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At the frontline of climate change

Key changes in the Polar Regions that call for European action

Date: 26th September 2018, 15:30-17:30

Venue: European Parliament, Brussels, ASP 5G 305

Scope of the policy briefing

In the Arctic and Antarctic, dramatic physical changes have become emblems of climate change. However, other subtle changes are also becoming apparent, and may disrupt established structures, patterns and practices in ecosystems, communities and economic sectors. Across the Arctic, many diverse human communities and activities will need to respond to altered ecosystem services on which they currently rely. In both Polar Regions, our ability to benefit safely and sustainably from natural resources, and to preserve and conserve the natural capital, their unique biodiversity and wilderness, may be tested. The changes occurring in the Polar Regions are not just regional in impact. European weather for example is influenced by Arctic sea ice, and ice lost from Antarctica and Greenland contributes to rising global sea-levels.

This policy briefing aims at highlighting areas of polar change that have profound societal, environmental, economic and political impacts – both locally and for Europe at large – that need urgent attention from both European scientists and policy makers. These insights are retrieved from five recently published White Papers, which have been developed on behalf of EU-PolarNet with a team of multidisciplinary polar experts, stake- and right holders.

Cooperation partner: European Parliament Intergroup on "*Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development*"

The European Parliament (EP) Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development” – originally called EP Intergroup on Sustainable Development – was established in 1994 at the initiative of the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) and with the support of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The secretariat of the EP Intergroup is provided by EBCD. This Intergroup constitutes a cross-party, cross-committee and cross-sector platform of discussion for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to learn, discuss and create policies geared towards finding solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss.

AT THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE
KEY CHANGES IN THE POLAR REGIONS
 A CALL FOR EUROPEAN ACTION

26 SEPTEMBER 2018
 15:30- 17:30
 ROOM ASP 5 G 305
 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

HOSTED BY
MEP CHRISTEL SCHALDEMOSE

IN COOPERATION WITH:

EU-PolarNet
 THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTERGROUP ON
 "CLIMATE CHANGE, BIODIVERSITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

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ALFRED WEGENER INSTITUT
 MARKO HOFFMANN

Agenda

- 15:00-15:30 Light networking coffee
- 15:30-15:35 Welcoming words by the Chair MEP Christel Schaldemose
- 15:35-16:00 Key changes in the Polar Regions that call for European action by **Antje Boetius** (Director of the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research)
Key insights from the EU-PolarNet White Papers by **Antonio Quesada** (Executive secretary of the Spanish Polar Committee)
- 16:00-17:00 Roundtable discussion with stakeholders moderated by Antje Boetius
- **Terkel Petersen**, Senior Expert (Arctic), European External Action Service
 - **Mininnguaq Kleist**, Head of Greenland Representation to the EU– reports from a changing home
 - **Marie-Hélène Tusseau-Vuillemin**, Scientific Director of the Environment, Geoscience and Astronomy Department at the French Ministry for Higher Education, Research and Innovation – how polar change affects national policy making and investments
 - **Nils Arne Johnson**, Director Regional Business Development, Troms County Council – sustainable development and industry climate action
 - **Katarina Gårdfeldt**, Director of the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat
 - **Jean-Louis Etienne**, IUCN Ambassador for Polar regions and the Oceans– sustainable development and conservation
- 17:00-17:25 Questions and discussion with the participants
- 17:25-17:30 Concluding remarks by MEP Jørn Dohrmann

Summary of presentations and discussions

Christel Schaldemose MEP welcomed participants by highlighting the importance to address climate change and underlined the importance of Polar Regions alongside her commitment on this topic. The Chair noted that “more knowledge and discussions about impacts of climate change are necessary in order to respond quickly to the challenges it represents”. While highlighting the need to benefit from new technologies to study physical phenomena, MEP Schaldemose noted that climate change has socio-economical impacts both in the region and at global level that request immediate action. Therefore the Chair called upon the Commission to increase financial support for research. As an increasing number of MEPs are interested in the topic and aware about its urgency, it should be a priority now to act through joint measures and projects.



