CHAPTER 8

Socioeconomic and Cultural Changes in the European Arctic

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Abstract

The chapter provides overview of the Arctic sociocultural landscape, highlighting innovative and growing Arctic cities, thinning-out rural areas, demographic challenges, and dependence on extractive and primary industries. Indigenous peoples often experience these elements in distinct manners.

The EU has a number of programmes that support socioeconomic development and co-operation in the North, as well as relevant transport policies and environmental regulations. When designing and carrying out actions affecting socioeconomic and cultural development, the EU decision-makers should take into account: the region’s intra-regional and core-periphery connectivity; power structures, social conflicts and cultural diversity; human-nature interactions; as well as the state of innovation, entrepreneurship and education.

The EU’s focus on entrepreneurship and innovation within co-operation and cohesion programmes is likely to continue in the future, although greater attention to gender issues and indigenous peoples is recommended. Intra-regional accessibility and connectivity must not be neglected. The special characteristics and needs of Arctic cities need to be taken into account in EU policies and programmes.

1 Introduction

This chapter discusses selected social and cultural trends in the European Arctic (see Figure 8.1). Arctic cultures are characterised by high resilience and

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adaptive capacity, but some aspects of social change have been challenging.\textsuperscript{1} The main issues discussed include changing demographics and urbanization, on-going dependence on public transfers and primary industries, on-going changes in lifestyle and livelihood, rising role of education and research and shifts in governance. Peripherality is an important feature of the region. Also, the presence of indigenous peoples distinguishes the North from the rest of Europe. As societies and cultures are by definition very complex and dynamic, the choice of issues and perspectives in this chapter is to certain degree arbitrary, but is believed to reflect the current emphases in debates on the socio-cultural development of the European Arctic.

2 Key Sociocultural Trends in the European Arctic

2.1 Complex Demographic Trends and Urbanisation

The \textit{Arctic Human Development Report} (\textit{AHDR}) (2004) estimated that there are four million people living in the Arctic, of whom 10\% are indigenous, \textit{e.g.} Inuit, Sámi and Nenets (Figure 8.2). Since 2000, there is 1.4\% less people living in the Arctic, primarily due to continued population decline in the Russian Arctic.