

SUMMIT OF BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC INDIGENOUS SÁMI PEOPLE

Brussels, Belgium
22-24 March 2023



under the patronage
of the European Parliament

THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY
OF THE BARENTS
EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL
2021–2023



"FAMILY PHOTO"



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Paintings of Anders Sunna. Oil on wood, 2023. Part of the Sámi Summits Art-exhibition.
1. Boys in the wood and white faces, 122 x 160 cm. 2. Give us all, the rest we will take, 159 x 350 cm

Executive Summary:

The Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People was a momentous event, co-hosted by the Sámi Parliament in Finland, the European Parliament, and the Finnish Presidency of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Held in Brussels from 22nd to 24th March 2023, the event marked the first in-person gathering of Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Region since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic four years prior.

The Summit focused on key topics such as human rights, climate change and its impact on the Arctic, and the challenges faced by the Sámi people within the European Union. A central concern is the need for a comprehensive internal policy addressing the rights and active participation of the Sámi people in EU politics and decision-making processes.

Roberta Metsola:
“The European Parliament is committed to supporting the interests of the Sámi people, ensuring their voices are heard and respected in decisions affecting their lives.”

In order to develop the relationship between Sápmi and the EU, the Summit expressed the importance of establishing a robust parliament-to-parliament relationship

between the Sámi parliaments and the European Parliament. This relationship is crucial in ensuring that the rights and concerns of the Sámi people are adequately represented and addressed within the European Union. Establishing a direct and collaborative relationship between these parliaments is essential in fully respecting and upholding the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, as recognized under international law and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Sanna Marin:
“The Sámi are the only indigenous people in the European Union, and it is crucial to safeguard their rights and promote self-determination.”

Many speakers highlighted that such a relationship would facilitate the active participation of the Sámi people in EU politics and decision-making processes, ensuring that the Sámi voices are heard, and their unique perspectives and needs are taken into account when formulating and implementing policies that affect them and their territories. This enhanced collaboration would not only benefit the Sámi people but also contribute to a more inclusive, diverse, and just European Union, promoting the values of human

rights, cultural diversity, and sustainable development across the region. The development of a parliament-to-parliament relationship between the Sámi parliaments and the European Parliament will build upon the valuable and long-standing work of the Sámi civil society, as represented by the Sámi Council.

Anni Koivisto:

"We therefore hope that this Summit is an important starting point for enhancing and ensuring the Sámi Parliaments participation in the EU's work."

The European Union's commitment to the Arctic, climate change mitigation, and respecting indigenous peoples' rights was outlined, with initiatives like the European Green Deal and programs such as Aurora and Northern Periphery and Arctic mentioned. The importance of free, prior, and informed consent in the context of development in the Arctic was emphasized, as was the necessity for collaboration and consultation with indigenous peoples.

Håkan Jonsson:

"The green transition must not become a tool to legitimate further exploitation of our lands and water."

Green colonialism, where supposed green solutions encroach on indigenous peoples' lands and rights, was addressed as a

significant challenge. The Fosen case in Norway was cited as an example where wind power development licenses were ruled invalid due to violating the rights of Sámi reindeer herders. The need for a just climate transition, in line with human rights and indigenous rights, was emphasized. In Sweden, a multitude of mineral and energy projects exemplifies the impression that the green shift is used as an argument for increased land encroachments in Sámi areas.

Silje Karine Muotka:

"We see that Sámi authorities, organizations and right holders who argue that non-consensual encroachments by so-called green industries on reindeer-grazing land is a form of green colonialism and they are in conflict also with other Sámi right holders."

During the plenary session on Climate Change and the Arctic, speakers emphasized the existential threat that climate change and biodiversity loss pose to the Sámi people's culture, language, knowledge, and way of life. The interconnectedness of climate change, biodiversity, and food systems was highlighted, along with the importance of maintaining and strengthening indigenous people's food systems and traditional knowledge.

Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen:

"We're not the reason for it, but we're still the ones that have to pay for it; we're the first ones that have to pay for the climate changes and the price is basically our existence, and that's not a price we're willing to pay."

Several speakers highlighted the urgent need to safeguard the Sámi right to decide on their political representation and the need to renew the Sámi act in Finland and thereby honoring the inherent right of self-determination for the Sámi.

Pirita Näkkäljärvi:

"But now the state of Finland allows a mechanism through which Finnish people can enter our Parliament. And when that happens, the Sámi Parliament gradually stops being the Sámi Parliament."

A positive example presented at the Summit was the collaboration between traditional knowledge and scientific research is the establishment of the Sámi Climate Council in Finland. This council serves as an important platform for the Sámi people to actively participate in addressing climate change issues within their specific context. By integrating their traditional knowledge

and expertise with scientific research, the Sámi Climate Council contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the environmental challenges faced in the Arctic region.

Johanna Sjö:

"When we consider measures to counter and to adapt changing climate, the traditional knowledge of the Sámi community is therefore crucial."

During the panel discussion, panelists emphasized the need to preserve Sámi culture, including the intellectual property rights, the importance of traditional knowledge, and the need for genuine dialogue, consultation, and actions based on those dialogues.

The right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) was underlined as a crucial aspect of decision-making processes involving the Sámi people.

Áslat Holmberg:

"And there is a reference to the free, prior and informed consent, which I say is a right, it's not only a principle, it's a right in international law."

Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People – 2023

Opening session

Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament:

Roberta Metsola warmly welcomed the Sámi people and distinguished guests to the fourth summit of the Barents, Euro-Arctic, and Indigenous Sámi people held at the European Parliament. She emphasized that the European Parliament is a home for the Sámi people and is committed to listening to their concerns.

Metsola discussed the European Parliament's commitment to the interests of the Sámi people in various forums, and the importance of dialogue between the institutions and the Sámi community. She highlighted programs that empower Sámi people to have a voice in the legislative process, such as the Interreg North Programme.

Metsola addressed climate change's impact on the Arctic and the Sámi people, stressing the need for urgent action and increased cooperation with local communities in the green transition. She also mentioned the importance of respecting human rights and environmental standards.

She touched upon the Russian invasion of Ukraine and commended the Sámi Council for putting relations with Russian Sámi organizations on hold in response to the war. Metsola emphasized the importance of continuing support for Ukrainians.



Roberta Metsola:

"The European Parliament is committed to supporting the interests of the Sámi people, ensuring their voices are heard and respected in decisions affecting their lives."

Finally, Metsola thanked the Finnish Sámi Parliament and the Finnish Presidency of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council for organizing the summit in Brussels and wished the participants fruitful discussions. She then handed over the floor to Anni Koivisto, 1st Vice President of the Finnish Sámi Parliament.

Anni Koivisto, Chair of the Summit, 1st Vice President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland:

Anni Koivisto declared the Summit for opened and introduced Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finland:

Sanna Marin, Prime Minister of Finland:

Prime Minister Sanna Marin of Finland expressed her gratitude for being invited to the significant event and emphasized the importance of discussing Sámi-related matters at the European level, considering they are the only indigenous people in the European Union. She highlighted that Finland's constitution includes the status of the Sámi people as an indigenous people, and the country is committed to promoting and safeguarding their fundamental rights.

Addressing the challenges with the Sámi Act, Marin acknowledged that the current act on the Sámi Parliament is outdated and requires revision. She expressed her disappointment in the situation and called for a sustainable solution to this long-term human rights issue soon.

