

Session II - Policy and governance in the Arctic.

Rapporteur: Michał Łuszczuk, Ph.D.

Jan Kochanowski University, Kielce, Poland

List of speakers and titles of their presentations:

1. Gestur Hovgaard & Gretar Eypórsson: „The West Nordic region: Possibilities and role in future development in the North - Atlantic“
2. Dmitry Zimin: „Climate Change and the Northern Sea Route: A New Russian Strategy in the Arctic?“
3. Lisa Van Well & Johanna Roto: „The Arctic: Europe’s Strategic Neighborhood“
4. Heikki Eskelinen & Matti Fritsch: „Looking North – the Arctic Dimension in Finnish Regional Policy

This very well moderated by Mats Johansson session covered four interesting presentations and open, fruitful discussions. Unfortunately for the audience we had a chance to learn about the different lessons coming from analyses of the challenges and adaptation processes taking place in different parts of the circumpolar north.

Firstly, we learnt from the presentation by Gestur Hovgaard & Gretar Eypórsson about the Vestnorden region grouping three actually quite distinct entities: Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Presented study revealed that existing so far institutional, economic, socio-historical and cultural connections within this region are today seriously confronted with very new challenges, which to some extent make further regional cooperation even more difficult, e.g. in terms of the independence aspirations or fishery issues (just like ongoing “mackerel war” shows). However, there are also some bright sides and perspectives, like a very new idea of applying by the Westnordic Council to the Arctic Council for closer cooperation.

Secondly, thanks to Dmitry Zimin we get some insight into the Northern Sea Route current situation and its perspectives. His presentation focused on the advantages and disadvantages, factors affecting the dynamic of the traffic and future expectations. Speaker highlighted new developments in political and legal approaches to NRF in Russian authorities, however also pointed out lack of funds for necessary investments. During

following discussion the audience tried to deeper deliberate about the economic plans of China to use the NSR and development of new infrastructure to meet requirements connected with implementation of the SAR Agreement 2011.

Third presentation, given by Johanna Roto offered an interesting overview of the position of the Arctic region as a one of the Europe's strategic neighborhoods, especially from the perspective of the territorial capital of the Northern territories. This type of analysis, used by the researchers involved in the project run in a framework of the ITAN Project, clearly indicates that the Arctic in the times of the climate change is both source of opportunities and threats in Europe. Arctic's characteristics are very unique and in many cases challenging, both the Arctic states and also other partners like the European Union. In following discussion the problem of exploitation of the outcomes of the project in the process of further development of the EU Arctic Policy was raised.

The last, but not least presentation given by Heikki Eskelinen referred to the problem of the adaptation of the Finnish Regional Policy to the new situation in the circumpolar north, how this policy has been changed in recent years. The authors suggested that Finnish approach in this regard is rather open or even optimistic, since the climate change seems to be perceived as an opportunity for development of Lapland. Three main ideas were discussed: Lapland as a new transport corridor, as an information centre for Europe on the North and, as a unique resource for general development related to tourism or mining. As it was highlighted this approach to the consequences of the climate change is something different from approaches demonstrated on higher levels, e.g. in the European Union.

To conclude, the whole session offered a lot of inspiring observations and brought some new questions, including ones about required methods of analysis of the policy and governance issues in the Arctic. Discussions confirmed that presentations were delivered in an interesting way and concerned vital issues worth further studies.