

Gender mainstreaming in the EU Arctic policy

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Abstract

The article presents the analysis of the EU's process of integrating a gender mainstreaming approach into its Arctic policy. The qualitative research includes a literature review, content analysis of the official EU documents, and interviews with EU officials, researchers and experts. The results explain the motives behind the measures taken in the context of the EU's policy ambitions. The authors also identify the relevance of the EU gender mainstreaming in the Arctic in the context of a broader discussions on the region and its geopolitical and economic importance in the era of climate change. The research demonstrates the need for further EU Arctic policy to develop ideas and perspectives on gender equality, including more detailed action plans and intervention measures. Although the current strategy is not fully gender-responsive, it is seen as significant progress towards recognising gender perspectives and moving towards gender equality in the region.

Keywords: European Union (EU), gender mainstreaming, Arctic, climate change, EU Arctic policy.

Równość płci w polityce Unii Europejskiej wobec Arktyki

Streszczenie

W artykule dokonano analizy procesu włączania podejścia uwzględniającego problematykę równości płci do głównego nurtu polityki UE wobec Arktyki. Badanie jakościowe obejmuje przegląd literatury, analizę treści oficjalnych dokumentów Unii Europejskiej oraz wywiady z urzędnikami, badaczami i ekspertami UE. Wyniki wyjaśniają motywy podjętych działań w kontekście ambicji politycznych UE. Autorzy podkreślają także znaczenie uwzględniania aspektu równości płci przez UE w Arktyce w kontekście szerszych dyskusji na temat tego regionu oraz jego znaczenia geopolitycznego.

tycznego i gospodarczego w epoce zmiany klimatu. Badanie wskazuje na potrzebę dalszej polityki UE wobec Arktyki w celu opracowania pomysłów i perspektyw w zakresie równości płci, w tym bardziej szczegółowych planów działania i środków interwencyjnych. Chociaż obecna strategia nie uwzględnia w pełni aspektu równości płci, jednak jest postrzegana jako znaczący postęp w kierunku uznania perspektywy płci i dążenia do równości płci w regionie.

Słowa kluczowe: Unia Europejska (UE), podejście genderowe, równość płci, Arktyka, zmiany klimatu, polityka UE wobec Arktyki.

Gender equality has been the subject of social and political activity at the global, regional, and national levels for several decades. The progress that has been made in this area, on the one hand, indicates an increased awareness of the issue's importance and complexity (EIGE 2014). However, on the other hand, it constantly reveals various constraints that make the fight against inequality far from over (Segnestam 2018). Moreover, there are considerable differences in the issues that impede gender equality at the national and regional levels, which hinders the implementation of a more comprehensive and strategic approach. All of these constraints bring to mind the international community's struggle with other common crises of modern times, such as climate change, military conflicts and migration (UN Women 2020, 2021, 2022).

In such situation, where various inequalities still exist, the activity of actors with adequate political and financial resources who support gender equality on institutional and legislative levels — such as the European Union — can be an essential factor in the development of non-discrimination and security, both for individuals and larger communities. Moreover, this activity can also contribute to a more comprehensive solution to complex challenges and, through different types of influence, stimulate additional involvement of other stakeholders. Although knowledge of this subject is consistently expanded by new studies, the explanations to date regarding the motivation of such actors to undertake such tasks can hardly be considered complete. The question of what factors inhibit or reinforce these actors' willingness to act or to just put forward specific demands remains open.

This research is focused on a unique moment in the European Union's Arctic engagement, when a reference to gender mainstreaming – perceived as one of ways to improve the conditions of Arctic residents in the face of the consequences of climate change – was officially introduced to the EU Arctic policy in 2021. On the one hand, looking at the presence of gender mainstreaming policy in the EU's external policy for many years, this step seems overdue (Allwood 2020). However, on the other hand, given the EU's previous priorities in Arctic policy¹ (Raspotnik, Stępień 2020), this new and minor element can become a starting or trigger point. Notably, this new development is crucial, because the regional discussion on gender equality in the Arctic has just entered a new and more advanced phase (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021).

¹ Environmental protection, climate change, sustainable development, regional governance.

