Chapter 1

SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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Chapter cover image: Greenlandic house right next to the Disco Bay.
Photo: GettyImages
1.1 Objective

The general objective of the Strategic Assessment of Development of the Arctic is “to assess the impacts of development in the Arctic and of European Union policies affecting the Arctic on the political, economic, and environmental landscape of the EU and the Arctic region”.

This objective has three dimensions:

- To provide an overview of changes and developments occurring in the Arctic (trends), including the implications of these changes for the EU environment, economy and societies (also specifically for the EU Arctic regions).
- To examine the role and influence of EU policies and actions in the Arctic.
- To involve stakeholders in discussion on the EU-Arctic relationship and incorporate stakeholder input into the assessment. A series of factsheets have been drafted to serve as background papers for the consultation process and as a starting point for report chapters.

Unlike typical strategic impact assessments, SADA does not assess a proposed policy and alternative policy options. Its primary aim is to provide an overview, based partly on input from stakeholders, of current Arctic development and the relationship between the EU and the Arctic.

SADA’s objective is to enhance knowledge of the EU among Arctic actors and of the Arctic within the EU by providing balanced, concise and up-to-date information both on the region and on the EU’s multifaceted roles in influencing Arctic trends.

1.1.1 Geographic Scope

This report covers the European Arctic, understood as a region extending from Greenland to northwest Russia (Figure 1.1), with a focus on areas where EU policies have the greatest leverage (Northern Fennoscandia and the European Economic Area). The report takes account of a pan-Arctic perspective where it is relevant for EU policy-making and the relationship between the EU and the Arctic.

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1.1.2 Thematic Scope

Seven themes – focused on change – have been chosen for assessment:

1. Climate Change in the Arctic
2. Changes in Arctic Maritime Transport
3. Changing Nature of Arctic Fisheries
4. Developing Oil and Gas Resources in Arctic Waters
5. Mining in the European Arctic
6. Activities Affecting Land Use in the European Arctic
7. Social and Cultural Changes in the European Arctic

Thematic chapters can be viewed as independent studies, which follow a similar structure, adjusted to the specifics of each theme:

- Overview of current trends in the Arctic including main drivers, environmental, social, political and economic impacts, and an overview of governance
- Outlook to 2030
- Implications of Arctic changes for the EU
- EU policies relevant for identified Arctic trends
- Critical factors for EU decision-making
- Recommendations

The chapters progress from general pan-Arctic discussion to issues specific to the European Arctic. Chapter 3 provides an overview of climate change in the region, and thereby constitutes a basis for the discussion presented in the other chapters, where climate change is examined as one of the drivers. Chapters 4 to 7 address specific developments occurring in the Arctic. Chapter 8 discusses a variety of issues connected with land-use pressures (including social conflicts or cumulative impacts). The multitude of terrestrial activities in the Arctic are discussed in an integrated manner. Mining, as a key terrestrial activity, is taken up separately in Chapter 7. Social and cultural changes in the European Arctic, connected partly with developments discussed in previous chapters, are examined in Chapter 9. Chapters 7-9 focus exclusively on the European Arctic with particular emphasis on the situation in Northern Fennoscandia. Chapter 10 serves as a summary and conclusion identifying the key messages of the assessment.

The assessment themes were chosen on the basis of: a scoping workshop (conducted among the project network in February 2013 in Rovaniemi, Finland), a review of recent Arctic assessments and debates, as well as initial outreach to stakeholders. Several issues are discussed across the report chapters, including indigenous peoples’ issues, biodiversity, research and Arctic governance. Some important topics, such as persistent organic pollutants, are not elaborated here as they have been discussed comprehensively in recent reports.

Figure 1.1: European Arctic as Defined in the Strategic Assessment of Development of the Arctic.  
Source: Arctic Portal, 2014.
1.1.3 Supporting EU Policy-Making

One of the aims of SADA is to assist the EU in its stated goal of being a more active, knowledgeable and responsible Arctic actor. The report offers guidance for EU decision-making regarding:

- Process of formulating an overarching Arctic policy.
- Decision-making regarding issues that are specifically Arctic.
- Policies that are designed for the general EU constituency, but have specific implications for the Arctic.

The guidance is composed of several elements:

- An overview of Arctic trends.
- Identification of the implications of Arctic developments for the EU.
- Identification of EU policies relevant for the Arctic.
- Critical factors for EU decision-making.
- Recommendations.
- Overview of the diverse opinions, interests and values among Arctic stakeholders (mainly in Annex 1).

The process has been also designed to contribute to forging a lasting partnership between Arctic stakeholders, EU policy-makers and Arctic experts.