Regarding climate change, Marin stated that it is a pressing issue for the Arctic region, particularly for indigenous peoples who are the first to experience its effects on their livelihoods and cultures. Finland has established a new Sámi Climate Change Council, recognizing the importance of traditional Sámi knowledge in developing and protecting the Arctic.



Sanna Marin:

“The Sámi are the only indigenous people in the European Union, and it is crucial to safeguard their rights and promote self-determination.”

Marin mentioned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission concerning the Sámi people, which began its work in Finland in October 2021, and acknowledged similar processes taking place in Norway and Sweden. However, she stressed the need for continued efforts to prevent violations of rights and respect the Sámi people's right to self-determination.

Marin concluded by emphasizing the need for ongoing cooperation and dialogue to safeguard the rights of the Sámi people and acknowledged the value of events like the summit in facilitating these discussions.

Håkan Jonsson, President of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden and President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council:

Håkan Jonsson delivered a petition on behalf of the Presidents of the Sámi Parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The main action points in the petition from the three Presidents of the Sámi Parliaments are:

1. Ensure that indigenous rights to self-determination for the Sámi People are fully understood and fulfilled on all levels of decision-making, including local municipalities, provinces, national legislations, and the European Union.
2. Support the Sámi People in Russia, whose well-being is currently extremely threatened.
3. Address the widespread lack of understanding of indigenous rights, leading to repeated violations of the rights of the Sámi People.
4. Address specific examples of rights violations in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, such as the failed amendment of the Sámi Act in Finland, the windmill construction in the Fosen area in Norway, and exploitative mining projects in traditional Sámi areas in Sweden.

The petition calls on Prime Minister Sanna Marin and the Government of Finland to help ensure that the States of Finland, Norway, and Sweden fully pledge to both fulfill the existing right to self-determination for the Sámi People and promote a clear understanding of these rights on local, national, and European levels of decision-making.

Anni Koivisto, Chair of the Summit, 1st Vice President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland:

Anni Koivisto called on the President of the Sámi Parliament in Norway to join her and president Jonsson on the stage and they together handed the common petition to PM Sanna Marin.

After the petition was handed to PM Marin, Koivisto continued the Summit by giving the floor to Commissioner Dalli from the European Commission.

Helena Dalli, Commissioner for Equality, the European Commission

Helena Dalli, Commissioner for Equality of the European Commission, emphasized the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity as a cornerstone of the European Union. She noted that the EU provides support through various programs and funding, including engaging with Arctic indigenous peoples, such as the Sámi, to ensure their rights are respected and promoted.

Dalli highlighted that the EU's Arctic policy has been updated in 2021 to reinforce the commitment towards Arctic indigenous peoples, focusing on maintaining a peaceful, stable Arctic while addressing environmental and climate challenges. She mentioned the regular engagement with the Sámi community and the need for equal opportunities to access their own culture, representation in cultural institutions, and decision-making bodies.

She praised the Nordic countries for recognizing the right to study in one's native language and protecting the use of the Sámi language in education. Dalli also provided examples of various EU programs supporting cultural and linguistic diversity, such as the Creative Europe programme, Erasmus+, and the European Language Label.

Dalli concluded by stressing the importance of supporting the Sámi people in being active partners in European initiatives to foster inclusion and equal opportunities within the EU.

Håkan Jonsson, President of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden and President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council:

In his speech at the Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People, Håkan Jonsson, the President of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden, discusses the role and challenges faced by the Sámi community. He highlights the cooperation between the Sámi parliaments in Sweden, Norway, and Finland through the Sámi Parliamentarian Council (SPR). As Sweden holds the chairmanship from spring 2022 to autumn 2023, Jonsson leads the SPR during this period.

Jonsson emphasizes the coexistence of the Sámi community with modern society and the difficulties they face due to the lack of recognition for their traditional land, Sapmi, which is divided among Sweden, Russia, Norway, and Finland. He also delves into the long history of the Sámi people, dating back 10,000 years, marked by colonization, oppression, and resistance.

The assimilation efforts of the past century led many Sámi people to lose their language, and today, they seek to reclaim it and feel included. Jonsson mentions the establishment of Sámi truth commissions in Sweden, Norway, and Finland to address historical violations and their consequences for the Sámi people. He also notes a collaboration between the governments of these three countries, along with the three Sámi parliaments, aiming to create a Nordic Sámi Convention. The goal is to provide equal legislation for the Sámi people across the three countries and expand their self-determination and influence over their traditional lands.



Håkan Jonsson:

“The history of the Sámi also tells about the colonization by the state powers, the oppression of the authorities and the resistance of the Sámi.”

Lastly, Jonsson discusses the Green Transition's challenge to the Sámi people. Aimed at reducing the climate impact of industrialization, this transition often leads to the exploitation of Sámi lands and waters through mining, wind turbines, hydroelectric power plants, and associated infrastructure. He emphasizes that indigenous people must not only have a voice in the Green Transition but also be an essential part of it. The loss of biological diversity due to increased exploitation will affect not only the Sámi people but the entire world.

In conclusion, Håkan Jonsson urges increased understanding and collaboration to address the challenges facing the Sámi people and their active involvement in the Green Transition.

Nancy Charlotte Porsanger Anti, State Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development of Norway:

Nancy Charlotte Porsanger Anti, State Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development of Norway, expresses gratitude for the invitation to the event and discusses the diversity of the Arctic region, specifically focusing on the Barents region. She highlights the importance of local commitment and inclusion of youth and indigenous people in fostering people-to-people contact.

Porsanger Anti emphasizes the coexistence of indigenous and local cultures with modern society in the Arctic, stressing the importance

Nancy Charlotte Porsanger

Anti: “

The Arctic is not a museum. It is a place where people live and thrive and have done so for millennia.”

of sustainable economic development, job and education opportunities. She notes that to enable Arctic communities to thrive, a balance must be found between protection and sustainable use, taking into account the green transition, traditional ways of life, and the impacts of climate change. She touches upon the challenges faced by Arctic communities due to changing ecosystems and the importance of indigenous languages in building thriving communities and using land sustainably.

Porsanger Anti recognizes that digitalization presents both opportunities and challenges for the indigenous society, with technology facilitating communication and public services in indigenous languages. However, she also acknowledges the downside, such as difficulties in using indigenous languages on digital platforms. Porsanger Anti calls for cooperation between governments and the Sámi parliaments to pressure tech giants to allow seamless use of indigenous languages on platforms like Google, Apple, and Microsoft.

Johanna Sjö, Chief of Staff of Tobias Billström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden:

Johanna Sjö, Chief of Staff of Tobias Billström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, addressed the summit of the Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi people and acknowledged their unique position as an indigenous people in the EU. She emphasized the importance of their culture, traditions, and languages being protected by law and underscored the need for sustainable development in Sápmi, the Barents region, and the Arctic.

Sjö discussed the urgency of addressing climate change, which is affecting the Arctic at an alarming rate, and the significance of the Paris Agreement and the EU's role in climate action. She highlighted the Swedish EU presidency's commitment to implementing the EU's Green Deal and working towards climate neutrality by 2050.

She stressed the importance of a science-based approach to understanding and mitigating climate change in the Arctic, as well as close collaboration between science, research, and traditional knowledge. Sjö saw the summit as an opportunity to emphasize the Sámi's importance in combating climate change and acknowledges the necessity of their traditional knowledge and involvement in climate change adaptation efforts.

