



MARITIME FORUM

EU policy on indigenous Arctic people

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Policy objectives

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - The European Union and the Arctic region (COM/2008/0763 fina) [2]

Arctic indigenous peoples in the EU are protected by special provisions under European Community Law[7]. A key principle of the Joint Statement on EU development policy[8] is the full participation and free, informed consent of indigenous peoples. EU regional policy and cross-border programmes also benefit indigenous peoples, whose organisations participate in the Northern Dimension. Rights of indigenous peoples are a thematic priority under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.

Hunting marine mammals has been crucial for the subsistence of Arctic populations since prehistoric times and the right to maintain their traditional livelihood is clearly recognised. However, modern human activities have put certain of these species in danger and there is growing concern in the EU about animal welfare. EU policies should continue to take all factors into account, seeking an open dialogue with the communities concerned.

Proposals for action :

1. Engage Arctic indigenous peoples in a regular dialogue.
2. Provide opportunities for self-driven development and the protection of their lifestyle.
3. Support in particular the organisations and activities of the Saami and of other peoples of the European Arctic, inter alia under regional and cross-border programmes. Promote Northern European know-how in reindeer husbandry.
4. Continue efforts ensuring effective protection of whales especially within the framework of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), including in the Arctic context. Support proposals for the management of indigenous subsistence whaling, provided that conservation is not compromised, whaling operations are properly regulated and catches remain within the scope of documented and recognised subsistence needs.
5. Conduct dialogues with indigenous and other local communities traditionally engaged in the hunting of seals.
6. The Community is currently considering banning the placing on the market, import, transit and export of seal products. However, this should not adversely affect the fundamental economic and social interests of indigenous communities traditionally engaged in the hunting of seals. Under the terms of the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning trade in seal products[9], seal products resulting from hunts traditionally conducted by Inuit communities which contribute to their subsistence are exempted. The proposal also foresees that

trade is allowed in other cases where certain requirements are met regarding the manner and method whereby seals are killed and skinned. The Commission's dialogue with the indigenous communities concerned will aim to facilitate the practical implementation of these provisions.

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[2] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:DKEY=483680:EN:NOT>