In her introduction, **Antje Boetius**, Director of the Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research and EU-PolarNet Coordinator, reminded the audience that climate change accelerates and is already causing extreme events in many places around the world. “Polar Regions are ecosystems rich in life,

while ice melting results in a dangerous loss of biodiversity there”. Moreover, the dispersion of soil in the water could alternate the sea ecosystems and the release of methane from the thawing permafrost presents a major contributor to global warming. Ms. Boetius highlighted the need for more scientific research, in order to be able to predict effects of higher temperature on Earth. Even if there is general consensus on climate change’s origin, there is still no agreement about its consequences. Also, social issues should have a prominent place in the debate. “Changes in the Polar region mean new opportunities for development”, but also the exploitation of resources presents risks both for nature and humans. To sum up, Ms. Boetius stressed that the international community is getting better in observing changes and predicting results in the Polar Regions, but still remains weak in taking action.



Antonio Quesada, Spanish Polar Committee, shared with the audience the key insights from the EU-PolarNet White Papers. The main task of EU-PolarNet is to develop an Integrated European Polar Research Programme, taking into account societal relevance and research needs. “A large group of stakeholders, from national policy makers to indigenous communities, from small or medium industries to research institutions, was involved in preparing the five White Papers with the aim to connect science to society”. They featured: (1) The coupled polar climate system: Global context, predictability and regional impacts, (2) Footprints on changing polar ecosystems, (3) Managing human impacts, resource use and conservation of the Polar Regions, (4) The road to the desired states of socio-ecological systems in the Polar Regions and (5) Advancing operational informatics for Polar Regions. Each White Paper identifies research needs and suggests a way forward. “Understanding the polar climate system in the global context is key for climate action. Our human activities, even in central Europe, have effects on ecosystems in the Polar Regions, but the consequences are largely unknown to us”. The need for clear and precise data on Polar ecosystems was raised, alongside the urgency to translate research into policy-making and providing more capacity-building activities in order to raise awareness and take action. Furthermore, the partners had identified a research need on how to link and implement the SDGs in the Polar Regions. As to informatics’ systems, Mr. Quesada stressed that they have to be improved to support information and data exchange for the benefit of society, science and business.



Terkel Petersen, European External Action Service, gave a brief introduction to the EU Arctic Policy, which is co-led by DG MARE. “The Arctic is home to people, and the need to engage with them and acknowledge their interests and unique insights is a key aim of the EU’s policy”. Mr. Petersen highlighted that changes in Arctic have a tremendous affect on the Earth and our ecosystems, however, the climate change negotiations are not defined by the Arctic. “This requires data, and the Commission’s DG RTD, JRC and EEAS are very supportive of this research. Also in the proposal of the Commission on the next budget (MFF), science, research and innovation are key pillars”. Mr. Petersen moved on stressing that science should not only be seen as data collection, but also as a contribution to innovation and connectivity across the Arctic. “We have to recognize that data



is not enough to change policy, as people want to use resources and is not easy to change their aspiration. We have to consider China, India and other new actors on the global scene because if we think only from an EU perspective we will fail”. Mr. Petersen concluded with a remark for a further reflection: “mitigating the effects of climate change requires sometimes uncomfortable changes of behavior”. More scientific insights will thus not necessarily and directly translate into political action.

Mininnguaq Kleist, Head of Greenland Representation to the EU, gave an insight into the effects of climate change on the Greenlandic society and environment. From his point of view, it is of paramount importance to consider the different perspective that inhabitants of the region have compared with the European one. In East Greenland, increasing temperature is causing changes in soil humidity meanwhile in the north it has an impact on fish populations and consequences for local economy. In the south, where farming takes place, warming temperatures are as well associated with a potential increase in food production.



However, on the contrary, rising temperatures have negative effects on the agricultural sector, as the changes are extreme and unpredictable. Moreover, the sector is also challenged by invasive species. Summing up the above, Mr. Kleist welcomed more research, but advised all scientists to collaborate more with the local population, learn from their expertise, and be more sensitive in their approaches.

Marie-Hélène Tusseau-Vuillemin, French Ministry for Higher Education, Research and Innovation brought the perspective of a non-Arctic country to the panel. France has a specific logistic agency for Research in Polar Regions (IPEV), while one of the top priorities of its National Research Strategy is the understanding of the Earth system and changes in global ecosystem, in order to support decision-makers to take action. With reference to investments for Polar research, they are covered within this programme. As mentioned during Ms. Tusseau-Vuillemin’s intervention, France also has a national “climate plan”, and a “biodiversity plan”, where research (including polar research) is of significant importance. A major contribution of research to the SDGs could be to imagine ways to reach them jointly, all around the world, including Arctic. Ms. Tusseau-Vuillemin noted however that raising awareness for biodiversity is a major challenge, as changes in ecosystems are not always visible at first sight. All in all, the need to encourage technological innovation was underlined, in order to jointly achieve the sustainable use of the Arctic natural resources.