Sjö recognized the importance of involving indigenous peoples and local communities in conservation efforts and decision-making



Johanna Sjö:

"When we consider measures to counter and to adapt changing climate, the traditional knowledge of the Sámi community is therefore crucial."

processes affecting their rights, resources, livelihoods, and food security. She discussed the EU's opportunities to support development in the Barents region and the potential role of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in promoting sustainable regional development.

Sjö concluded by addressing the current situation in the Barents region and the 30th anniversary of the Barents Corporation, expressing concerns over Russia's actions in Ukraine and emphasizing Sweden's solidarity with Ukraine. She highlighted the importance of continued investment in the green transition, education, and equal opportunities for the future of the region and looks forward to discussions on moving forward together.

Q&A Session to the opening speeches:

Áslat Holmberg asked about the right to self-determination for the Sámi people at the EU level. Håkan Jonsson emphasized the importance of establishing a platform for the Sámi in Brussels to have more influence on decisions affecting them. Stefan Mikaelsson asked about the Swedish government's attitude towards attending Sámi parliament events, with Johanna Sjö expressing willingness to encourage participation. Eirik Larsen asked about the Nordic Sámi Convention as a tool for Sámi self-determination, with Nancy Charlotte Porsanger Anti stating the Norwegian government's commitment to advancing the convention. Lastly, Pirita Näkkäljärvi raised concerns about political games affecting the Sámi Parliament Act in Finland, with Anni Koivisto expressing hope for a new government committed to the act and noting the ongoing fight for Sámi rights.

Anni Koivisto, Chair of the Summit, 1st Vice President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland:

In her speech, Anni Koivisto emphasized the increasing international attention on the Arctic and the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples in the region, including the Sámi. She highlighted the European Union's integrated policy for the Arctic, focusing on climate change, environmental protection, sustainable development, international cooperation, and local stakeholder participation.

Koivisto also appreciated the fact that the Summit also included translation from the Sámi language so that she, and others could use their mother-tongue in the dialogue with the EU.

Koivisto referred to the European Union's strong commitments to human rights and Indigenous Peoples' rights in her speech. These commitments are reflected in several key documents and policy decisions:

- Integrated European Union policy for the Arctic: This policy focuses on climate change, environmental protection, sustainable development, international cooperation, and local stakeholder participation, including Indigenous Peoples like the Sámi. The EU aims to engage with Arctic Indigenous Peoples to ensure their views and rights are respected in the development of EU policies affecting the Arctic region.
- Council Conclusions on Indigenous Peoples (2017): The Council of the European Union adopted this document, which recalls that the EU is founded on values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, and respect for human rights, including those of minority groups such as Indigenous Peoples. The EU commits to promoting the respect of human rights for everyone worldwide.
- Support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP): The

EU has expressed its support for the adoption of UNDRIP, a landmark document that establishes a universal framework for the rights, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples globally.

- Support for the Outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples (2014): The EU supports this document adopted during a high-level plenary of the UN General Assembly, which outlines measures to improve the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples.
- European Parliament resolution on violation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the world (2018): This resolution advises EU Member States to establish formal consultation processes on topics relevant to Indigenous Peoples and calls on the EU to strengthen Indigenous representation in decision-making processes.

These documents and policy decisions demonstrate the EU's commitment to upholding human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples both within and outside the EU. However, Koivisto underlined the need for a comprehensive internal policy concerning the Sámi people living within the EU. This is important to ensure that EUs overall principals concerning Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples also include the Sámi people and its active participation in EU politics and decision-making processes.



Anni Koivisto:

“The Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic are especially vulnerable because of the close connection between traditional livelihoods and nature. The climate change is affecting everything we are, and everything we have.”

Plenary session 1: Climate Change and the Arctic

Anni Koivisto, Chair of the Summit, 1st Vice President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland:

Koivisto introduced the first plenary session, Climate Change and the Arctic, and handed the word to the moderator for this session, Gunn-Britt Retter.

Gunn-Britt Retter, Head of the Arctic and Environmental Unit of the Sámi Council

Gunn-Britt Retter explained her roles as the Sámi Council's head of delegation to the Arctic Council and the Arctic Indigenous representative to the LCIPP Facilitative Working Group, a body under the UN Climate Convention. She lives near the Russian and Finnish borders in Norway and is moderating a plenary session on Climate Change and the Arctic. She recalls the EU Sámi Week held nine months ago in Brussels, where Sámi people gathered for discussions and cultural sharing, and where she facilitated a session on climate justice. She emphasizes the interdependence of climate, ecosystems, biodiversity, and human societies and looks forward to the panel discussion. Retter introduces the first keynote speaker, Silje Karine Muotka, president of the Sámi Parliament in Norway.

Silje Karine Muotka, President of the Sámi Parliament in Norway

In her opening keynote speech during the “Climate Change and the Arctic” session at the Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People, Silje Karine Muotka, President of the Sámi Parliament in Norway, emphasized the existential threat that climate change and loss of biodiversity pose to the Sámi people's culture, language, knowledge, and way of life. She highlighted the interconnectedness of climate change, biodiversity, and food systems and called for support to maintain and strengthen indigenous people's food systems and traditional knowledge.

Muotka also addressed the need for increased involvement of indigenous peoples in the EU and Arctic decision-making and for incorporating the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into new EU-Arctic policies. She discussed the concept of “green colonialism,” where supposed green solutions are encroaching on indigenous peoples' lands and rights, causing conflicts and human rights violations. She cited the Fosen case in Norway as an example, where licenses for wind-powered development were ruled invalid as they violated the Sámi reindeer herders' rights.



Silje Karine Muotka:

“We see that Sámi authorities, organizations and right holders who argue that non-consensual encroachments by so-called green industries on reindeer-grazing land is a form of green colonialism and they are in conflict also with other Sámi right holders.”

Green colonization, as Muotka explains, occurs when states grant permits to companies to build new industries, particularly wind energy developments, on indigenous lands without obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of the affected Sámi communities. This results in conflicts between such developments and the rights of the Sámi people, particularly in relation to reindeer husbandry and traditional livelihoods.

One example of ongoing human rights violations in Norway is the Fosen case, where the construction of wind turbines was found to violate Sámi reindeer herders’ rights. Despite a Supreme Court judgment ruling the license and expropriation decisions invalid, the Norwegian government has not taken any action to stop the ongoing violations.

In response to this, a group of young indigenous human rights defenders, along with environmentalists, occupied the reception area and blocked the entrance to the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy in Oslo. The protest was organized by the Norwegian Sámi Association Youth and Nature and Youth Organization. The protesters demanded that the government take action to stop the ongoing human rights violations, highlighting the urgency of addressing these issues and ensuring a just climate transition that respects the rights and needs of indigenous peoples.

Muotka called for a just climate transition, in line with human rights and indigenous rights, emphasizing that climate measures

must be based on the most appropriate measures and climate justice. She concluded by stating that the Sámi people experience national and EU policies expanding land uses for mining, wind energy, and bio-economy, leading to land use conflicts, reduced psycho-social health, and threats to their culture and way of life.

Kestutis Sadauskas, Deputy Director-General Directorate-General “Maritime Affairs and Fisheries” (DG MARE), European Commission.

Kestutis Sadauskas, Deputy Director-General Directorate-General “Maritime Affairs and Fisheries” (DG MARE), European Commission, emphasized the importance of the Arctic region in the global climate system and its profound impact on the rest of the world. He mentioned the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s synthesis report, which highlights the drastic need for carbon emissions reduction and achieving carbon neutrality.

