



Draft

Title: **The EGP calls for a new binding legal regime to protect the Arctic**

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Draft text

1 The European Green Party considers conservation and protection of the oceans an
2 urgent matter in the face of the climate and nature crisis. In a rapidly
3 changing ocean, a more accessible Arctic region is more vulnerable than ever to
4 environmental and industrial conflicts, calling for an updated, coordinated and
5 special approach to governance.

6 The Arctic holds some of the world's most sensitive and fragile marine areas, in
7 which the marine environment is under a constant threat from human activities.
8 As climate change and rising temperatures cause ice-covered areas to decrease in
9 volume, decision-makers see commercial and industrial opportunities rather than
10 conservatory and preservatory ones. The Arctic is warming up to three times
11 faster than the rest of the planet. The melting of ice and thawing of permafrost
12 in the Arctic further accelerate climate change and have huge knock-on effects.
13 Offshore drilling and other oil and gas activities pose many dangers to the
14 Arctic marine environment, such as operational pollution, rubbish and sewage, an
15 influx of peoples, air pollution, noise and light pollution, and emissions from
16 the burning of fossil fuels, to mention a few. In addition, new opportunities
17 for fishing and shipping threatens the unregulated areas in the Arctic.

18 While the EU has taken important [initiatives](#) for conservation of the Arctic, the
19 European Green Party wishes to further this stance through specifying the
20 objectives, framework and targets by urging the development of a legally binding
21 agreement that regulates and prevents oil and gas operations in the Arctic. In
22 the face of a complete meltdown, the Arctic region demands protection in

23 accordance with the changing sea ice persistence. The EU should use its economic
24 and political weight to enforce regulatory tools to ensure a moratorium on oil
25 and gas activities in the Arctic. As with imports of food to ensure food
26 security, and the current proposal on Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, the EU
27 should use its ability to enforce emission reduction requirements on ships
28 navigating through the Arctic to European ports as well as imposing a ban on
29 imports of oil and gas from the region.

30 While the Arctic Ocean consists of vast areas which provide for the freedom of
31 the high seas, and the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Fish Stocks
32 Agreement provide a relevant and extensive overview of the management of the
33 Arctic region, there is no legally binding instrument in which the region is
34 managed. While Regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) exist across
35 international waters, there is a lack of regional management in the Pan-Arctic
36 region. Climate change's impact on ecosystems could lead to intensified
37 competition between fisheries, causing stress for the environment. The lack of
38 regulatory instruments in place to ensure sustainable fish stocks and
39 conservation of the marine environment makes the area particularly vulnerable.
40 Today's gap in the coverage of RFMOs across ocean areas together with
41 shortcomings in the international legal framework, calls for a new and updated
42 regime to regulate fishing and the safeguarding of marine living resources in
43 the Arctic. It is necessary to adopt a shared legal regime for conservation and
44 management measures that are binding on the coastal states and states with
45 interest in the area to regulate the overall fishing effort in the future.

46 The changing climate and warmer temperatures have made northern sea areas more
47 available and therefore vulnerable to exploration, and we have yet to see
48 northern coastal states take action to ensure responsible management and
49 protection of the region. The European Green Party considers today's regulatory
50 instruments in place for the conservation of marine living resources
51 insufficient.

- 52 • **The European Green Party calls on** the EU to impose a moratorium on the
53 exploration and extraction of oil and gas resources in the Arctic through
54 a regional binding agreement.

- 55 • **The European Green Party calls on** the EU to initiate the drafting of an
56 Arctic-specific legal regime to ensure conservation, accountability and
57 sustainability in the management of fish stocks and marine living

resources.