The industry representative on the panel, **Nils Arne Johnsen**, Troms County Council, drew attention to the link between economic growth and the opportunities for cooperation between business and the research community in the Polar Regions. Today, many Arctic regions are not attractive for settlement, but urbanization should be seen as an opportunity for the sustainable development of the area, according to Mr. Johnsen. Also, business opportunities should not be considered negatively, but as a way to address change and improve well-being. Furthermore, the contributions of local knowledge for development have to be taken more seriously. Mr. Johnsen recommended that “any environmental or economic policy should only be developed with a full involvement of local inhabitants, taking their livelihoods and possible impacts on them into account”. As a result, the fact that the Arctic needs more scientists based in and originated from the region itself, was stressed.



Jean-Louis Etienne, IUCN Ambassador for Polar Regions and the Oceans, presented the PolarPod Expedition, an exploration of the Southern Ocean which surrounds the Antarctic Continent, where twelve countries are involved. Mr. Etienne underlined how we still lack on information about the role of Ocean on our climate and pointed out that the Antarctic is the world's largest carbon sinks and a vital component of the Earth. The main objective of PolarPod Expedition will be to collect measures about air-sea exchange of CO₂, physical characteristics of water, contaminants' presence and quantity, in order to improve the knowledge around the Region and the Ocean. Starting in October 2021, the PolarPod expedition will remain for two years in the Antarctic Ocean.

Katarina Gårdfeldt, Director of the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat pointed out the importance for Europe to look south, focusing on Antarctic, while considering the main issue of global sea level rise and the contribution of melting glaciers. Many countries will be affected around the globe and the changes come with huge costs and implications for infrastructure and societies. As to Antarctic, she noted the lack of data (especially for winter time) and knowledge gaps on climate change, glaciers' melting, but also on Earth's history, water, exchange of CO₂ and other gases between different natural sinks. From Ms. Gårdfeldt's point of view, "this as an excellent opportunity for European countries to collaborate more on Polar research", while a European Research Programme on the global impact of Antarctic changes was suggested. Also, the SDGs could help addressing these, as she sees them as a great gift, providing us with a universal language.

During the discussion with the audience, **Andrea Tilche** (DG RTD) stated that next year's Horizon2020 programme will address the polar issues related to sea level's rise, sustainable development and biodiversity. **Marie-Anne Coninx**, Ambassador for Arctic Affairs of the European Union mentioned that "the polar bear is a prominent symbol of climate change, but we must not forget that four million people live in the Arctic and they are affected by the effects of a changing environment", stressing the meaning of a balanced approach. **Hannele Savela**, from Oulu University emphasized the importance of community-based observations in the Arctic, which include local knowledge, which is key for climate action. Moreover, the need for better finance allocation was raised, especially for research coordination, while participants were informed that Copernicus Programme open data will be available as of 2019. Finally, further discussions reiterated the importance of European and global collaboration and the role of research as a cooperation tool.



In his closing remarks, **Frederik Hoj Ruhne** addressed the public on behalf of **MEP Jørn Dohrmann**, who is especially interested in this topic due to his role as chair of the EP DEFA Delegation. Mr. Ruhne reiterated the need to discuss climate change strategies for Polar Regions. "Despite the complexity of the issue, there is an enormous expertise to benefit from and share". Last but not least, the need for more research and an improving global dialogue was highlighted, while mentioning that this meeting was an important step towards this process.