1. The article's aim and research methodology

This article's aim is to explore why and how the European Union decided to add gender mainstreaming to its Arctic policy. Secondly, it will be explained the importance of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the Arctic in current times, when geopolitical considerations seem to dominate discussions about the region's future. We argue that gender inequalities can almost effortlessly be relegated to the background of political debates, but that ignoring them in the long term is highly disadvantageous in social, economic, and ecological dimensions. In this context, the newest EU Arctic policy — at least in part dealing with gender equality issues — has acquired an important, though mainly symbolic, meaning. This research is based on academic literature review, an analysis of the official EU documents, and eight expert interviews with key EU officials (European External Action Service), researchers, and scientists focusing on foreign policy, Arctic research, and gender research, conducted online in 2022.

This study addresses a gap in academic understanding of dynamics and processes, through which the European Union's influence is created and operates within a complex and varied international regional landscape, where social policies appear to be overshadowed by more dominant concerns such as energy security, transportation, or fisheries. Consequently, the research outcomes contribute to the existing literature about the EU's external policies, gender mainstreaming, and the political advancements of gender equality in the Arctic region. This study not only increases the understanding of the EU's role in promoting gender equality, but also highlights the complexities and difficulties of the EU's multifaceted impact in a relatively new and dynamically changing region of the world.

2. Theoretical basis: gender mainstreaming in the Arctic

In this section we define gender mainstreaming and its importance in policy-making in the Arctic. This will help for clear understanding of gender inequality in the region, and clarify whether a gender mainstreaming tool is used in the Arctic governance.

2.1 Gender inequalities in the Arctic

Although gender equality is a fundamental human right (Fredman, Goldblatt 2015), much work needs to be done to actually achieve it. This also can be applied to the Arctic, where many people are confronted with alarming patterns and particular environmental and social issues that overlap with gender equality, despite the fact that the Nordic countries are at the top the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Index* (World Economic Forum 2022). In the last few years, focus on gender equality appeared in the Arctic governance while Iceland was in the Arctic Council Chairmanship 2019–2021 (see: Arctic Council 2021a). During its chairmanship, Iceland maintained that gender equality is an important element for achieving sustainable development, and it continued to lead a project aimed at the promotion of the dialogue on gender equality in the Arctic (Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2019). The *Pan-Arctic Report: Gender Equality in the Arctic – Phase 3*

(GEA) is a study (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021), which is considered as a valuable source of knowledge of gender issues in the Arctic region. It includes six chapters on gender equality, ranging from the topics of law and governance to security and the environment.

Human development and gender equality issues have gotten comparatively little attention from domestic governments or international organisations as a result of their focus on the economic possibilities of the Arctic. Existing gender disparities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also highlighted and magnified worldwide social, health, economic, and political vulnerabilities (UN Women 2020). Due to a lack of comprehensive data, accurately analysing gendered reality in the Arctic continues to be very difficult.

Eight nations, as well as regional and municipal entities, must be considered while looking at the Arctic, because they all have different definitions and perspectives of gender issues. In such situation, creating a unified strategy for gender-related data is a challenge (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021).

One of the problems in the North is highly gendered migration and mobility. The authors of the chapter on migration in GEA report note that men exceed women in terms of outmigration and that men outnumber women in most Arctic locations. One element that might support inequality and act as a catalyst for female outmigration is the skewed sex ratio. Brain drain is associated with outmigration. Many Arctic residents, who move south to pursue further education or work, do not go back to the North. Although sectors like offshore oil and gas and mining contribute significantly to the Arctic's economic foundation and offer job possibilities, these sectors are frequently male-dominated, but women are only 1/5 of the workforce in the oil and gas industry (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021).

The GEA report also highlights the fact that gender-based violence is still a major problem in the Arctic. In the context of ongoing settler-colonial interactions, indigenous women and girls experience disproportionately more violent victimisation. However, there hasn't yet been a comparative study of violence in the Arctic. Another essential component of a resilient and sustainable community is gender empowerment, a concept closely related to fate control. In order to guarantee that initiatives are culturally, economically, and politically relevant in each Arctic region and community, the authors of the empowerment chapter highlight the necessity of keeping an emphasis on empowerment, while embracing human variety (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021).

