Arctic inhabitants in addressing those?

(≤700 chars)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Climate change and environmental deterioration					
Health					
Education, training, and capacity-building					
Talent attractiveness and retention					
Sustainable tourism					
Raising awareness and citizen engagement in public and European affairs					
Transportation and connectivity					
Migration and demographic changes					

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Community resilience, prevention and preparedness					
Inclusivity and community integration					

Key challenges are **connectivity/transport, demography and skills, service capacity, preparedness**, and climate impacts on infrastructure and livelihoods. The EU can help by safeguarding territorial tools for sparsely populated regions (incl. NSPA-type mechanisms), simplifying access for small municipalities/SMEs, funding east–west and redundant transport/digital links, supporting skills pipelines and youth mobility, and scaling applied innovation/testbeds in green industry, ocean economy and digital public services. Support cross-border Nordic cooperation on preparedness, labour markets and education.

QUESTION 7: How can the EU assist in ensuring that natural resources in the Arctic, such as land raw minerals, are mined in a sustainable and inclusive way that contributes to economic development and benefits local communities? (≤500 chars)

Use EU instruments (CRMA implementation, ESG standards) to require transparent value chains, high environmental performance, and local benefit sharing. Support early regional/Indigenous participation, cumulative impact assessment, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Invest in local processing/refining skills and SMEs to keep more value in the region, and fund remediation/monitoring. Reward projects that deliver jobs locally and protect nature.

QUESTION 8: How can the EU make its policies more inclusive towards Arctic Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including for the principle of free, prior and informed consent? Please provide specific examples. (≤500 chars)

Make Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) operational by requiring early, structured consultation and co-design in EU-funded Arctic projects (transport, minerals, energy, research). Include Sámi parliaments as eligible partners with dedicated budget lines for participation capacity. Support Indigenous language/culture-based livelihoods and integrate Indigenous knowledge in research and monitoring.

ARCTIC MARITIME TRADE ROUTES

QUESTION 9: To what extent should the EU support the potential development of Arctic maritime trade routes taking into account the potential benefits or drawbacks?

(≤500 chars)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The EU should support the potential development of Arctic maritime trade routes.					
The related economic opportunities are considerable					
The environmental and climate risks are considerable					
The cultural impacts are considerable					
The geopolitical developments portray the need to develop maritime trade routes in the Arctic					
The related safety concerns (e.g. search and rescue operations) are considerable					

Benefits may include shorter routes and economic opportunities, but key drawbacks are high **environmental risk**, limited response capacity, insurance/liability issues, impacts on fisheries and Indigenous/coastal livelihoods, and major geopolitical/security spillovers. Safety must be paramount: SAR, spill response, ports of refuge, communication coverage, and stringent shipping standards. Any support should be conditional on strict environmental rules and real emergency preparedness capacity.

SECURITY & DEFENCE

QUESTION 10: What are the main security challenges in the Arctic? Please rank the following security challenges from least important (at the bottom) to most important (at the top). Use drag&drop or the up/down buttons to change the order or accept the initial order.

Suggested KS Finnmark ranking (top = most important):

1. **Military tensions & geopolitical developments**
2. **Critical infrastructure vulnerabilities**
3. **Hybrid/cyber threats** (*use “Other” to add*)
4. **Search and rescue challenges**
5. **Climate change & environmental security**
6. **Maritime security**
7. **Economic competition & resource management**
8. **Human security & human rights**

If “Other” (≤500 chars):

Hybrid threats and cyberattacks are escalating risks for Arctic communities and critical infrastructure (energy, ports, communications, satellites, health services). EU support on cyber resilience, situational awareness, and shared standards/exercises is needed, especially given long distances, limited redundancy and high dependency on digital and space-based services.

QUESTION 11: What could the EU do to support Arctic States, in particular EU Arctic States, regarding enhancing defense capabilities and security, such as procurement of defense-related capabilities, protection of critical infrastructure, dual-use transport infrastructure, supply chains? Please choose two priority actions.

Recommended selections:

- **Assist in building and maintaining infrastructures**
- **Enhance cooperation with international partners**

Based on these proposals:

Support investments in defense companies

Develop new technologies

Promote relevant training and capacity building

Enhance cooperation with international partners

Assist in building and maintaining infrastructures

Other - If other, please explain. *500 character(s) maximum*

If “Other” (≤500 chars) – optional:

Create a dedicated funding window for **dual-use, cross-border Arctic corridors** (including EEA/third countries like Norway) and reduce administrative barriers for civil–military mobility. Investments should cover TEN-T comprehensive/extended networks and include ports, airports, rail and digital logistics systems to ensure redundancy and interoperability with NATO.

QUESTION 12: Which emergency and crisis response domains should the EU prioritize to strengthen capacities and capabilities in the Arctic context, in particular in the European Arctic?

Please rank the following domains from least important (at the bottom) to most important (at the top).

Suggested ranking for KS Troms:

1. **Prevention and preparedness**
2. **Communication and information management**
3. **Search and rescue operations**
4. **Public health**
5. **Security and law enforcement**
6. **Continuity of operations and business continuity**
7. **Humanitarian assistance and relief operations**
8. **Wildfires** (*still relevant, but less central than floods/landslides in much of North Norway*)

If “Other” (≤500 chars):

Add **critical infrastructure protection and bottleneck preparedness** (roads/bridges/ports, power, telecom). These are decisive due to single-corridor dependency and long detours when failures occur.

RESEARCH, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

QUESTION 13: What areas of research, science and technology development should be prioritised to better understand and address Arctic challenges? Please choose maximum three answers

Between 1 and 3 selections

Energy and Environment

Life sciences/Physical sciences

Social sciences

Digital technologies (e.g. cybersecurity, AI, data sciences)

Telecommunications

Defence and security

Earth observation and space technologies

If other, please explain. 500 character(s) maximum

Recommended KS Finnmark picks:

1. **Earth observation and space technologies**
2. **Energy and Environment**
3. **Other: Arctic research programme** in FP10

If “Other” (≤500 chars):

Support a dedicated **Arctic research programme** in FP10 that treats research as strategic infrastructure: long-term funding, integration of natural/social sciences and local / Indigenous knowledge, shared research infrastructure, and stronger links to innovation/competitiveness instruments so results scale into Arctic and European value chains.

QUESTION 14: What initiatives can the EU support to enhance digital connectivity in the Arctic?

(≤700 chars)

Prioritise Arctic broadband and redundancy: fiber backbones, subsea cables where feasible, and resilient satellite solutions for remote areas. Support cross-border Nordic connectivity corridors, shared standards for emergency communications, and secure government communications (incl. space-based). Fund digital capacity in municipalities (cybersecurity, data skills, interoperable systems) and enable SMEs to adopt digital tools. Use Copernicus/space services for maritime awareness and SAR, and support testbeds for Arctic digital solutions.

Kind regards

Jan Morten Hansen (s)
Political leader
Vest-Finnmark Rådet

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