Outreach

Social media

Both EU-PolarNet and the EP Intergroup live tweeted from the event, earning the EU-PolarNet Twitter account ([@EUPolarNet](https://twitter.com/EUPolarNet)) 18 tweets and 6.4000 impressions over the day, compared to the average of

1.8000 impressions per day in September. Within one week after the event 17.2000 impressions were reached. The hashtag [#eupolaraction](#), which was created for the event, was used in 23 tweets

Web

The event was advertised on three websites:

- the EU-PolarNet Website: <https://www.eu-polarnet.eu/news-and-events/conferences-and-workshops/policy-briefing-2018/>
- the website of the Alfred Wegener Institute: <https://www.awi.de/nc/en/about-us/service/press/press-release/polar-policy-briefing-in-the-european-parliament.html>
- the website of the EP Intergroup: <http://ebcd.org/event/at-the-frontline-of-climate-change-key-changes-in-the-polar-regions-that-call-for-european-action/>

Appendix

Biographies of speakers

Christel Schaldemose Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Christel Schaldemose is a Danish politician and member of the S&D group. She's a member of the IMCO committee, and substitute in the ENVI and PEST committees. Besides that, she's a member of the EU delegation for relations with Switzerland, Norway and Iceland. She's chairing the working group on Polar Regions of the European Parliament Intergroup on "Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development".

Antonio Quesada, Executive Secretary of the Spanish Polar Committee Antonio Quesada is a Professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and Executive Director of the Spanish Polar Committee. From 2013 to 2017 he has been the Head of the Spanish Polar Scientific Program. Moreover, he holds the positions of National representative at Committee for Environmental Protection (Antarctic Treaty), IASC, COMNAP and European Polar Board, Deputy National Representative at the Antarctic Treaty and at the Arctic Council. Participating in different programmes within SCAR (e.g. RiSCC, AntECO) and Arctic Science Summit Week are of key interest for Mr. Quesada as well. Being a researcher on polar regions since 1993, on both Arctic and the Antarctic, Mr. Quesada has participated in over 15 expeditions to polar regions and PI of numerous polar projects. From this work, over 120 published papers have been published in international peer reviewed journals.

Terkel Petersen, Senior Expert for Arctic matters, European External Action Service (EEAS) Terkel Petersen was born in Denmark in 1963. His education covers degrees in languages, economics and law as well as international relations, obtained at the Copenhagen Business School and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government (Cambridge, Massachusetts); he also studied at Università Bocconi in Milan. He is currently senior expert for Arctic matters at the EEAS in the division covering multilateral regional cooperation. Between 2012 and 2015, he was deputy head of division for the Western Balkans. He also covered Asian issues in 2010/11. He served in Geneva at the EU/Council liaison office from 2003 to 2007 (ao. disarmament affairs as well as development issues in the UN and WTO). Before this, he covered ao. multi-lateral environmental agreements (climate change, biodiversity, CITES) for the EU/Council at HQ (2001-3) and at the Danish Ministry of Energy and Environment (1993-1995 and 1999-2001).

Mininnguaq Kleist, Head of Greenland Representation to the EU Mininnguaq Kleist has since May 2016 been the Head of the Greenland Representation to the EU in Brussels. The Greenland Representation is involved in all the different agreements and relations Greenland has to the EU - including the EU-Greenland partnership agreement, the Fisheries Partnership Agreement, the Letter of Intent on mineral resources, etc. Prior to his posting in Brussels Kleist has worked extensively on the self-government development in Greenland, including as special advisor under the Greenland-Danish Self-Government Commission in 2005-2008. From 2007 to 2009 he led the Self-Government Office under the Home Rule Government in 2007-2009, during which a popular referendum on

the introduction of Self-Government was organized (2008), followed by the introduction of the Self-Government system in Greenland in 2009. Kleist subsequently worked in the management of the Department of Foreign Affairs later in 2009 - with responsibilities on climate policies, bilateral affairs and EU relations. In 2013 he took the position as director in The Premier's Office and it is from this position Kleist came, when he was posted in Brussels. Mininnguaq Kleist is a Master of Arts in Philosophy from 2004, Århus University, Denmark. He was born in Nuuk, Greenland, in 1973, and is married to Mari.

Marie-Hélène Tusseau-Vuillemin, Scientific Director of the "Environment, Agronomy, Ecology, Earth system and Universe Science", French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation

Since March 2018, Marie-Hélène Tusseau-Vuillemin is scientific director of the "Environment, Agronomy, Ecology, Earth system and Universe Science" in the Service for Research and Innovation Strategy of the French Ministry in charge of Research. She has a 20 years research experience in the fields of marine biogeochemistry and ecotoxicology. She is the previous Director of Research at Ifremer (the French Marine Research Institute).