2.2. The concept of gender mainstreaming

"The concept of gender mainstreaming was first introduced at the 1985 Nairobi World Conference on Women. It was established as a strategy in international gender equality policy through the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the 1995 Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, and subsequently adopted as a tool to promote gender equality..." (Council of Europe W/W/W; see also: Daly 2005; Lomazzi, Crespi 2019). Gender mainstreaming is a strategy of significant importance "for achieving gender equality in the public sector among the Member States. The EU adopted gender mainstreaming in 1997 with the Treaty of Amsterdam (art. 2, 3), which came into force in 1999." (Bendl, Schmidt 2013). The term *gender mainstreaming* refers to "the (re)organization,

improvement, development and evaluation of the policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making" (Council of Europe 1998: p. 13).

Gender mainstreaming refers to the integration of the gender equality perspective across all government action. "Gender equality refers to the equal participation of women and men in different life domains (e.g., the economy, social life, politics, education)" (Abendroth 2020). Gender mainstreaming is "a deliberate and systematic approach to integrating a gender perspective into analysis, procedures, and policies" (Bendl, Schmidt 2013). It shifts focus away from individuals and their rights or shortcomings and disadvantages, towards "those systems, processes, and norms that produce such inequalities" (Rees 1998, cited in Daly 2005: p. 438; Bendl, Schmidt 2013). Thus, gender mainstreaming is a technique for achieving gender equality that is focused on changing structures and procedures by challenging the mainstream and supposing that institutions and organisations may need to change in order to achieve gender equality (Lomazzi, Crespi 2019).

As a strategy for achieving equality, gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally (Rees 2005). Integrated gender perspectives are included in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, regulations, and spending programmes with the aim of promoting equality and eliminating discrimination (EIGE 2016). By ensuring that policies and regulations take into account both women and men, the gender mainstreaming process guarantees that policies are of higher quality and have greater relevance to society. In addition to preventing inequalities from being created or reinforced, which can negatively affect both women and men, gender mainstreaming also helps to create opportunities for women (Lavena, Riccucci 2012).

2.3. The gender mainstreaming gap in the Arctic

The presence of gender mainstreaming in the scope of Arctic politics can be considered from at least two perspectives: the regional (pan-Arctic) and the national (Arctic states). Starting with the former, it can be argued that gender issues are relevant for the Arctic Council, particularly for its Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), which has highlighted gender equality in some of its previous projects (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021). Looking from a historical perspective, we can notice two strands of growing interests in the gender issues in the works of the Arctic Council. The first one began at the turn of the century and was initiated by the 2002 Taking Wing Conference in Inari, which was "focused on the themes of women and work, gender and self-determination among Indigenous Peoples, and violence against women" (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021: p. 3; see also: MSAH 2002; Arctic Council 2002). The steps taken at that time resulted in a few reports focused on or including gender mainstreaming and increased knowledge about the scale and importance of the topic (Sloan 2004, 2006; Einarsson et al. 2004). The second strand started in 2013 when — inspired by Iceland — a multiannual collaborative project called *Gender Equality in the Arctic* (GEA) began under the auspices of the SDWG: initially as a conference (see: Oddsdóttir et al. 2015), and then in the form of the cooperation network on Gender Equality in the Arctic. "GEA highlights the importance of

recognising and appreciating diversity in terms of discourses, gender, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples, governance, education, economies, social realities, sustainability, and balanced participation in leadership and decision making in the public and private sectors" (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021: p. 3).

Gender equality became a priority of Iceland's Arctic Council Chairmanship (2019–2021), which concluded in 2021 with the publication of the groundbreaking *Pan-Arctic Report: Gender Equality in the Arctic – Phase 3* (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021). The declaration, issued at this occasion during the Council's Ministerial Meeting in Reykjavík, "includes by far the strongest statement on gender equality in the history of the AC to date" (Prior, Smieszek 2023: p. 1). Namely, it "emphasize[s] the importance of gender equality and respect for diversity for sustainable development in the Arctic [...], encourage[s] the mainstreaming of gender-based analysis in the work of the Arctic Council and call[s] for further action to advance gender equality in the Arctic" (Arctic Council 2021b: p. 4).

At the same time, it should be noted that the Arctic Council "has been criticised for not adequately prioritising gender equality, both internally and among Arctic States" (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021: p.42; see also: Gunnarsson, Svensson 2017; Lahey et al. 2014). This observation leads to the second, national perspective regarding the presence of gender mainstreaming in the scope of Arctic politics. According to study presented in the *Pan-Arctic Report*, "the Russian Federation, the U.S., and Finland do not address gender equality explicitly in their Arctic policies, while others include gender considerations in various forms" (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021: p. 43; see also: Heininen et al. 2020). Moreover, it is argued that "the terminology in the policies varies to some extent. None of the policies refers explicitly to the legal principle of equal rights between men and women or elaborates on the options for interpreting this principle formally or substantively" (Oddsdóttir, Ágústsson 2021: p. 44).

