

Experience Report

With the support of the CIERP Travel Fund for Experiential Learning, I was able to attend the Arctic Circle Assembly in Reykjavik, Iceland, in October 2023. The Arctic Circle Assembly is the biggest yearly gathering of scholars, practitioners, and decision-makers in the Arctic. Since I have previously already been working and studying Arctic issues, especially the combination of security policy and climate policy (e.g., writing my undergraduate thesis on the consequences of climate change on the Arctic and its influence on the current Arctic regimes) this was a unique opportunity for me to talk and especially listen to people who are experts in a field I am particularly interested in and to broaden my knowledge on the region.

During the three conference days, I attended various panels, mostly on my two top interests, climate change and security policy, but also on various other topics, all of which relate in some ways to the first two, such as indigenous rights, arctic governance, or arctic shipping. My biggest takeaways were (1) that the Arctic states still have to figure out how exactly to deal and cooperate (or not cooperate) with Russia, which covers almost half of the whole Arctic, (2) how the US is becoming increasingly interested in the Arctic as a Region, (3) the Arctic has big potentials to fight climate change but is also the region most severely affected by it, and (4) European countries (especially Scotland) have the chance to use the Arctic and the North Sea's offshore wind potential to solve the European energy crisis to a large part.

Another highlight for me was a short discussion I had with Ambassador David Balton, current Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Fisheries, who has worked a long time in the Arctic Council, the Arctic's most relevant political regime. He gave me valuable insights into how the US' positions on Arctic issues have changed over time, what the US' main interests in the region are, and how committed the US is to protect the environment and implementing climate change policies in the region.

As a German, I was also happy to see a large German delegation at the assembly, highlighting Germany's and the EU's important role in the region, especially when it comes to shipping routes and implementing climate policies. This also showed me that even though I am not from an Arctic country there are career opportunities for me to work on and in the Arctic. The whole experience made me even more eager to work on Arctic issues in the future.

Additionally, I learned a lot about how the relevant stakeholders in the region are and where their priorities lie. I was already able to put the people I met and/or heard speaking to good use since I was able to get one of them to contribute a piece for the student-run academic journal *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, for whom I currently work as a staff editor. Hopefully, this is the first sign of me establishing a network within the Arctic community.

And lastly, even though it is probably not the best shot ever taken of me, I did make it into the final official Foto collection of the Arctic Circle Assembly (see first picture below, on the right).

