OPEN LETTER TO THE EU COMMISSION ABOUT THE ARCTIC STRATEGY

27th of May 2026

Dear Commissioner Costas Kadis, Commissioner Joseph Síkela, Commissioner Dan Jørgensen, Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra, and Executive Vice-President Teresa Ribera,

We are writing to you in our capacity as representatives of financial institutions, the private sector, civil society organisations, and academia, bringing together a broad and cross-sectoral perspective.

We note with concern that the EU may reconsider its position on Arctic oil and gas development in the ongoing revision of the EU Arctic Strategy.[1]

Against this backdrop, we urge the European Union to maintain and reinforce its commitment to protect the fragile ecosystems north of the Arctic Circle from new oil and gas infrastructure.

Oil and gas expansion threatens vulnerable Arctic ecosystems
The Arctic is one of the planet's most vulnerable ecosystems and home to unique wildlife, like whales, seals, birds, and some of the world's largest fish stocks. The region is already under pressure, as it is warming four times faster than the global average.[2]

Further oil and gas expansion would add pressure to these globally significant ecosystems, by increasing the risk of oil spills and leakages, which could cause irreversible environmental damage while increased shipping, noise and physical disturbance would further intensify the environmental stress on the region.

North of the Arctic Circle, Norway has opened parts of the southern Barents Sea for petroleum activities and the marginal ice zone extends into licensed areas.[3] The ecological value of this zone is not defined by the presence of sea ice alone, but by the ecosystems linked to it. The marginal ice zone is a highly productive transition area where key biological processes occur, connecting ice, water masses and the seabed throughout the year.[4]

The Barents Sea supports feeding grounds for whales such as fin and sperm whales, as well as seals and dolphins. Several Arctic seabird species breed on Bjørnøya and migrate through the licensed areas, directly linking oil activities to sensitive ecological hotspots in the wider Arctic system. The region is also a key feeding and spawning habitat for species like Atlantic salmon and Greenland halibut, alongside fragile cold-water coral communities on the seafloor.[5]

Oil spills, even small ones, can be devastating, particularly for species unable to escape.

In the event of an oil spill, response capacity in the Barents Sea would be severely constrained. Oil spill simulations for the Wisting field show that only around 7.8% of spilled oil could be recovered during winter. Under polar conditions, characterised by darkness, fog,

freezing temperatures, and rough seas, cleanup efforts may quickly become ineffective, allowing oil to spread towards vulnerable areas such as Bjørnøya and Svalbard, with potentially severe and irreversible environmental consequences.[6]

An energy system built on domestic renewables and widespread electrification is more resilient than one reliant on fossil fuel imports

New fossil fuel developments in the Arctic are not a near-term response to the current energy crisis. Project lead times average 13 years on the Norwegian continental shelf and are longer in the Barents Sea due to harsh conditions and limited infrastructure.[7] Accordingly, new oil- and gas fields in the Arctic are unlikely to reach full production this side of 2040.

If the EU meets its 90% greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2040, existing gas infrastructure in Norway, the UK and the EU will be sufficient to cover demand.[8]

In the unfortunate event that the EU would not reach its 2040 targets, the Barents Sea would not serve as a sound fallback strategy. Rystad Energy estimates of resources worth extracting are 78% lower than the estimates of the Norwegian authorities, and despite decades of extensive exploration activities in the Barents Sea, the findings have been very limited. Furthermore, limited existing infrastructure, particularly for gas export, materially constrains commercial development. Existing LNG capacity is fully utilised for decades, while the commercial viability of new pipeline infrastructure depends on the EU entering into long-term gas offtake agreements spanning 20–25 years.[9] This will create carbon lock in long after the EU's net zero target in 2050 and risks crowding out renewable energy.[10]

We believe that the most effective way to continue to strengthen the EU's long-term energy security is to ramp up EU's electrification and domestic renewable energy and efficiency measures, not to deepen dependence on imported fossil fuels.[11]

Arctic oil and gas expansion represents a security threat to Europe

The changing geopolitical situation has heightened the security risks in the Barents Sea, with oil and gas infrastructure being potential targets for hybrid warfare due to the proximity to Russian territory and the Northern Sea Route. Research shows that expanding oil and gas activity in the Barents Sea would increase these risks further.[12] This has also been echoed by statements by the Norwegian intelligence and security services that over the last year have warned of a persistent, heightened risk of attacks on the Norwegian continental shelf.[13] If oil and gas flowing from the Norwegian part of the Arctic becomes crucial for Europe's energy security, it would make the infrastructure even more attractive as targets for sabotage and make the EU vulnerable to such attacks.

For these reasons, we encourage the EU to prioritise environmental protection, long-term energy resilience, and security by upholding the moratorium on new Arctic oil and gas and accelerating renewable energy and efficiency measures within Europe.