3. EU Arctic policy

In this section, we will overview and analyse EU Arctic policy to explore its background, development, and scope.

3.1. The EU in the Arctic

The EU is considered as an Arctic actor mainly due to the geographical arguments highlighting that three of its Member States are Arctic states: Finland, Sweden and Denmark (on behalf of Greenland). While Greenland itself is outside of the EU, it is linked through the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (Bennedsen Witt, Gstir-Svenstrup 2019). Additionally, the EU closely collaborates with two other Arctic states (Iceland and Norway) within the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA not only extends the spatial scope of EU legislation beyond the EU Member States' territorial jurisdiction, but it actually creates a single market for all state parties (Lourenço 2019). In addition, the EU, Iceland and Norway have been engaged since 1999 in the *Northern Dimension*, which has been a common policy between them and Russia focused on economic collaboration and sustainable development in Northern Europe (Karhunen, Kosonen 2021). These geopolitical and economic frameworks

in the European Arctic shape "a strong, multidimensional regional presence" for the EU – mainly of a legal and financial nature (Raspotnik, Stępień 2020: p. 132).

Diversified impacts of several EU policies and legislation are noticeable in various areas, including environmental protection, climate change policy, regional development, and the last, but not least, Arctic research (Koivurova et al. 2021; Chuffart, Raspotnik 2019).

Moreover, the region is also impacted by the economy and population of the EU in terms of its huge market influence: particularly, huge market influence, stemming from the growing demand for Arctic resources such as hydrocarbons and raw materials (Raspotnik, Stępień 2020). The EU's environmental and climatic footprints in the Arctic should also be taken into account (Stępień et al. 2016; Koivurova et al. 2021). Finally, very recently, due to Russia's foreign policy, the hard security concerns related to the EU and its Member States' interests in the Arctic have become visible (Raspotnik, Østhagen 2022).

In addition to its activities within its Member States' territories and its external cooperation in the European Arctic, the EU is also involved as an important stakeholder in pan-Arctic arrangements and organisations, including the Arctic Council, and other international or even global initiatives (agreements, programmes, and discussions) related to the Arctic region, particularly in fields of climate change policy, environmental protection, maritime policies, and scientific collaboration. In many of these fields, the EU frequently endeavours to assume the role of a norm entrepreneur (Chuffart et al. 2021), which is particularly relevant in the context of gender mainstreaming.

3.2. The development of the EU Arctic policy

While the EU had already contributed to different political and economic developments taking place in the European Arctic going back to the 1970s (Ojanen 2000; Palosaari, Möller 2004; Myrjord 2003), its interests in the region developed significantly around 2004–2007 (Airdoldi 2008, 2010, 2014). The declared starting point for the development of the EU Arctic policy were then the reasons regarding the rapid increase in multidimensional threats and risks growing in the Arctic due to the climate change. As the European Commission explained in 2008, environmental changes caused by climate change, acting as a 'threat multiplier', "are altering the geo-strategic dynamics of the Arctic with potential consequences for international stability and European security interests calling for the development of an EU Arctic policy" (European Commission 2008: p. 2). "Responding to climate change and safeguarding the Arctic environment, promoting sustainable development and strengthening international cooperation" have been constantly highlighted in all documents published between 2008 and 2021 (see *Table 1*). For this reason, these issues might be called the "founding pillars of the integrated EU policy for the Arctic" (European Parliament 2021: par. 17).

Ever since 2008, the main EU institutional actors have developed a dedicated EU Arctic policy structured around five resolutions of the European Parliament (2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2021), one communication by the European Commission (2008), three joint communications by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2012, 2016, 2021), and three conclusions by the Council of the European Union (2009, 2014, 2019).

Table 1: The European Union's main documents related to Arctic policy, 2008-2021.