Sadauskas stressed the European Union’s commitment to the Arctic, updating its Arctic policy in October 2021 with objectives that include addressing climate change and its impacts, as well as supporting inclusive and sustainable development. He acknowledged the significant socio-economic and cultural impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples such as the Sámi, whose traditional ways of life are under threat.

Kestutis Sadauskas:

“The Green Deal is our response to the climate crisis, is our growth strategy towards thriving, decarbonized, competitive and digital economy. Our way to demonstrate that prosperity and sustainable development can be achieved without sacrificing the environment and the climate.”

The European Green Deal is at the core of the EU’s Arctic policy, aiming for a 55% reduction in emissions by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050. The EU is working to promote sustainable economic development in the Arctic while upholding high environmental standards and respecting indigenous peoples’ rights.

Sadauskas cited various EU initiatives and programs, such as Aurora and Northern Periphery and Arctic, that are designed to support the Sámi people and foster regional development. These initiatives incorporate traditional and indigenous knowledge in their research and implementation.

Lastly, Sadauskas reiterated the EU's commitment to free, prior, and informed consent when it comes to development in the Arctic. He called for collaboration and consultation with indigenous peoples to ensure that the region's diverse perspectives are considered and that the right decisions are made for future generations.

Klemetti Näkkäljärvi, PHD, University of Oulu, "Sámi climate justice and participatory rights in Finland"

In the article by Klemetti Näkkäljärvi, PhD, University of Oulu, titled "Sámi climate justice and participatory rights in Finland," the author discusses the challenges faced by the Sámi people in the context of climate change and their struggle for participatory rights. The article highlights the need for increased cooperation between the Sámi Parliament, national governments, and EU representatives, as well as good communication and awareness-raising efforts.

Climate change has a significant impact on indigenous peoples, including the Sámi in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The consequences of colonialism and industrialization have left indigenous

peoples in a vulnerable position when it comes to climate change adaptation. The impacts of climate change on the Sámi people include threats to their traditional livelihoods, culture, language, and legal rights.

The author also discusses the concept of "green colonialism," which has led to further encroachment on Sámi lands and rights. Examples of this include wind farm projects that disrupt Sámi cultural heritage sites. Climate justice is crucial to ensuring that indigenous peoples' rights are respected in the face of climate change, and the author emphasizes the importance of involving the Sámi people in decision-making processes.

Klemetti Näkkäljärvi:
*"Dálkkadatrievdamis ja dasa
 vuogáiduvvamis leat maid
 váikkuhusat dearvvašvuhtii.
 Bistevaš streassa ja fuolla
 iežas kultuvrras buktá
 biehtadahkes váikkuhusaid
 dearvvašvuhtii."*

In the broader context, the article touches on the global implications of climate change for human rights, livelihoods, and cultures. The European Union has made progress in its climate change policies, but the author argues that it still needs to focus on the specific rights and needs of the Sámi people as its only indigenous population.

The establishment of the Sámi Climate Council is a significant step towards ensuring climate justice for the Sámi people. However, the author stresses the need for adequate resources and political support for the council to be effective. By involving the Sámi people in climate change discussions and addressing their concerns, the European Union can strengthen its commitment to climate justice and human rights.

Panel discussion on Climate Change and the Arctic

Gunn-Britt Retter, Head of the Arctic and Environmental Unit of the Sámi Council

Retter introduced the panelists for the session on Climate Change and the Arctic. The panelists included Jan Rannerud, a member of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden and a reindeer herder; Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, a member of the European Parliament and co-chair of the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development; Erik Bergkvist, a member of the European Parliament from Sweden focusing on transport, tourism, and regional development; Akseli Koskela, State

Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior of Finland, working on the reform of the Sámi Parliament Act of Finland; and Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen, vice-chair of the Youth Council of the Sámi Parliament in Norway.

Retter then directs the conversation towards the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights and Sámi peoples' rights in the context of climate change, green transition, and the implementation of the European Green Deal. She starts by asking Jan Rannerud for his perspective on how the rights of the Sámi people and the foundation for Sámi culture should be respected in this context.

Jan Rannerud, Member of the board of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden

In Rannerud's response, he expressed his concerns regarding the so-called green transition, mentioning that it is being used as a reason to increase exploitation on Sámi land. He also discussed the importance of traditional knowledge, referencing Klemetti Näkkäljärvi's earlier mention of it. Rannerud highlighted that the traditional knowledge in their areas has changed drastically within a generation, making it difficult to pass it on to their children. He emphasized the need to focus on preserving Sámi culture, while accepting that changes have occurred and urging governments to listen to the voices of the Sámi people and other Indigenous communities around the world.

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Member of the European Parliament

Kumpula-Natri, member of the European Parliament, emphasized the importance of approaching climate change as a global issue that requires inclusive action. She encouraged the involvement of all stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, in consultations and legislative processes. Kumpula-Natri also urged for the focus to shift not only to climate change but also to nature and biodiversity, as they are interrelated. She emphasized the need for local-level action to protect and care for nature, as it cannot be done effectively at a global level.

Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen, Vice chair of the Youth Council of the Sámi Parliament in Norway

Aslaksen emphasized the importance of involving the Sámi people in decision-making processes that affect them. She called for genuine dialogue, consultation, and actions based on those dialogues, rather than tokenistic consultations. Aslaksen stressed the importance of obtaining Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) from the Sámi people and noted that the rights of minority groups must be protected. She suggested that the Sámi people actively participate in consultations and impact assessments to ensure that their culture and needs are taken into account in decision-making.

Akseli Koskela, State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior in Finland for the Green Party



Akseli Koskela:

"I see it as a triangular between climate, biodiversity, and circular economy... And I think we need to see this triangle when we talk about climate issues as well."

Koskela, State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior in Finland for the Green Party, emphasized the importance of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) principle in the context of Green New Deal initiatives. He mentioned the establishment of the Sámi Climate Council in Finland and the need to address climate issues within the Sámi context. Koskela also highlighted the connection between climate, biodiversity, and circular economy, stressing the significance of considering these aspects together when discussing climate issues.

Erik Bergkvist, Member of the European Parliament

Erik Bergkvist:
"We need less polarization and we need more dialogue and we need to find processes for a true good dialogue."

Bergkvist, Member of the European Parliament, emphasized the importance of securing democratic development on a global level and having a real dialogue, rather than a checkbox dialogue, with indigenous communities like the Sámi. He acknowledged the capacity challenges faced by the Sámi community and smaller municipalities in participating in projects and engaging in dialogue. Bergkvist stressed the need for less polarization, more dialogue, and finding processes to enable effective communication. He also suggested that the EU could help build dialogue capacity for the Sámi communities to be more involved in discussions and decision-making.

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Member of the European Parliament

Kumpula-Natri, member of the European Parliament, highlighted the importance of including traditional knowledge in

addressing climate change and the role of the Sámi Climate Council in contributing to research and dialogue. She emphasized that the Green Deal is not a one-size-fits-all approach and that understanding different perspectives is crucial in a diverse community. Kumpula-Natri also mentioned the potential of digital tools and satellite knowledge to help better understand the climate and the need for research communities to collaborate for effective solutions. The EU has invested a lot in satellite systems where the information must be available also for Sámi researchers and the Sámi Climate Council.

Gunn-Britt Retter, head of the Arctic and Environmental Unit of the Sámi Council

How does this tie to traditional knowledge?

Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen, Vice chair of the Youth Council of the Sámi Parliament in Norway

Aslaksen, Vice chair of the Youth Council of the Sámi Parliament in Norway, expressed her concerns about why it's difficult for governments and industries to acknowledge and include the traditional knowledge that the Sámi people possess. She mentioned that her generation is learning traditional ways, but is also the first to experience the adverse effects of climate change, which threatens their existence. Aslaksen emphasized the need for greater inclusion of indigenous knowledge in addressing climate change.

Erik Bergkvist, Member of the European Parliament

Erik Bergkvist:

“When you have a true dialogue, you learn from each other and you get curious about what the other people really are thinking. Because if you know what they really think and what their background is, then you will much easier find a solution that is good for everyone.”

Bergkvist, Member of the European Parliament, believes that the shift from prejudice towards curiosity about the Sámi people is a positive development. He asserts that climate change and increased exposure to Sámi culture have contributed to this change. Bergkvist emphasizes the importance of true dialogue and processes that allow both sides to learn from each other, ultimately leading to better solutions for all.

Akseli Koskela, State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior in Finland for the Green Party

Koskela emphasized the importance of local knowledge in the Arctic region, acknowledging that the Sámi people have valuable insights on the rapid warming occurring in the area. He mentioned Finland’s ambitious nature preservation and climate laws, which both explicitly include Sámi rights and opportunities to preserve their culture and language. Additionally, Koskela suggested exploring EU structural funds and their 40 different programs for potential new ideas and support for the Sámi people.

Jan Rannerud, Member of the board of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden

Rannerud emphasized the importance of traditional knowledge, particularly in terms of land use. He believes that states should listen to reindeer herders and their practices to protect the land. Rannerud also advised against using the green transition as an excuse for increasing land exploitation.

Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen, Vice chair of the Youth Council of the Sámi Parliament in Norway



Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen:

“Trust building is, to me, just proving that you mean what you’re saying by actually following it up with actions.”

Aslaksen highlighted the importance of dialogue but stressed the significance of its starting point and perspective. She noted that dialogues often end in exploitation, and the Sámi are in a defensive position due to this fear. Aslaksen emphasized that trust building is crucial in this process, as many in her community currently have little trust in the government.

Erik Bergkvist, Member of the European Parliament

Bergkvist agreed with Aslaksen’s point and emphasized the need for a new kind of dialogue, a true dialogue that promotes trust-building and equal opportunities. He stressed that this dialogue should not be based on a single view or solely on the national level, but rather, be an honest and constructive exchange that doesn’t lead to misuse.

Q&A

Tauno Ljetoff:

“The Sámi as a people have a right to rule over our own natural resources as seen in Fosen, and our rights to these resources should not under any circumstances be taken away from us.”

During the Q&A session, various stakeholders and representatives raised concerns and questions about the rights and issues faced by the Sámi people. Key topics discussed include:

- The need for trust-building and meaningful dialogue: Participants agreed on the importance of trust and dialogue in addressing the concerns of the Sámi people. Trust-building was seen as essential for both youth and adults, regardless of their background. It was emphasized that actions should follow words to demonstrate genuine commitment.
- Land rights and resource management: The Sámi people’s right to self-determination and control over their natural resources was highlighted as crucial. Questions were raised about how the EU could ensure the FPIC (Free, Prior, and Informed Consent) principle is followed and that impact assessments are conducted properly. Land rights were also discussed, with the need for Sweden to ratify the ILO Convention.
- National and EU-level involvement: It was noted that while land rights and some other issues are primarily national competences, the EU can still help by setting environmental standards and fostering dialogue. The importance of knowledge-building and cooperation between the Sámi people and EU representatives was also emphasized.
- The role of youth: Participants stressed the importance of involving young people in discussions and decision-making processes at all levels, acknowledging their unique perspective and the need for their voices to be heard.

Plenary session 2: EU’s Arctic & Northern policies and Indigenous Peoples; rights, privileges, and obligations in community

Moderator: **Stefan Mikaelsson**, Vice-President of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden:

Stefan Mikaelsson opened the plenary session by welcoming distinguished guests and panelists, sharing his roles in various organizations, and mentioning the common election day development for the Sámi parliaments in Anár, Giron, and Kárášjohka. He introduced the panelists, including Áslat Holmberg, Ulla Karin Sarri, Eduard Auer, Anne Nuorgam, Johanna Suurpää, and Clara Ganslandt, emphasizing their presence’s importance in achieving a productive discussion. He then handed the floor to Anne Nuorgam for her keynote speech.

Anne Nuorgam, Member of the Sámi Parliament in Finland:

Anne Nuorgam emphasized the importance of institutionalizing the relationship between the European Union and the Sámi

Parliaments to ensure that Sámi rights and interests are effectively represented in the EU’s decision-making processes. Nuorgam called for a stronger parliament-to-parliament relationship, similar to the nation-to-nation relationships in other contexts, such as in the United States.

The Sámi Parliamentary Council, a cooperative body between the Sámi Parliaments in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, has suggested that the EU develop an internal Indigenous Peoples’ Policy and Action Plan to ensure full and effective participation of the Sámi in the European Union. This would involve establishing a body or platform to enhance the Sámi rights as Indigenous People, as stipulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, within the European Union. This would contribute to the overall goal of ensuring that the rights, privileges, and obligations of the Sámi people are respected and promoted within the EU’s Arctic and Northern Policy.

Anne Nuorgam further discussed the importance of recent court cases in Finland that affirmed the Sámi people's rights to their culture, specifically their fishing rights. The Finnish Supreme Court acknowledged the importance of fishing as a part of the Sámi culture and acquitted the Sámi defendants from criminal charges on constitutional grounds, informed by Finland's international human rights obligations concerning indigenous peoples' rights. This case was significant because it strengthened the Sámi people's substantive rights to their culture and acknowledged fishing rights as a constitutionally protected fundamental right and internationally protected human right of indigenous peoples.

However, the court also noted that the Sámi people's fishing rights were not unlimited and could be restricted for environmental reasons, such as protecting the stocks of migratory fish. Nuorgam mentioned that it remains to be seen how this and similar cases in Norway and Sweden will influence the legislation in Finland, Norway, and Sweden concerning the Sámi people and how they will impact future negotiations.

Clara Ganslandt, the Special Envoy for Arctic Matters, Head of the Western Europe Arctic Regional Division, European External Action Service:

Clara Ganslandt recalled the EU Arctic Policy which is guided by three main objectives. Firstly, to maintain a peaceful and constructive dialogue and cooperation

in a changing geopolitical landscape and ensure the Arctic remains safe and stable. Secondly, to address the challenges arising from climate change, taking strong action to tackle climate change and environmental degradation. Lastly, to support inclusive and sustainable development in the Arctic regions, focusing on human rights and the needs of indigenous peoples, women, the young, and various ethnic and social groups, while investing in future-oriented jobs in the blue economy.

Ganslandt mentioned the EU's priorities in Arctic research, ethical research, integrating indigenous knowledge, enhancing cooperation with partners, fighting climate change and environmental degradation, and promoting sustainable development. She acknowledged that the EU has a balancing act to perform between various interests and that primary responsibility for developments within Arctic territories lies with the eight Arctic states.

In conclusion, Ganslandt reaffirmed the EU's commitment to upholding a safe, stable, sustainable, and prosperous Arctic, emphasizing the importance of low tension and peaceful multilateral cooperation.