1.2 Methodology and Assessment Process

SADA builds on two interlinked parallel processes: (i) internal expert-led assessment and (ii) stakeholder consultations (Figure 1.2). Thus, the study combines expert knowledge with stakeholders’ input.

1. SADA experts provided an overview of Arctic trends and developments, including their key drivers and important implications.
2. Based on this overview, implications of Arctic changes for the EU are identified (by identifying the EU’s interests and related policy areas affected by Arctic changes).
3. EU policies that affect or are relevant for Arctic changes are identified and assessed in general terms.
4. The information collected in the first phase of the assessment was presented in factsheets (www.arcticinfo.eu), which served as background papers for stakeholder consultations.
5. Stakeholder consultations were conducted through workshops (focused on interaction between stakeholders) and online questionnaires (collecting individual perspectives).
6. Assessment teams combined expert analysis with stakeholder input to develop a draft report, which was then submitted to stakeholders for further feedback.

Figure 1.2: Strategic Assessment of Development of the Arctic Process
1.2.1 Arctic Trends and Their Implications
The overview of Arctic trends and their implications as well as an understanding of the role of EU policies in shaping/responding to them is based on the significantly simplified DPSIR framework (driving force, pressures, state, impact and response). The framework, developed by the European Environment Agency, presents causal linkages between drivers and the pressures they exert on the environment/society, and the state of the environment/society under these stresses. Instead of pressure and a static notion of state in DPSIR, the assessment team adopted a dynamic approach (trends and developments). The assessment takes into account the diversity of the Arctic, characteristics of particular regions and the diverse values or viewpoints of different groups.

Trends are understood as changes occurring in the region in the recent past, currently and expected in the near future, as well as their general direction and pace. Discussing “Arctic trends” is a major simplification, as they are in fact a bundle of various, temporarily and spatially diverse changes.

The concept of a driver has been applied in SADA more broadly than in DPSIR (primarily human needs), and is understood as all elements that cause or shape certain activities, synonymous with driving factors, shaping elements or conditions of developments. Impacts or implications are understood as effects of changes on the environment, society, economy, culture and politics.

The report does not propose scenarios for Arctic developments. Nevertheless, as it identifies the drivers and critical factors for decision-making, it provides tools to consider Arctic futures. Each chapter features a brief assessment of likely developments to 2030 with an emphasis on uncertainties.

1.2.2 Identifying and Assessing EU Policies
The authors identified five dimensions of Arctic-relevant EU policies/actions:

- Those directly relevant for the EU Arctic (Finland and Sweden) and the European Economic Area (EEA, including Norway and Iceland, where significant parts of EU regulatory frameworks apply), including cohesion and co-operation programmes.
- Indirect impacts via policies and actions shaping the EU’s environmental and economic footprint in the region.
- Co-operation programmes in Greenland and northwest Russia.
- EU-funded research.
- EU influence on Arctic-relevant international developments (e.g. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and the Arctic Council).

The focus in SADA is on the policies and actions of the EU and not its individual member states, although often these cannot be clearly separated. Moreover, the majority of EU policies and actions affecting the Arctic are not designed specifically with the Arctic in mind, or if Arctic issues are considered, they constitute only a minor element within a multiplicity of policy considerations (see Chapter 2).

1.2.3 Critical Factors for Decision-Making
Each chapter includes a list of three to four critical factors for decision-making. The SADA team applied the concept of “critical factors for decision-making” – developed by Partidário – in a simplified manner, due to the broad scope/objective of the assessment and the needs of stakeholder engagement.

Critical factors for decision-making include:

- Most important and most uncertain issues.
- Key challenges that need to be taken into account in policy-making.
- Issues where significant differences between actors’ values occur, and which require stakeholder engagement.

Thus, critical factors refer to a broad array of issues, including drivers, values and significant impacts (e.g. biodiversity or employment), or main aspects or tools of governance (such as spatial planning).

Discussion and presentation of critical factors served several purposes:

- Identification of issues on which experts needed to focus in the final stage of assessment work.
- Discussions of critical factors revealed stakeholder opinions and values.
- Critical factors help to create a basis for future development of scenarios and alternatives for EU policies and decisions relevant for the Arctic.
- When policies refer to broad European constituency, the critical factors are those issues that must be taken into account with regard to the Arctic implications of EU policy choices.

1.2.4 Recommendations
Recommendations in SADA aim to suggest policy areas and actions that authors see as important for the EU.