Katarina Gardfeldt, Director-General, Swedish Polar Research Secretariat

Since January 1st 2018, Ms. Gardfeldt is appointed by the Swedish Government as Director-General for the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat, SPRS. She was the initiator of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Northern Europe (SDSN NE). She is Associate Professor in Environmental Inorganic Chemistry at Chalmers University of Technology, and the previous Director of the Centre for Sustainable Development (GMV) at University of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology

Jean Louis Etienne, IUCN Ambassador for Polar regions and the Oceans

Born in 1946, Dr. Jean Louis Etienne, is a French scientist, explorer, and MD in surgery, specialized in nutrition, biology of the sport, and physiology of human adaptation to extreme conditions. In 1977-78, he participated in the Whitbread Round the World Race. A mountain buff, he climbed peaks in the Himalayas, Patagonia and Greenland, among others. In 1986, he became the first person to reach the North Pole single-handedly, pulling his sled for 63 days in complete solitude. In 1989-90 he performed the first ever traverse of the Antarctic continent with dogs, over 7 months, covering nearly 4 000 miles. He later went on to explore the Erebus volcano on Antarctica, wintered in Spitzberg on his polar vessel Antarctica, and drifted on ice over the North Pole on board the Polar Observer. In April 2010, he managed the first traverse of the Arctic Ocean in a roziere balloon. His next project (2021-23) is an exploration of the Southern Ocean on board of PolarPOD, an international oceanographic station, driven by the Antarctic Circumpolar Current.

Participants

First Name	Surname	Company
Anna-Natasa	Asik	EASME
Kristina	Baer	Alfred-Wegener-Institut
Abraham	Bassolet	-
Kristina	Bat	Alfred-Wegener-Institut
Nicole	Biebow	Alfred-Wegener-Institut, EUPolarNet
Antje	Boetius	Alfred-Wegener-Institut
Maria Teresa	Cabrita	PRPOLAR
Jérôme	Chappellaz	French Polar Institute (IPEV)
Marie-Anne	Coninx	EEAS
Mette	Damsbo	Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education
Cecilia	Donati	Mercator Ocean
Caroline	Ellingsen	Mission of Norway to the EU
Jean-Louis	Etienne	IUCN
Gaia Maria	Fermanelli	EUROPARC Federation
Barbara	Ferreira	European Geosciences Union
David	Gallego Torres	EC: ERC
Attlio	Gambardella	European Commission
Katerina	Gårdfeldt	Swedish Polar Research Secretariat
LucyLucy	Gilliam	Transport & Environment
Piotr	Glowacki	Institute of Geophysics PAS
Ivan	Glushko	-
Thomas	Grandjouan	NOVE
Ina	Haldenmayr	Russian Mission UE
Ida	Heebøll	Copenhagen EU Office
Janne	Hirvonen	EEAS
Winfried	Hoke	European Climate Research Alliance (ECRA)
Heidi	HÖÖK	Political Advisor (AFET) to MEP Mirja Vehkaperä
Marie-Noelle	Houssais	CNRS
Nils Arne	Johnsen	Troms County Council
Torjris	Kandel	North Norway
Mininnguaq	Kleist	Greenland Representation to EU
Andreas	Krell	EU liaison office of the German research organisations
Tone-Cecilia	Lang	Mission of Norway to EU
Stephanie	Langerock	FPS Health, Food Chain safety and Environment
Katerina	Lazaridou	IOM - UN Agency for Migration / Office in Greece
Guido	Lena	UEAPME
Lise	Lotte Sørensen	Aarhus University
Raphael	Maier	-
Kurt	Nielsen	Aarhus University
Terkel	Petersen	EEAS
Paula C.	Qualizza	APA
Antonio	Quesada	Spanish Polar Committee

First Name	Surname	Company
Angela	Richter	Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres
Søren	Rysgaard	Aarhus University
Anna	Santoro	EC-JRC
Hannele	Savela	Thule Institute / University of Oulu
Christel	Schaldemose	MEP
Annette	Scheepstra	Arctic Centre, University of Groningen
Arthea	Sutherland	TUSIAD
Andrea	Tilche	European Commission
Maria	Tiyer Bodlund	Mid Sweden EU office
Lars Magne	Tungland	Equinor
Rein	Vaikmäe	Tallinn University of Technology
Mirja	Vehkapera	MEP
Nils K. S.	Wilson	North Norway
Esther	Winterhoff	Permanent Representation of Germany to the EU
Alberto	Zocchi	EASME