Ulla Karin Sarri, Member of the Board of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden

Ulla Karin Sarri discussed the rights of the Sámi people in Sweden under the 1971 reindeer husbandry law. This law grants every Sámi individual in Sweden the right to do reindeer husbandry (*renskötselrätt*). However, to exercise this right, they must be a member of a sameby, an association of reindeer herders in a specific area.



Ulla Karin Sarri:

“Every Sámi individual has his or her Sámi right under the Swedish law but the majority of the Sámi people are excluded from actually using this right because it demands a membership in an association in which you are not allowed to be a member in.”

The sameby has the right to use the land for various activities such as fishing, hunting, reindeer husbandry, and more. However, Sámi people living in the same area who are not members of a sameby are excluded from exercising their rights under the 1971 reindeer husbandry law.

Sarri concluded that while every Sámi individual has rights under Swedish law, the majority of Sámi people are excluded from exercising these rights due to the requirement of sameby membership. Furthermore, Sámi people who want to fish and hunt on their ancestral land are treated the same as ethnic Swedes, having to ask for permission and pay fees. Sarri argued that the carrier of the right should be the human, not the animal (reindeer), and that Sámi people should be able to exercise their indigenous rights without being dependent on reindeer ownership.

Johanna Suurpää, Director General, Department for Democracy and Public Law, Ministry of Justice of Finland

Johanna Suurpää expressed her encouragement and appreciation for the discussions on Sámi issues. She mentioned the importance of international law and its development in the area of indigenous rights, such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the EU treaty Article 2.

Suurpää argued that the EU should take indigenous rights into account, as it is not isolated from the international law framework. The EU's willingness to join the

Council of European Convention on Human Rights is another step in the right direction. She mentioned the positive developments and cooperation between EU institutions, the European Parliament, and the Sámi representatives to find more concrete ways for collaboration and Sámi representation in Brussels.

Suurpää also discussed some good examples from member states, such as Finland's Sámi Climate Council, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Arctic Policy that mainstreams the rights of Sámi and indigenous people. However, she acknowledged that there are also unfortunate examples where the right to participate effectively has not been upheld.

Despite the challenges, Suurpää remained optimistic about the potential to move forward and encouraged further discussions on finding concrete ways to improve the situation for the Sámi people in the EU.

Eduard Auer, Head of Division, Regional Eastern Partnership, Regional Cooperation and OSCE(EURCA.1), European External Action Service

Eduard Auer expressed gratitude to the Finnish presidency of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and its Secretariat for their work. He acknowledged the suspension of activities with Russia in BEAC and the unclear timeline for its return but reiterated the EU's commitment to

continue working with BEAC and supporting its activities, particularly on the Youth Council and work with indigenous people, including the Sámi.

Eduard Auer:

"Any change affecting the Arctic, both good and bad, will be first and foremost experienced by the people living there."

Auer highlighted the EU's focus on continuous dialogue with Arctic indigenous peoples and mentioned several important policy documents, such as the Council of Conclusions on Indigenous Peoples (2017), the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024), and the updated Arctic policy.

To implement these commitments, the EU maintains an institutionalized permanent dialogue, supports the Sámi Council financially, and organizes events to strengthen relationships between the Sámi and the EU. Additionally, the EU provides support through regional development programs, funding for Greenland, and the Horizon Europe research program, which streamlines co-creation of research with local and indigenous communities.

Áslat Holmberg, President of the Sámi Council:

Áslat Holmberg acknowledged the challenges facing the Arctic, such as invasive species and declining traditional food sources. Holmberg stressed the importance of building awareness on both sides, with the EU understanding Sámi issues and priorities and the Sámi gaining knowledge about the EU and its mechanisms.



Áslat Holmberg:

"And there is a reference to the free, prior and informed consent, which I say is a right, it's not only a principle, it's a right in international law."

Holmberg argued that Sámi should be recognized as rights holders in the development of EU policies, mentioning concerns over mineral development in Sámi territories. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of respecting indigenous peoples' rights, such as the right to self-determination and free, prior, and informed consent.

Holmberg called for a stronger Sámi presence in Brussels, not just through project-based initiatives but with a more permanent presence. He mentioned that the Sámi conference last August called for the implementation of the EU-Sápmi Strategy. The strategy is a document developed by a think tank appointed by the Sámi Council. The document is to his knowledge the most comprehensive consideration of how to develop the relationship between the Sámi people and the EU. It could serve as a way to improve the relationship between the Sámi people and the EU. He also called for an internal indigenous peoples policy for the EU and a partnership agreement between Sápmi and the EU, expressing a desire to work together towards these goals.

Panel discussion on EU's Arctic & Northern policies and Indigenous Peoples

The panel discussion on the challenges faced by the Sámi people in the Arctic region, particularly in regard to the preservation of Sámi culture, rights, and environment highlighted the following issues:

- The need for a unified Sámi region and the recognition of Sámi as one nation, transcending state borders.
- The potential for Sápmi to contribute to conservation and biodiversity.
- The need for a bottom-up approach to conservation, where Sámi communities define their own conservation methods.
- The challenges in ratifying and implementing the draft Sámi convention and harmonizing legislation among Nordic countries.
- Innovative ideas for protecting indigenous rights, such as granting legal subject status to rivers.
- The need for increased engagement with the European Union and greater clarity on member states' priorities for Sámi people.

Overall, the discussion emphasized the need for increased recognition and support for the Sámi people, their rights, and their culture. The speakers call for greater involvement of Sámi communities in decision-making processes, the implementation of a bottom-up approach to conservation and fostering collaboration with other indigenous communities to address common challenges.

Stefan Mikaelsson:

"Swedish government made a convention report to the ESC committee that it is the opinion of the government of Sweden that indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination as they constitute a people according to the meaning referred to in the joint article one of 1966 two conventions."

Plenary session 3: Traditional knowledge and cultural heritage in Sámi communities

Moderator: Áslat Holmberg, President of the Sámi Council:

In his introduction, Áslat Holmberg, President of the Sámi Council, welcomes attendees to the second day and third plenary session of the Sámi Summit. As moderator, he briefly introduces himself and shares that he comes from the village of Njuorggán in the Deatnu River Valley. Before moving on to the day's agenda, he performs a traditional Sámi luohi from his region, called Čáppa eallu, which is about the beauty and diversity of a reindeer herd.

Holmberg then proceeds to introduce the topic for the session - traditional knowledge and cultural heritage in Sámi communities - and invites keynote speakers to share their thoughts, starting with Ronny Wilhelmsen, a member of the Sámi Parliament in Norway.

Ronny Wilhelmsen, Member of the Sámi Parliament in Norway:



Ronny Wilhelmsen:

"We Sámis have a rich cultural heritage that is deeply rooted in traditional knowledge."

Ronny Wilhelmsen emphasizes the importance of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage in Sámi communities. He shares his personal connection to the sea

and fisheries, acknowledging that traditional knowledge is not taught in schools but passed down through generations. Wilhelmsen believes that traditional knowledge is vital in addressing modern challenges like climate change and environmental degradation.

He highlights the importance of indigenous peoples' rights to fish in their waters and rivers, which is enshrined in international law, and how this understanding contributes to sustainable practices. He also discusses the challenges faced by Sámi communities, such as climate change, overfishing, and industrial activities like oil and gas exploration.