Year	Document	Key messages/topics/objectives
2008	European Parliament resolution on Arctic governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - climate change, energy and security policy, maritime traffic; - pursuing 'observer status' in the Arctic Council.
2008	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: <i>The European Union and the Arctic Region</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "protecting and preserving the Arctic in harmony with its population; - promoting sustainable use of resources; - contributing to Arctic multilateral governance" (European Commission 2008: p. 3).
2009	Council conclusions on Arctic issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acceptance "of the Commission Communication of 20 November, 2008, on the European Union and the Arctic region" (Council of the European Union 2009: p. 1).
2011	European Parliament resolution on a sustainable EU policy for the High North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new world transport routes in Arctic; - access to the natural resources; - climate change and pollution effects on the Arctic; - sustainable socioeconomic development; - multilevel governance in the region (European Parliament 2011).
2012	Joint Communication of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security to the European Parliament and the Council: <i>Developing a European Union policy towards the Arctic Region: progress since 2008 and next steps</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - environmental expertise and enhancing the protection of the Arctic environment; - multidisciplinary Arctic research; - harnessing information about/for/in Arctic; - EU funding for sustainable development; - sustainable management and use of resources; - international cooperation on Arctic matters (Joint Communication 2012: p. 6-11).
2014	European Parliament resolution on the EU's strategy for the Arctic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - freedom of research in the Arctic; - safety, emergency preparedness and rescue facilities, environmental safety in the Arctic; - environmentally and socially responsible investments (European Parliament 2014).
2014	Council conclusions on developing a European Union Policy towards the Arctic Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acceptance of the documents of the European Commission (2012) and European Parliament (2014). (see: Council of the European Union 2014).

2016	Joint Communication of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security to the European Parliament and the Council: <i>An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - climate change and safeguarding the Arctic environment (including research, climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, and protecting the environment); - sustainable development in and around the Arctic (including sustainable innovation, regular dialog between EU and Arctic stakeholders, investments in infrastructure projects, space technology, and safe and secure maritime activities); - international cooperation on arctic issues (multilateral, bilateral dialogue with Arctic indigenous peoples; main areas: fisheries and research). (Joint Communication 2016: p. 5-16)
2017	European Parliament resolution on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - energy security in the context of climate change; - environmental protection; - international collaboration; - freedom of navigation and innocent passage; - indigenous peoples and local communities; - unregulated fishing in the Arctic (European Parliament 2017).
2019	Council conclusions on the EU Arctic Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acceptance for Joint Communication 2016; - continued significant contribution, both at regional and multilateral fora which deal with Arctic matters (Council of the European Union 2019).
2021	European Parliament resolution on the Arctic: opportunities, concerns and security challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - international cooperation; - climate change in the Arctic; - geopolitical developments in the Arctic, - safeguarding freedom of navigation; - sustainable development and exploitation of strategic resources; - serving local communities and preserving the rights of indigenous peoples; - science and knowledge; - more EU in the Arctic, more Arctic in the EU (European Parliament 2021: p. 118-128).
2021	Joint Communication of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security to the European Parliament and the Council: <i>A stronger EU engagement for a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous Arctic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintaining dialogue and cooperation; - intensifying regional cooperation and developing strategic foresight on security challenges; - addressing the ecological, social, economic and political challenges arising as a consequence of the climate change; - climate change and environmental degradation; - making the Arctic more resilient; - inclusive and sustainable development of the Arctic regions (Joint Communication 2021: p. 2).

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on documents from the database EUR-Lex.

4. Research results

In this section we highlight the outcomes of the interviews with politicians and researchers² conducted in spring of 2022. Our findings are related to: (1) the present role of gender mainstreaming in the Arctic, (2) the specifics of the gender issues in the Arctic, and (3) the perspective of future possibility for gender mainstreaming in the EU Arctic policy.

4.1. The role of gender mainstreaming in the Arctic

Gender equality and representation are urgent issues, and they are more visible in situations that are specific for industry. So, to consider, for instance, the extractive sectors, it is obvious that there is a gender imbalance in this industry and that women's perspectives are not valued or included in this space. The other issue is the question of how small communities can develop in a more balanced way of representation of women, taking into account the fact that extractive industries are typically male-dominated. In this case, regional development must be taken into consideration, and the EU should do the same when developing cross-border programmes and cohesion initiatives. If we limited our attention to conversations about various forms of economic development in the Arctic, we would find that they too are heavily gendered. So many of the socioeconomic problems encountered in the Arctic are gendered. More women are leaving the area, which raises the issue of outmigration and higher suicide rates harming more men. This situation demonstrates that the Arctic faces unique challenges, that might not be familiar or urgent in the EU. Traditional ways of living, infrastructure, Indigenous peoples' perspective, forced migration and many other Arctic-specific issues are unique and should be taken into account when discussing gender inequalities in the region.