Sincerely,

Signatories:

Financial Institutions

1. Sampension

2. Nordea Asset Management
3. KLP
4. Velliv
5. Pensam
6. PBU - Pædagogernes Pension
7. Lærernes Pension
8. P+, Pensionskassen for Akademikere
9. Akademiker Pension
10. Triodos Bank
11. Merkur Andelskasse
12. Cultura Bank

Private Sector

13. Energy Modelling Lab
14. Ecosia
15. Patagonia
16. Norion
17. Terje Osmundsen, Empower New Energy
18. Organic Plant Protein
19. Northern Playground
20. Movement AS

Trade Unions:

21. NTL Norsk Tjenestemannslag - Norwegian Civil Service Union
22. IDA - Danish Society of Engineers
23. Finansforbundet - Financial Services Union in Denmark
24. DM - Danish Association of Masters and PhDs
25. Forbundet Arkitekter og Designere - Union of Architects and Designers
26. Prosa - Union for IT Professionals

Public Profiles:

27. Dr. Robert Habeck, Senior Arctic Analyst at The Danish Institute for International Studies, former German Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection
28. Connie Hedegaard, Former European Commissioner for Climate Protection and former Danish Minister for Climate and Energy
29. Laurence Tubiana, CEO of European Climate Foundation (ECF) and France's former Climate Change Ambassador
30. Eva Joly, Norwegian-French lawyer and former member of the European Parliament for Europe Écologie
31. Jens Ulltveit-Moe, Norwegian business leader and founder of the industrial investment company Umoe AS
32. Lars Bonderup Bjørn, CEO of EWII
33. Mogens Lykketoft, Former President of the United Nations General Assembly, during the adoption of the Paris Climate Agreement and veteran Danish parliamentarian and government minister

34. Dr. Paul Shrivastava, Professor of Management & Organization, The Pennsylvania State University and CoPresident, The Club of Rome
35. Olivier De Schutter, former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and Chair of New Economies for Eradicating Poverty (NEEP)
36. Ilona Szabó de Carvalho, Co-founder and President, Igarapé Institute
37. Bill McKibben, Author and co-founder of 350.org

Academia

38. Katherine Richardson, Professor of Biological Oceanography, Globe Institute, UCPH
39. Michael Mann, Presidential Distinguished Professor and Director of the Center for Science, Sustainability and the Media at the University Pennsylvania, US
40. Arild Vatn, Professor Emeritus, Department of International Environment and Development, Norwegian University of Life Science, Norway
41. Berit Kristoffersen, Associate Professor, UiT - the Arctic University of Norway
42. Peter Birch Sørensen, Professor, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
43. Dr. Martin Sommerkorn, Coordinating Lead Author Polar Regions, IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (2019)
44. Dr. Heidi Mogstad, Senior Researcher Christian Michelsens Institute, Norway
45. Professor Vigdis Vandvik, University of Bergen, Norway
46. Prof. Jean-Pierre Gattuso, Research Professor (emeritus), Ocean Acidification and Warming, ocean CO2 cycling, CNRS, Sorbonne University, and IDDRI, France
47. Hans-Otto Pörtner, Marine biologist and former IPCC Working Group Co-Chair, Alfred Wegener Institute, Germany
48. Claudia Cheng, Researcher, UiT- the Arctic University of Norway, Norway
49. Erik Gomez-Baggethun, Professor in Environmental Governance at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) and a Senior Research Associate at the University of Oxford
50. Bård Lahn, Associate Professor, University of Oslo
51. Camilla Houeland, Research Professor, Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, Norway
52. Carlos Nobre, Professor of Climate and Sustainability, University of São Paulo, Brazil
53. Jason Hickel, ICREA Professor at ICTA-UAB working on ecological economics, global inequality, and post-capitalist futures
54. Andreas Rasche, Associate Dean and Professor of Business in Society at the CBS Centre for Sustainability, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
55. Andreas Ytterstad, Professor, OsloMet, Norway
56. Charlotte Wrigley, Researcher, University of Stavanger, Norway
57. Liv Sunnercrantz, Associate Professor, University of Stavanger, Norway
58. Oluf Langhelle, Professor, University of Stavanger, Norway
59. Henner Busch, Associate Professor, Lund University, Sweden
60. Tevfik Murat Yildirim, Professor, University of Stavanger, Norway
61. Cecilie Larsen, PhD candidate, University of Stavanger, Norway
62. Anders Riel Müller, Associate Professor, University of Stavanger, Norway
63. Maja Brandt Andreasen, Postdoctoral Research, University of Stavanger, Norway
64. Juan Antonio Samper, PhD Candidate, Lund University, Sweden
65. Jens Friis Lund, Professor, University of Copenhagen