Wilhelmsen points to the Norwegian Supreme Court ruling in favor of the Sámi regarding the Fosen Wind Power Project as a landmark decision that reinforces the importance of respecting indigenous peoples' rights and traditional knowledge. In conclusion, he calls for dialogue, collaboration, and a strong framework like the Consultation Act to maintain and strengthen traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, which can guide society in addressing modern challenges.

Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships in the European Commission:

Jutta Urpilainen addresses the summit and highlights the EU's interest in the Arctic region. She discusses the increased geopolitical competition and military buildup in the Arctic, with major players striving to obtain control of strategic infrastructure and resources. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has further heightened these tensions, impacting

the Sámi people inhabiting Sápmi.

Urpilainen highlights the importance of addressing climate change and prioritizing human development in the Arctic. She

Jutta Urpilainen:

"The tensions and ramifications of war have also touched and put pressure on Sámi peoples inhabiting Sápmi."

underscores the valuable traditional knowledge of indigenous communities, like the Sámi people, in achieving sustainability. The EU recognizes the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Sámi, supporting projects through programs like Erasmus+ and Creative Europe.

The Commissioner also mentions the EU's regional development support in northern Sweden and Finland through the European Regional Development Fund. She concludes by emphasizing the importance of inclusive dialogue, diversity, and meaningful participation in decision-making for a sustainable Arctic region.

Anna Vuopala, Secretary-General for the Traditional Knowledge Network from the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland:



Anna Vuopala:

"Now more than ever, we need to understand the basic concepts of indigenous legal framework, such as self-determination, prior and free informed consent, which should be put in the center of attention as regards awareness and education on cultural intellectual property."

Anna Vuopala discusses the importance of building awareness and cooperation capabilities across borders regarding indigenous traditional knowledge. She introduces the concept of cultural intellectual property and highlights the need for open and inclusive dialogue between the Nordic indigenous peoples, governments, and EU institutions.

Vuopala emphasizes the importance of understanding the basic concepts of the indigenous legal framework, such as self-determination and free, prior and informed consent. She points out that indigenous peoples are often observers rather than formal decision-makers in matters concerning their own affairs, and their rights and interests under the intellectual property system are barely recognized in the EU.

She suggests that engagement, networks, and education are essential for progress in protecting indigenous cultural heritage. Vuopala highlights the importance of establishing connections with the Sámi Parliamentary Council and mentions the development of educational materials on the subject of intellectual property rights, which have been funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. These materials aim to increase understanding and capacity to address the existing intellectual property rights systems across borders with full participation and determination of the indigenous peoples.

Salla Saastamoinen, Deputy Director General of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission:

Salla Saastamoinen:

“The Arctic indigenous people hold valuable skills to deliver early warning signs on sustainability threats through their centuries-long experiential and traditional knowledge.”

Salla Saastamoinen, Deputy Director General of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, highlights the importance of working hand-in-hand with local and indigenous peoples to address the crucial sustainability challenges in the Arctic region. Indigenous peoples hold valuable skills and knowledge, which are essential for developing and implementing resilience and sustainability strategies in the region.

Saastamoinen discusses the EU Arctic Policy's aim to support sustainable

development in Arctic regions and the policy tool of Smart Specialization to strengthen the capacity and resilience of Arctic societies and economies. Smart Specialization strategies are place-based innovation strategies designed to boost innovation-led growth and competitiveness while reducing territorial inequalities across the EU.

The Joint Research Centre has been working to understand how policy practitioners use Smart Specialization to address sustainability challenges in their regions, focusing on the European Arctic regions. The study found that Arctic regions have used the Sustainable Development Goals as a reference for regional development and Smart Specialization processes. The focus on green transition has sparked a dialogue with local stakeholders, including indigenous communities like the Sámi people, on how to address localized sustainability challenges.

In conclusion, Saastamoinen emphasizes that Smart Specialization offers a framework to engage relevant stakeholders in co-creating shared visions and sustainable development pathways. There is still room for improvement in the implementation of these strategies, and a stronger focus on sustainability is needed. Mutual learning and collaboration between the Nordic-Arctic regions is highly recommended to address common challenges.

Panel discussion on Traditional knowledge and cultural heritage in Sámi communities

Moderator: Áslat Holmberg, President of the Sámi Council:

Áslat Holmberg introduced the panel discussion on traditional knowledge and cultural heritage in Sámi communities. The panelists included Anni-Sofia Niittyvuopio, Alice Bah Kuhnke, Pirita Näkkäläjärvi, Jean-Pierre Halkin, Marie Persson Njajta, and Piera Heaika Muotka. The discussion aimed to cover ways to support Sámi culture through the EU, livelihoods, rights, challenges in protecting cultural heritage, and experiences from the youth. The panelists would also address challenges in protecting rights within court systems. The audience was encouraged to prepare questions for the panelists, with the first question directed to Alice Kuhnke about her experience as a former Sámi Minister in Sweden and its influence on her work in the EU.

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Member of the European Parliament

Alice Bah Kuhnke expressed her gratitude for being invited to the panel and shared how Sámi people and their fight for rights have been a significant part of her life. Growing up in the south of Sweden, she learned about the Sámi people through the Swedish church and began to educate herself since schools did not provide this knowledge. Joining the Green Party, Kuhnke

developed friendships with Sámi people, who helped her grow as a person and politician. She emphasized the importance of earning trust, listening carefully, and being patient when seeking knowledge about the Sámi community. This approach has made her a better politician, especially when listening to older people and asking questions.

Anni-Sofia Niittyvuopio, Chair of the Sámi Parliamentary Youth Council, of the Sámi Parliament in Finland:

Anni-Sofia Niittyvuopio discussed the challenges of practicing traditional Sámi livelihoods amidst climate change and land use changes. She emphasized the importance of preserving traditional knowledge held by elders, as well as the innovative ways the youth are incorporating modern technology, like drones, into their practices. Niittyvuopio stressed the urgency of collecting and preserving traditional knowledge before it's lost and called for more support and resources to accomplish this. She also mentioned issues like fishing restrictions in her home area, which contribute to the loss of traditional knowledge, and urged governments to avoid actions that erode this valuable cultural heritage.

Piera Heaika Muotka, Member of the Sámi Parliament in Norway.



Piera Heaika Muotka:

“Today marks a 529th day since the Supreme Court ruling and a solution has yet to be reached regarding the power plant. And the ruling is practically being ignored by the Norwegian government.”

Piera Heaika Muotka discussed the ongoing conflict between the South Sámi reindeer herding community of Fosen and the state. A wind energy plant, constructed in the middle of crucial winter grazing pastures, was ruled by the Supreme Court as violating the human rights of the Sámi people. However, 529 days after the ruling, the Norwegian government has yet to resolve the issue or implement the ruling. Muotka emphasized the importance of Article 27 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protects the rights of ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities. He expressed concern over the potential erosion of trust in democratic and judicial institutions, and called for better mechanisms to ensure countries follow international law and human rights. Additionally, Muotka highlighted the importance of considering energy policies, asserting that Sápmi cannot be the green battery of Europe and that destroying Sámi lands would only lead to more greenhouse gas emissions.

Pirita Näkkäljärvi, Member of the Sámi Parliament in Finland

Pirita Näkkäljärvi is deeply passionate about amending the Sámi Parliament Act. The current Act contains a loophole allowing Finnish and non-Sámi people to vote and even become representatives in the Sámi Parliament, diluting its effectiveness in representing the Sámi people. Finland has received three decisions from UN Human Rights bodies

stating that this violates international Human Rights conventions. Näkkäljärvi emphasizes that the Sámi culture is not just about art forms, but also encompasses traditional ways of life, languages, and worldviews. She highlights the importance of Sámi languages in everyday life and maintaining cultural identity. Näkkäljärvi calls for the Finnish state to respect and support the Sámi people’s rights to govern their own future and maintain their distinct languages and culture.