As a result, gender issues are very visible in the Arctic region. In different parts of the Arctic these issues are perceived and viewed in different ways, and this fact makes the situation even more complex. Based on the conducted interviews, we can conclude that gender issues in the Arctic are unique and include multiple dimensions. The Arctic is a unique region, geopolitically, and it requires more attention to how gender is taken into consideration when it comes to different areas of the region. Gender issues in the region require creating an approach that will assist in solving those specific issues, and gender mainstreaming could potentially be beneficial in this matter.

Based on the interviews that were conducted, the question of how to solve these problems fits under a variety of categories. Gender equality, education and economic development are interconnected. Education is vital for young people in the region, indigenous people, and other marginalised communities. The same issue comes with economic development, for example, with funding and regional development

² Semi-structured interviews with EU officials (European External Action Service) and researchers who have expert knowledge about foreign policy, Arctic research, and gender research. The selection of respondents was both targeted and comprehensive, encompassing a broad spectrum of insights and expertise relevant to our study's focus. The collected research material was analysed by using qualitative content analysis.

programmes that should be more inclusive and supportive of women's participation. For instance, connectivity is essential when discussing education and the development of business. Having proper satellite coverage is essential nowadays for the future growth of the region. Some examples include the assistance for youth organisations to have a secretariat, bringing together women decision-makers for seminars, and connecting municipalities for exchange of the best practices.

Another strategy for solving gender inequality is increasing representation of women. There is definitely a need to have a place for women to be full community participants in terms of actually being key economic driving forces (e.g., in tourism business or other enterprises). Additionally, there is a focus on gender balance in the programming committees, as well as on the idea of representation for young people. It is necessary to consider gender-related issues with the strategy evaluations and impact analyses carried out for these programmes. Obviously, it is necessary to ensure that women's voices are heard in every setting, including conferences and meetings. However, it is particularly significant to have them heard in decision-making bodies, common committees, or advisory committees. There is a reason, why it is frequently quite difficult to find women in decision-making bodies for logistics and resource extraction.

Statistics and lack of data is another issue, as there is a need to present them in order to discuss various issues from a more specific perspective. The GEA report identifies issues that were well documented and also highlights the gaps in gender equality in the Arctic. As a result, there is a need for better data to truly understand the variations in living conditions between men and women and determine whether or not they were justified. Gender equality within this larger context refers to more than just eliminating discrimination, it also refers to gender balance, which is a crucial component of national and regional growth.

Based on the information received from the experts, we can conclude that the main goal is to include women in education, all sectors of the economy, create a proper representation of women and focus on eliminating the lack of proper data needed in order to solve gender issues in the Arctic region. With regard to long-term development, this is something that makes the societies in the north and in the periphery more stable, creating more opportunities for women in the future.

4.2. Gender mainstreaming in the EU Arctic policy

The notion 'gender mainstreaming' was originally used at the 1995 Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing, and the EU quickly adopted it. Therefore, by 1996, the EU had already made clear that it was committed to the idea of gender mainstreaming and that it was essential to ensure that gender mainstreaming was completely integrated into all of its programmes. It was a very significant step. Between the mid-1990s and about 2004, the EU saw some important changes, particularly in terms of its actors and organisational structure. In terms of actors, the expansion to the North marked the beginning while the expansion to Central and Eastern Europe signified the end (Kelemen, McNamara 2021). The Treaty of Amsterdam marked the beginning of structural changes, while the

discussion over the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe and the launch of the Euro marked the end. These basic adjustments had a significant impact on EU gender equality policy as well, resulting in notable advancement in many areas. Due to two changes, the Commission's options for expanding the reach of its gender equality policy have significantly shifted since the mid-1990s. First, the expansion to the North and the years before it, made clear that Sweden and Finland, as new Member States, strongly supported and were willing to negotiate a well-developed gender equality policy as a key component of the accession agenda. Second, a new political approach, known as gradual gender mainstreaming, was backed by the Fourth UN International Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, and its predecessors. Due to the addition of new articles and revision of old ones, the Treaty of Amsterdam was widely regarded as a turning point for gender equality policy. The EU also mandated that every policy must consider how it will affect gender equality. This served as the legal foundation for the gender mainstreaming effort, in significant part (Ahrens 2018).