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policy-makers to consider. The recommendations have been developed by the experts, building on the ideas proposed by stakeholders in the thematic workshops and online questionnaire, as well as on the analysis of Arctic trends and relevant EU policies. Therefore, the recommendations should not be seen as coming directly from stakeholders. Both the specific content and order of recommendations in each chapter is the choice of the authors. The proposed ideas have been analysed in the light of EU competences, in terms of their feasibility and realism, and alignment with EU Arctic policy guiding principles (knowledge, responsibility, engagement). The recommendations are the outcome of analysis conducted by the report authors, and they have not been drafted and agreed as a common position of the whole project network.

1.2.5 Stakeholder Consultations

The consultation process was one of the most important elements of SADA, creating a space for dialogue and contributing to long-term participatory partnerships. Stakeholders (in workshops and via an online questionnaire) scrutinised the approach of experts and were a crucial source of information. They provided guidance on the further focus of assessment work and proposed initial ideas for recommendations.

The team followed the principles of expert humility (to criticism and limitations of expert knowledge), openness (to other viewpoints), critical approach (to information coming from different sources), and long-term engagement.

Stakeholders were seen as representing certain viewpoints and sensitivities rather than specific institutions, organisations or groups. A broad understanding of Arctic stakeholders has been applied, including:

- Primary stakeholders – those likely to be positively or negatively affected.
- Secondary stakeholders – intermediaries in the policy-making process and its implementation – those who have critical interests, knowledge and expertise.
- Key stakeholders – those able to significantly influence the policy-making processes.

As a means of communication with stakeholders, a series of background papers (factsheets) were written in lay terms and based on existing studies (factsheets can be downloaded from www.arcticinfo.eu). The chapters in this report build from those factsheets.

Consultations were composed of several elements:

- Consultation meetings (in Rovaniemi in October 2013 and Tromsø in January 2014)
- Online questionnaire
- Interactive website
- Feedback process, where workshop participants and questionnaire respondents commented on the results of consultations and assessment
- Direct outreach to stakeholders by the report authors

1.3 Overview of Stakeholder Consultations

Tina Schoolmeester (GRID-Arendal) and Adam Stępień (Arctic Centre)

1.3.1 Stakeholder Consultation Meetings

Consultation meetings in Rovaniemi and Tromsø consisted of plenary sessions and content-focused workshops. During the general meetings, an overview of the project was presented and experts gave presentations to stimulate discussion on important trends and issues. A total of nine workshops addressed seven assessment themes. More than 1100 individual invitations were sent and about 200 participants attended the consultation meetings (including 30 members of the EUAIC network in each meeting), 120 of whom actively participated in the workshops.

The workshops proved a good way to communicate between the Arctic stakeholders and experts conducting the study. Participants gave generally positive feedback on both the format and the content of the consultation meetings and appreciated having the chance to express their own views and hear the opinions of other stakeholders.

Stakeholders in general agreed that common drivers for many Arctic developments are global demand for resources and a main natural physical driver – climate change. Broad public participation, especially of the local Arctic communities, has been identified in several workshops as a need, critical factor and a corresponding area for recommendations for EU policy-making. The importance of supporting research, education and technological development was also emphasised very extensively across the themes. Entrepreneurship and international co-operation (in particular with Russia) proved to rate highly, too, as did good governance and the need for clear regulations. It was also pointed out that the EU should be more actively involved in international negotiations (e.g. Polar Code, climate change negotiations). Respecting the local Arctic communities and ensuring that revenues from resources in the Arctic reach the local communities as well were also recurrent issues. Safety, security and preparedness
measures were deemed particularly important for offshore business development (shipping and oil and gas) due to the harsh and remote environment. Health and environmental concerns were among the frequently highlighted issues.

The report from the stakeholder consultation workshops in Rovaniemi and Tromsø can be found in Annex 1.1 (available online at www.arcticinfo.eu).

1.3.2 Online Questionnaires

The online questionnaires, which in general followed similar steps to those used in the workshops, aimed to provide concrete, individual inputs. Respondents were able to freely choose the questions they were interested in answering. The online questionnaire gathered 260 responses, around half of which were fairly substantial or extensive.

Often, the greatest criticism regarding the content of the factsheets was expressed by the representatives of the industry, clearly showing the need to engage practitioners in assessment work. Each comment from the stakeholders was considered and addressed as extensively as possible, taking into account stakeholders’ background.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of communication, participation and dialogue, in light of a number of misrepresentations of particular topics or of industries within the society. There is interest among the respondents in what the EU could do regarding various issues in the Arctic, but correspondingly little knowledge of the Union’s competences, policies and regulatory framework. Differences of opinion between various groups are evident.

The summary report from the online questionnaire is attached to this report as Annex 1.2 (available online at www.arcticinfo.eu).