Pirita Näkkäljärvi:

“Culture for us means our ways of life, our ways of thinking, our world views. Everything is culture to us.”

Jean-Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit in Interreg, Cross-Border Cooperation, Internal Borders in the European Commission

Jean-Pierre Halkin discussed how cohesion policy and Interreg programs can help preserve the Sámi language, culture, and ecosystem. He highlights three relevant features of the coming seven years: the contribution to larger policy frameworks, the concept of multilevel governance, and supporting citizens and communities living across borders. Halkin praises the Sámi-

EU strategy, developed through an Interreg project, and the involvement of the Sámi Parliaments in the new Aurora program. He emphasizes the importance of including civil society and youth representatives in decision-making processes and encourages Sámi representatives to be a part of the cohesion policy, regional development plans, and Interreg programs. This collaboration will help turn the Sápmi-EU strategy and partnership agreement into concrete action.

Marie Persson Njajta, Member of the Board of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden

Marie Persson Njajta addressed concerns about the proposed European Critical Law, Raw Materials Act. She believes the act, a result of successful mining industry lobbying, could override local environmental consequences in favor of strategic projects. Njajta is worried that the law will sidestep environmental protections and human rights. She highlights Sweden’s ongoing criticism from the UN for non-compliance with Sámi rights and stresses the importance of a just transition that respects indigenous peoples’ rights. Njajta calls for consultation with the Sámi parliaments and representatives, rather than the Nordic states, in policy-making that affects Sámi culture. She emphasizes the need for a reduction in consumption, increased recycling, and learning from traditional knowledge to combat climate change. Lastly, Njajta expresses solidarity with indigenous peoples globally.

Q&A Session

In the Q&A session, Áslat Holmberg, President of the Sámi Council, took questions from the audience, including Tauno Ljetoff, Stefan Mikaelsson, and Aina Madelén Nordsletta Aslaksen. The questions addressed issues such as the rights of the Sámi people in traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, the importance of including Sámi communities in national legislation, and how the European Union and national governments can protect the Sámi people from misuse of their cultural heritage.

Tauno Ljetoff:

“If or as long as the EU has no official negotiation party from the Sámi part, then I think that the EU is still on the road of colonizing the Arctic.”

Panelists Alice Bah Kuhnke, Jean-Pierre Halkin, Marie Persson Njajta, Anni-Sofia Niittyvuopio, and Piera Heaika Muotka provided their reflections on the questions. They discussed the importance of young people’s involvement in decision-making processes, the need for the Sámi people to demand a place at the table in negotiations, the ongoing Truth Commission in Sweden, and the need for better access to the EU for the Sámi people.



Alice Bah Kuhnke:

“You have to demand a place around the table and to be listened to. They will try to over and over again to, I won’t say fool you, but make these scenes where you think you are invited to have some influence, but you won’t. So for me as an ally with the Sámi people, this is my true and strongest message.”

Summary

Håkan Jonsson, President of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden and President of the Sámi Parliamentary Council:

Håkan Jonsson discussed the importance of traditional knowledge and Sámi cultural heritage, which encompasses all aspects of their lives, including hunting, fishing, handicrafts, and reindeer herding. He mentioned the importance of preserving traditional knowledge as stated in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Traditional knowledge is often collective, but it can also be individual and vary between families.

He emphasized the connection between traditional knowledge and sustainability and the negative consequences of intrusion in the form of mining, forestry, hydropower, and wind power. Jonsson also highlighted the challenges faced by the Sámi in preserving their culture and knowledge, pointing out the importance of involving children and young people in their daily practices.

He addressed the need for EU and national legislation support for all forms of Sámi traditional knowledge and culture. Jonsson expressed the strange situation the Sámi find themselves in, having to fight for their rights in court and deal with laws established by the colonizing states. He

urged the EU and states to engage in meaningful dialogues to change legislation, allowing indigenous people and the Sámi greater opportunities to continue their trades and culture in the future.

Lastly, he thanked the participants for their contributions and expressed hope for change in the future, despite sometimes feeling like they are speaking to deaf ears.

Heidi Hautala, Vice President of the European Parliament

Heidi Hautala, Vice President of the European Parliament, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn about the challenges faced by the Sámi people. She focused on two main issues: the green transition and the need for a Sámi platform within EU institutions.

Regarding the green transition, she emphasized the importance of a holistic approach that respects indigenous peoples' rights and biodiversity. She mentioned the ongoing work on the Critical Raw Materials Act and the need to protect Sámi rights amidst the rush for renewable energy and electrification. She also highlighted the increasing awareness among companies about the importance of respecting indigenous rights and environmental consequences.

Hautala then addressed the idea of establishing a Sámi platform within EU institutions. She suggested exploring a parliamentary partnership between the European Parliament and the three Sámi parliaments, which could help engage other European institutions in the conversation.

In closing, Hautala thanked the organizers and participants for their contributions to the event and expressed her commitment to working together towards the realization of the Sámi people's rights.

Anni Koivisto, Chair of the Summit, 1st Vice President of the Sámi Parliament in Finland:

Anni Koivisto expressed gratitude for the discussions and participation during the Barents Euro-Arctic Sámi Summit. She emphasized the importance of the Sámi people's voices being heard in Brussels and their involvement in decision-making on matters concerning their culture, languages, and traditional livelihoods. Koivisto suggested that the European Union should develop an internal Indigenous People's Policy and action plan to ensure full participation of the Sámi in EU matters.

She expressed hope for a strong partnership between the Sámi people and the EU, as they work together to address challenges such as climate change. Koivisto extended her gratitude to the European Parliament, the Finnish Presidency of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and various individuals and organizations involved in organizing the

summit. She concluded by hoping that the summit would mark the beginning of a long-lasting partnership between the Sámi Parliaments and the European Parliament.

The Summit's Music and Yoik/ Luohti/Livde:

The Summit of the Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People featured a captivating array of artists who showcased their unique talents and cultural heritage. In this photo collage, we celebrate their contributions to the event.

NIKO VALKEAPÄÄ

Esteemed Sámi musician and yoiker, Niko officially opened the summit with a powerful performance of traditional Sámi Yoik.



Photo by: Juha Kauppinen



ANNA MOROTTAJA

Hailing from Inari, Anna Morottaja enchanted attendees during the evening dinner reception with her revival of the Inari Sámi livde musical tradition.

Photo by: Marko Vasara



AILU VALLE

This talented rap artist from Anár, Finnish side of Sápmi, entertained the audience after the dinner with his multilingual rap performances in Northern Sámi, Finnish, and English. With special guest performance by Petra Laiti, performing her song: Ále eastte mu dánsumis.

ÁSLAT HOLMBERG

A multifaceted figure, Áslat opened the concluding day of the summit with a traditional Sámi Yoik, and later moderated a session on traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.



This memorable event brought together a diverse group of talented artists who showcased the rich cultural heritage of the Sámi people, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended the Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People.

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This report, titled “Summit of the Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People 2023 in Brussels” is the result of a collaborative effort between the Sámi Parliament in Finland, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland/the Finnish Presidency of the BEAC and Friends of the Presidency Working Group of Indigenous Peoples of BEAC.

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