Another important aspect of gender mainstreaming in the European Union is the Gender Action Plan. The EU's most recent Gender Action Plan (GAP III) outlines three principles that will govern the EU's approach to gender in external action: a gender-transformative approach, an approach that considers intersectionality, and an approach based on human rights. According to the GAP III, tackling intersectionality requires the EU to focus on the most disadvantaged women, while also taking into account other variables that may disadvantage women, such as racial/ethnic and religious background, age, disability, and sexual orientation. It builds on the Gender Action Plan 2010-2015 (GAP I) and the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (GAP II). EU efforts on gender equality have received limited attention in EU external activity, and a recent evaluation was critical of the EU's help in this area (Teevan 2021).

Based on the interviews with EU representatives, it is implied that the topic of gender in the EU Arctic strategy was rather more accidentally overlooked in the case of EU Arctic policy. We cannot construct a policy like the European Security and Defence Policy, which has a strong treaty framework, because the Arctic policy is weakly justified by the current legal papers. There is currently a broader cultural and political shift taking place in the world, and it has become evident both that the president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has spent a lot of political capital in a political paradigm that she is acutely aware of, and what political efforts should be made to advance gender equality. The EU Arctic strategy is not superior, but comparable to the rest of the EU's framework of policies.

Taking into account the 2016 EU Arctic strategy, and what was lacking in it, the new updated Arctic policy has included the massive change. The 2016 EU Arctic policy included three primary objectives: (1) fighting climate change and protecting the environment, (2) sustainable development, and (3) the promotion of international cooperation. These pillars are also properly described in the new, updated, EU Arctic policy. However, it was surprising to see that there was no information on youth or gender in the 2016 policy, even though local communities and indigenous peoples were included in both

the 2016 report and the one before it. Ultimately, though, even those who refuse to include gender in these policies must confront gender issues if they are to create modern, forward-looking policies.

There has been a significant shift in the way that individuals in the Arctic, especially women, people of colour, young people, and indigenous people, are represented. Fortunately, there is a clear trend that shows an increase in representation of these groups. Although the voices of indigenous people have become louder, this does not mean that everyone respects or agrees with what they have to say. Women, equality, and youth have not yet undergone the same transformation. Women must be involved in all decision-making processes, from the formulation to the execution and developing policies, in order for everything to be inclusive. Gender mainstreaming is necessary nowadays, and there ought to be a stronger commitment to it. More importantly, mentioning gender in the policy is not a commitment, rather it is a major change that should be backed up by evidence, as this policy was only recently introduced at the end of 2021. There is a need to monitor the situation in order to determine whether any results were achieved or if there was any progress in that area. It is possible that institutions like the European Parliament, for instance, will play a significant role in the discussion with the key politicians responsible for the Arctic deal regarding the progress of the policy that was implemented. However, there is a need to truly look at what was promised in the EU, and then try to carry that into other regions, especially when compared to other Arctic states. If the Arctic states have even addressed gender mainstreaming the way the EU has, as that is the fundamental tenet of foreign policy.

The fact that gender was mentioned in EU Arctic policy is very promising, because inserting even a straightforward term or commitment requires a lot of work, and the European Parliament frequently carries it out. Therefore, the policy frequently enters the Parliament entirely gender-blind and exits the Parliament with a minimal focus on gender. In between, there is a lot of gender mainstreaming that goes on. It is important to follow the development of these texts, and it is crucial that these declarations of principle are being made. Despite the fact that they may appear repetitious and automatic, the mere fact that they exist indicates that they are useful. As a result, it is important to follow the development of the Arctic policies, specifically whether there will be focused on the topic of gender and specific actions implemented regarding gender.

4.3. Perspectives of EU Arctic policy and gender mainstreaming in the Arctic

The transition of societies, the gender gap and climate change, followed by transition of the EU and its policies – are processes with both positive and negative outcomes. Although it is inevitable, policymakers will be compelled to achieve gender equality. As a result, women's empowerment and trying to mainstream gender issues is vital if one wants to pursue proper policymaking. Despite the fact that current EU Arctic policy is not a fully gender-sensitive document, it is a great step forward that the policy is taken into account from the gender perspective.

