

## **Introductory Note for Public Consultation**

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment NPA 2014-2020**

Between 7<sup>th</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, a public consultation is taking place for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the INTERREG Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2021-2027, which is currently under development.

#### **About the target group**

This public consultation is aimed at the following stakeholders:

- Environmental authorities/agencies
- NGOs/voluntary sector, especially in the environmental field
- Countryside agencies
- Natural heritage agencies
- National organisations for industry (in particular for SMEs, farmers/landowners, etc.)
- Associations/organisations for businesses in the environmental sector
- Associations/organisations for marine/shipping/fish-farming businesses
- General public in the programme area

#### **About the Strategic Environmental Assessment**

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is an important tool for integrating environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development. It assesses whether implementing the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme is likely to have (significant) effects (positive/negative) on the environment. The SEA offers an opportunity to improve the environmental dimension of the programme during its preparation. The SEA has been carried out by the European Policies Research Centre at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland.

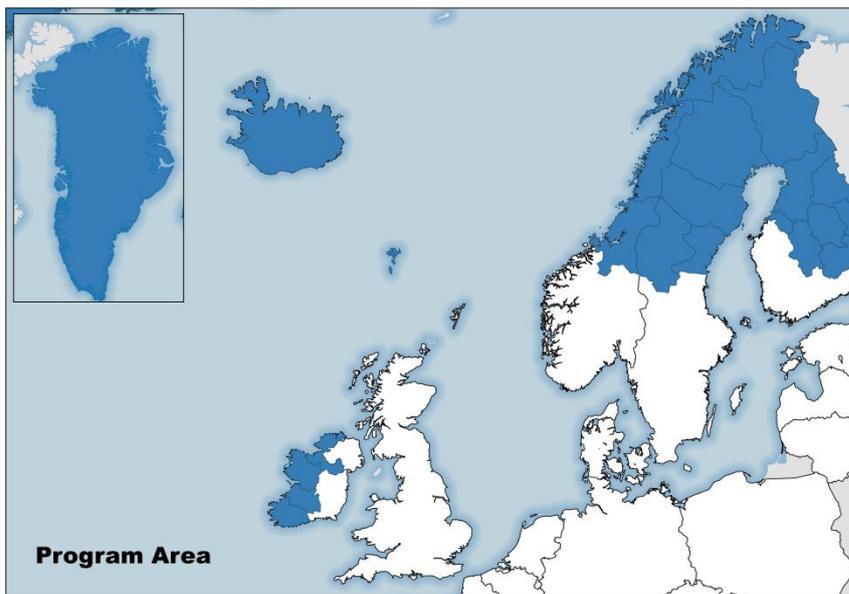
According to the SEA Directive, a public consultation for the SEA Report should take place before submission to the European Commission to ensure that relevant environmental authorities and the public in the countries affected are informed and given an opportunity to forward their opinion about the results of the assessment within a reasonable timeframe.

#### **About the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2021-2027**

The Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2021-2027 (NPA 2021-2027) is part of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective, also known as INTERREG. As part of Cohesion Policy, territorial cooperation encourages regions and cities from different EU Member States

to work together and learn from each other through joint programmes, projects and networks. This objective is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The Programme is jointly owned by 7 countries; the EU member states of Finland, Republic of Ireland, Sweden and the Non-EU member states Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway. Geographically, the programme covers the Euro-Arctic zone, parts of the Atlantic zone and parts of the Barents region, neighbouring on Canada in the West and Russia in the East. Typical characteristics of the programme area are: low population density, low accessibility, low economic diversity, abundant natural resources, and high impact of climate change.



### *Programme objectives*

The Programme aims to support communities on the extreme north of Europe to develop their economic, social and environmental potential. It does so by funding cooperation projects, (e.g. the joint development of model solutions or transfer of good practices) among these different territories, which share similar challenges and development potentials. A special focus of the Programme is on the Arctic.

The conclusions of the SEA Report should be seen in relation to the nature of INTERREG programmes, which focus on cooperation and not on hard investments, and the relatively modest size and likely impact of the NPA 2021-2027.

Preparations for the NPA 2021-2027 are at a well-advanced stage. The Cooperation Programme document is expected to be approved by the programme partner countries in June, when the national approval processes are expected to start before submission to the European Commission during the autumn. Throughout the development of the programme, an emphasis has been placed on ensuring national and regional-level participation. Based on this input and on the Policy Objectives set out in the ERDF Regulation, three priorities have been selected:

### **Priority 1: Strengthening the innovation capacity for resilient and attractive NPA communities**

- Specific Objective 1.1 - Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
- Specific Objective 1.2 - Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities
- Specific Objective - 1.3 Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments

### **Priority 2: Strengthening the capacity for climate change adaptation, and resource sufficiency in NPA communities**

- Specific Objective 2.1 - Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Specific Objective 2.2 - Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches
- Specific Objective 2.3 - Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

### **Priority 3: Strengthening the organisational capacity among NPA communities to make use of cooperation opportunities**

- Specific Objective 3.1 - Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies

#### ***About the public consultation***

The consultation is open from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The survey can be accessed [here](#).

Consultation materials consist of the following document:

- [Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Report NPA 2021-20227](#)