ENGLISH

The LDAC calls for stronger protection of the Arctic fisheries amid Norway plans to expand oil, gas and mining activities

Photo credit: Research vessel Lance in Svalbard © Tuomas Romu / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Madrid, 22 September 2026 — The EU Long Distance Fleet Advisory Council (LDAC) has adopted on 17 September a new advice calling on the European Union to maintain and strengthen its position against new oil and gas developments in the Arctic, highlighting the potential impacts of expanding industrial activities on marine ecosystems, fisheries and long-term food security.

The advice titled **"Recommendations on EU Arctic Strategy – International Ocean Governance: Impacts of Norway's plans to advance exploration and exploitation of oil, gas and mining activities in the Arctic"**, provides recommendations to the European Commission in the context of the ongoing revision of the EU Arctic Strategy.

The LDAC stresses the global ecological importance of Arctic marine ecosystems and their role in supporting productive fisheries. Arctic waters provide important breeding, spawning, feeding and overwintering grounds for commercially important species including cod, capelin, Norwegian spring-spawning herring and Atlantic mackerel. Because many of these stocks migrate across large areas and national boundaries, environmental impacts in Arctic waters can have consequences for fisheries well beyond the areas directly affected.

Growing pressures on a vulnerable marine ecosystem

The advice draws particular attention to the cumulative pressures facing Arctic ecosystems. Climate change is already altering water temperatures and the distribution and migration of commercial fish stocks, while additional industrial activities could increase pollution, habitat disturbance and competition for marine space.

According to the LDAC, oil and gas activities present specific risks for fisheries. Arctic conditions — including ice, darkness and harsh weather — can make spill response particularly challenging. Potential impacts include contamination of spawning and nursery grounds, effects on fish, seabirds and marine mammals, and long-term damage to marine ecosystems. The advice also points to chronic pressures from seismic surveys, underwater noise, seabed disturbance, increased vessel traffic and the displacement of fishing activities by industrial infrastructure and safety zones.

The LDAC further recalls its previous advice concerning deep-sea mining and fisheries, particularly in relation to Norway's plans for exploration and exploitation in the Arctic. It notes that knowledge of Arctic seabed ecosystems remains limited and reiterates the rationale for maintaining a precautionary approach until there is better evidence regarding environmental risks and impacts.

Fisheries and food security at the heart of Arctic policy

The advice argues that decisions concerning Arctic industrial development should fully consider their implications for fisheries, ecosystem integrity and long-term food security. As climate change increasingly affects fish distribution and productivity, protecting resilient marine ecosystems and key breeding and feeding areas is considered essential to the future of European fisheries.

The LDAC also highlights the Arctic's importance for marine biodiversity, including whales and other marine mammals, threatened sharks and seabirds, and stresses the close relationship between healthy marine ecosystems, productive fisheries and food security.

Two key recommendations to the European Commission

Against this background, the LDAC puts forward two main recommendations for the revised EU Arctic Strategy:

- **Maintain and strengthen the EU moratorium on the Arctic, particularly against new oil and gas activities**, in order to protect marine ecosystems and fisheries while safeguarding EU policy coherence and long-term sustainability objectives.
- **Maintain the EU definition of the Arctic as areas north of the Arctic Circle**, with the precautionary principle guiding EU decision-making.

The LDAC considers that maintaining a consistent EU position is also important for the Union's wider international commitments on climate, biodiversity and ocean governance.

Read the full LDAC advice here