The EU's emphasis on how people conduct Arctic science in general was also quite beneficial. Of course, it is one case that already illustrates a different problem with gender mainstreaming in the entire EU. Arctic science is naturally a component of the considerably bigger EU science and research portfolio in this respect. As a result, it is a reflection of the far more extensive talks and developments occurring at the EU level. It goes hand in hand, and, in that regard, this broader EU strategy benefits Arctic science. There is a drawback to this, because it demonstrates that the EU Arctic strategy is not specifically focused on the challenges of gender mainstreaming.

EU Arctic policy is unquestionably on the right track — and not just when it comes to gender — especially when compared to earlier iterations. Undoubtedly, gender equality should be a priority in all EU policies. The EU is required by its treaties to mainstream gender in all of its internal and external actions. It should have been present from the beginning, thus, it is incredibly intriguing that gender issue was mentioned in 2021. So, this came after the third external action plan on gender. It was at the outset of the new gender equality policy, which was also unveiled in 2020, so it ties in well with promises to produce academic work. The fact that it was included in the records is crucial.

Conclusions

The Arctic is the area of growing strategic importance, and the EU has a critical role to play in ensuring successful Arctic cooperation and addressing the region's difficulties. Gender equality is an essential principle of the EU, as expressed in the Treaty on the European Union, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Over decades, the EU has enacted a significant corpus of law on problems such as equal treatment in work and profession, closing gender pay inequalities, and encouraging women's participation in labour market. Aside from that, the EU is dedicated to advancing gender equality in decision-making, addressing gender-based violence, and promoting gender equality and women's rights globally, in accordance with both the Beijing Declaration and the SDGs. In Arctic issues, the European Union has a unique position. The EU's connection to the Arctic is heavily influenced by the complex combination of various effects, overlapping agendas and stakeholders. As a result, the EU has a strong impact on the Arctic affairs, and the policy that the EU develops for the Arctic region has an influence on different areas of the region and its future overall.

Gender equality is becoming more prevalent in debates about the Arctic. It has been pushed by Iceland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council and is expressly mentioned in the Arctic policies of all Nordic countries. The EU implemented a number of new plans in 2020 with the goal of attaining gender equality both within the EU and globally, with a focus on the empowerment of women and girls. Main points of the policy emphasise the inclusion of gender equality as one of the overarching principles in a new Arctic communication, as well as promotes gender equality, and the empowerment of women in and through EU-funded Arctic scientific research. In this case, with the EU's assistance, the Arctic Council has a unique opportunity to encourage research and initiatives that

will help people comprehend gender equality. There has to be a larger commitment to gender mainstreaming. In the current EU Arctic policy, gender issues were mentioned for the first time, which can be perceived as an indicator of the future development of gender mainstreaming in the Arctic policies, as well as of a broader focus on the topic of gender issues in general. Since the policy was implemented at the end of 2021, over the course of the upcoming years, gender-related issues need to be observed in order to see whether any outcomes were obtained or if any progress was made in EU Arctic policy. The new Arctic policy echoes the broader approach used by EU programmes, placing emphasis on youth issues and gender equality. The policy envisions research and regional development funding to support better understanding and visibility of these perspectives, although there is a lack of more concrete ideas and specific measures. As a result, future EU Arctic policies develop these ideas and perspectives of gender and youth, but with more concrete plans and specific measures that should be mentioned in the policy.

By leaving out half the population, governments are not accomplishing what they are intended for. In order to genuinely work towards gender equality, women's empowerment and efforts to mainstream gender problems are crucial. Even the 2021 EU Arctic policy is not exactly a gender-sensitive text in many aspects. Another element that may be seen as a new possibility is the fact that the entire policy is considered from a gender perspective. Especially when compared to past revisions, this document puts EU Arctic policy firmly on the right track, and not just in terms of gender. The EU should include gender equality into all of its internal and external actions, as required by its treaties. Gender mainstreaming may be an effective approach to further development of the gender perspective in the future EU Arctic policies, as the EU can also play a decisive role in promoting gender equality through its foreign actions. The fact that it was included in EU Arctic policy in 2021 – is an important step towards achieving gender equality.

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