

Arcticity – a source of dynamism and sustainable growth

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The Arctic region is going through a period of changes, as global warming and the melting of the glaciers and the northern sea ice will enable the creation of new transportation routes and the discovery of huge natural resources, such as oil deposits and minerals. Seventeen per cent of the world's mineral resources and a quarter of the oil and gas resources are located in Arctic areas. Seventy per cent of the EU's forest area is located in the Barents region and 50 per cent of the EU's fisheries come from the north. The Arctic Ocean, which is in the process of opening up, is providing a new trade route, while rapidly advancing changes in conditions and growing migration have increased global interest towards northern areas. The Arctic Ocean has become a shortcut between Europe, Asia and North America, whose value should also be realised in terms of foreign policy and security policy.

For some time now, Finland has underestimated her northern know-how. We often view icebreakers as a breakthrough in safely navigating ice conditions although, in reality, they represent "only" the tip of the iceberg of our Arctic marine expertise. Research on winter conditions, our expertise in weather-resistant technology and our Arctic know-how play an important role in our Arctic competence as a whole. For example, the Arctic Power Lab, operating in Rovaniemi, represents precisely the kind of progressive training and research cooperation that generates the ICT, energy and construction competence and smart solutions needed in the Arctic.

Finland has always been a forerunner in the Northern Dimension. We were the first to highlight the importance of the north in the EU. We have an ambitious Arctic strategy and the ability to consider the north in a sustainable manner.

It is splendid that Finnish universities have a strong presence in Arctic tourism and technology networks, for example. Northern companies have proved that cooperation and networking are beneficial, regardless of sector. For example, cooperation between tourism and the creative industries seems to be driving both sectors forward. In addition, there seems to be a clear link between the university networks and student employment in the area and the development of innovation activities and industry. For example, Finland's north2north student mobility

programme has been operating during the 15 years, it has shown how important the establishment of personal contacts is for sustainable development in the region. Erasmus has achieved the same in Europe.

Finland strives to support Arctic know-how through national projects. The Academy of Finland's Arctic Academy Programme (ARKTIKO, 2014–2018) aims to study and understand the process affecting the development of the Arctic region and the reasons underlying the change. The programme provides new research knowledge to support decision-making. The Arctic Seas programme of Tekes – the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation in turn aims to develop our expertise in core business areas such as marine technology, maritime transport, offshore solutions and environmental technology in northern waters.

It should be recognised that economic development in northern regions cannot be achieved sustainably or safely without close cooperation between countries. There are simply too many unresolved questions. We need even closer international cooperation and constant dialogue in the Arctic region. Northern companies have proved that cooperation and networking are beneficial, regardless of sector. For example, cooperation between tourism and the creative industries seems to be driving both sectors forward. Development of cooperation in the Arctic region must be highlighted as one of the priorities of Finland's external relations, and EU investment will be required in order to further northern projects.

An image survey of universities and universities of applied sciences conducted in 2014 by Taloustutkimus indicated that students studying in Lapland – irrespective of whether they were local or had come from other parts of the country – were happy to recommend Lapland University of Applied Sciences to new students. The same survey shows that degrees from Lapland University of Applied Sciences are valued in the labour market and provide better than average opportunities for internationalisation. It is excellent that the northernmost university of applied sciences in the European Union has specialised in Arctic expertise and in the needs of businesses operating in the north, and understands the good of the students as professionals in an international field.

I believe that Finland needs a sustainable north now more than ever. During her chairmanship in 2017, Finland is ready to focus on Arctic know-how and to develop the Arctic Council primarily as a cooperation forum dealing with issues relating to the Arctic. Although Finland

is a small country, our knowledge and active participation in issues pertaining to the northern region makes us an actor with more influence than our size would warrant.