66. Pete Smith, Professor, University of Aberdeen, UK
67. Peter Newell, Professor of International Relations, University of Sussex, UK.
68. Harro van Asselt, Hatton Professor of Climate Law, University of Cambridge, UK
69. Lukas Slothuus, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Sussex, UK
70. Wim Carton, Associate Professor, Lund University, Sweden
71. Kirstine Lund Christiansen, postdoc, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
72. Susanne Ditlevsen, Professor, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
73. Caroline Kuzemko, Professor in the Political Economy of Climate Change, University of Warwick, UK
74. Daniele Vezzelli, PhD candidate, University of Padova - Centre of Excellence Jean Monnet on Just Fossil Fuel Transitions, Italy
75. Dr Alex Megann, Ocean and Climate Scientist, National Oceanography Centre, UK
76. Richard Williams, Professor in Ocean and Climate Sciences, University of Liverpool, UK
77. Andreas Malm, Associate Professor, Lund University, Sweden
78. Kyla Tienhaara, Associate Professor, Queen's University, Canada
79. Louison Cahen-Fourot, Associate Professor of Economics, Roskilde University, Denmark
80. Sebastian Berghald, PhD Researcher in Polar Climate Variability, KU Leuven & UCLouvain, Belgium
81. Ernest Aigner, Postdoctoral Researcher, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany
82. Nick Fitzpatrick, Postdoc, Aarhus University, Denmark
83. Rubén Vezzoni, PostDoc at University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
84. Teja Šosterič, Research Associate at LMU Munich and editor-in-chief of Environmental History Now
85. Joseph Christopher Proctor, Post-Doctoral Researcher, The Institute for European Policymaking, Italy
86. Mine Islar, Associate Professor, Copenhagen University
87. Vigdis Vanvik, Professor, Biology, University of Bergen, Norway
88. Caroline Anna Salling, Postdoc, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
89. Christian Seiler, Assistant Professor, Queen's University, Canada
90. Graham Whitelaw, Associate Professor, Queen' University, Canada
91. John P. Smol, Professor, Queen's University, Canada
92. Pierre Wokuri, Junior Professor in Political Science, Rennes Institute of Political Studies, France
93. Gaurav Madan, Research Scientist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Science, University of Reading, UK
94. Maja Essebo, Researcher, Lund University, Sweden
95. Federica Ammaturo, PhD Candidate, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany
96. Bue Rübner Hansen, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, GAIA/SDU Climate Cluster, University of Southern Denmark
97. Richard Allan, Professor of Climate Science, University of Reading, UK
98. Lyla Mehta, Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK
99. Inge Røpke, Professor, Aalborg University, Denmark
100. Bo Elberling, Professor, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
101. Torben Røjle Christensen, Professor, University of Aarhus, Denmark

102. Helge Ryggvik, Senior Researcher, University of Oslo
103. Thijs Van de Graaf, Associate Professor, Ghent University
104. Daniele Codato, researcher, University of Padova - Centre of Excellence Jean Monnet on Just Fossil Fuel Transitions, Italy
105. Peder Ressem Østring, PhD Candidate, University of Oslo, Norway
106. Fergus Green, Associate Professor, University College London, UK
107. Ella Gilbert, Climate Scientist & Presenter, UK
108. Jason Glynos, Professor of Political Theory, University of Essex, UK
109. Alex Pazaitis, Postdoctoral Researcher at Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance, Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia
110. Juan C. Rocha, Associate Professor, Stockholm University, Sweden
111. Judit Gébert, Associate Professor, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary
112. Naja Dyrendom Graugaard, Associate Professor, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
113. A Siri C Paulsen, PhD-Fellow, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
114. Marte Hofsteenge, Postdoctoral Researcher, Utrecht University, Netherlands
115. Ida Due, PhD Student, Department of Environmental and Resource Engineering, Technical University of Denmark
116. Zsófia Benedek, Senior Research Fellow, ELTE Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Budapest, Hungary

Think Tanks:

117. Carbon Tracker Initiative
118. CONCITO

Civil Society:

119. Nordic Center for Sustainable Finance, ActionAid Denmark
120. WWF-Norway, WWF European Policy Office
121. ZERO
122. Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
123. Fair Finance Guide International, Fair Finance Guide Sweden
124. Centre of Excellence Jean Monnet on Just Fossil Fuel Transitions
125. Tara Ocean Foundation
126. SAGA, Danmarks partineutrale ungdomsorganisation
127. Nettverk for samfunnsansvar 2.0

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[2] "Unburnable carbon in the rapidly warming Arctic: Mapping spatial relationships among oil and gas development, ecologically sensitive areas and Indigenous Peoples' lands", 2026, Daniele Codato et. al

[3] "Forvaltningsplaner for Norske havområder – Stortingsmelding nr. 20 (2019-2020); «Kampen om Iskantsonen» 2024 WWF Norge

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[5] "Geranium. Decision support and visualisation tool for the Arctic Seas Conservation Planners", WWF; Bear Island, 2023, Ramsar Sites Information Services; "*Key Biodiversity Areas factsheet: Bjørnøya (Bear Island)*", 2026, Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership: IUCN et al.; «Innspill til PUD II Konsekvensutredning på Wisting», 2022, WWF et al

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[11] "Boosting Electrification in Europe», 2025, Strategic Perspectives; «Schockproof: How electrification can strengthen EU energy security, 2025, EMBER; Europe's energy security on the path to climate neutrality", 2025, Agora Energiwende

[12] «Barentshavet i spill. Sikkerhetspolitisk risiko for olje- og gassvirksomhet i Arktis», 2026, Norsk Klimastiftelse

[13] «Nasjonal trusselvurdering», 2025, Politiets sikkerhetstjeneste (PST)