



Committee of Senior Officials
Information document
Doc.BEAC.CSO.2005.13
29 March 2005

Working Group on Trade Barriers (WGTB) Action Plan 2005

CSO Chair has the pleasure of circulating the Action Plan for 2005, as adopted by the WGTB on 10 February 2005 and later endorsed by the CSO by silence procedure.



Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Working Group on Trade Barriers in the Barents Region

WGTB Chair: Norway
Mr. Svein Skeie
10 February 2005

Action plan 2005

The intergovernmental co-operation in the Barents Region was formalised on 11 January 1993 when the Foreign Ministers of the Nordic Countries, the Russian Federation and representatives of the European Commission signed a Declaration that created BEAC at a Foreign Ministers Conference in Kirkenes, Norway.

The Task Force II was by initiative from the Ministers established in 1999. Norway is from October 2003 chairing the BEAC for the coming two years. By a special agreement reached in November 2003 by the representatives from respective countries, Sweden has continued to chair the Task Force II until 8 February 2005 during the Norwegian BEAC chairmanship. Norway will chair the group until Finland is taking over the BEAC chairmanship in October 2005. After decision made by the CSO-meeting in Hammerfest 29 June - 1 July 2004, Task Force II is renamed and changed into a permanent working group. The new working group is now called "*Working Group on Trade Barriers in the Barents Region*".

The Finnish Board of Customs assists the chair and the working group with interpreter resources and contacts with other co-operating Finnish Authorities. The Finnish Foreign Ministry supports the group with permanent secretary help during the meetings.

The WGTB will meet regularly 4 - 6 times per year. During these meetings one of the main issues is to go through and follow up the activities according to the adopted Action Plan and actively inform the WGTB of activities made by the chair and the co-chairs.

The overall objective of the Action Plan is to reduce with 50% (fifty per cent) the number of border crossing barriers experienced by the companies making cross border trade in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

In order to reach the over all objective, the work within the WGTB is concentrated on the activities listed in the Action Plan with expected results and a tentative budget.

1. Logistical Chain.

- a) Project connected with the logistical chain between Northern Norway and North West Russia.

Expected results: To clarify and promote the border crossing procedures to the commercial life.

Activities: Arrange meeting between the local Russian and Norwegian Customs authorities in Murmansk and Tromsø to clarify the logistical chains between Tromsø – Murmansk (sea transport) and Kirkenes – Murmansk. The work on this issue was started in december at a bilateral meeting in Tromsø, between Customs representatives from Murmansk and Tromsø. The work will be continued and fullfilled during the first 6 months in 2005. The result will be publicated throught the Chambers of Commerce to actual companies. And a short version will be publised on [www. barentscustoms.org](http://www.barentscustoms.org).

Budget: 2.000 Euro

Travelling cost and accommodation	1.500
Interpreter and other external costs	250
Other expenses	250

- b) Open Forum on Timber - Encourage and promote a dialogue between Forest Industry and Customs.

Expected results: Simplify the border crossing for the intensive traffic of lorries carrying wood for the Nordic saw and pulp- and paper industry.

Activities: Arrange an Open Forum Seminar on timber i Petrozavodsk, Russia together with other relevant bodies, especially active in Karelia, and also enlarge the co- operation with appropriate operators in the forest- and wood industry.

The russian Customs as well as the Forest Task Force will more or less be involved in this mission.

Budget: 3000 Euro,

Travelling costs and accommodation	2500
Interpreter and other expenses	500

2. A Barents Twinning Programme

Implementation built on existing experience of earlier Twinning Programme on exchange of customs officials, bilateral and multilateral.

Expected results: Increased exchange of information and more efficient co- operation within the areas of customs clearence and customs enforcement.

Activities: A twinning programme consisting of at least two seminars located to respective border crossing stations in the Lapland area, primary between Russia- Norway and Russia - Finland, targeting the road traffic. The seminars will be open for specialists and other observers from Sweden.

If possible during this periode, a bilateral twinnig seminar between Murmansk and Kirkenes/Tromsø dealing with sea transport will be prioritised.

Budget: 6000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accommodation	5000
Interpreter and other expenses	1000

3. Arrange seminars to inform the business life of the new Russian Customs Codex

Expected results: A faster, more predictable and smoother border crossing procedure.

Activities: Arrange 2 or 3 Customs Codex Seminars in:

- a) Seminar in Tromsø in April 2005 where Russian Customs Specialists from NWCA gives information about the benefits of the new law and how the new law has been implemented.
(10 - 20 participants from the business life in the Norwegian part of the Barents Region).

Budget: 4000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accommodation	2500
Interpreter and other expenses	1000
Other costs	500

- b) Arrange a similar Seminar in Luleå or Oulo in May 2005 with participants from the business life in the Swedish and Finnish part of the Barents Region. (The same number of participants as mentioned under point 3 a).

Budget: 4000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accommodation	2500
Interpreter and other external service	1000
Other expenses	500

4. Seminar for Border Authorities to solve practical problems.

The main goal is to improve both personal contacts at the border points and technical communication between the authorities on both sides of the border in order to insure the flow of necessary information.

Expected results: Improve the border crossing procedure to ensure the 2 hour goal by direct exchange of important information.

Activities: Arrange 1 or 2 seminars in September 2005 (primarily in the northern part of the Barents Region) for officials working on both sides of the border, create common thrust and understanding for the different national laws, regulations and various demands.

Budget: 5000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accommodation	4000
Other expenses	1000

5. To follow up the Russian process of reducing the number of Authorities acting at the Russian border.

Expected results: Only two authorities working at the Russian Border, eg; Customs and Border Guard.

Activities: Encourage to and support at least one meeting between border crossing authorities in the Barents Region. The meeting will take place in Russia arranged and guided by the Russian Customs Authorities. Time and place of the meeting will be decided by the NWCA in St. Petersburg.

Budget: 2000 Euro.

Travelling and accommodation	1500
Other expenses	500

6. Continue the development and maintenance of the Barents Customs InfoBase: www.barentscustoms.org.

Expected results: Keep the infobase updated and continue the development of the infobase according to former decisions by WGTB and the sub-group.

Activities: There will be arranged two meetings between IT and Customs experts during the year 2005. The first meeting will take place in Kirkenes, Norway, January 26th, 2005. The second meeting will take place during the autumn 2005. Place and time for the second meeting will be decided later.

In addition to presenting and accepting contracts for the year 2005 and discussing change of leadership in the sub- group, following issues will be highlighted;

- a) updating and translating of existing information
- b) updating the customs lexicon
- c) FAQ service
- d) Marketing
- e) New development

Budget: 17000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accommodation	5000
Consults and other external service	9000
Interpreter, translation and other expenses	3000

7. Support the implementation and use of ATA- Carnet on all international border- crossing stations in the Euro- Arctic Region.

Expected results: Ensure that the International ATA- Carnet Convention is applied and that the use of the Carnet is possible and sustainable in all agreed international border- crossing stations along the Finnish- Russian and the Russian- Norwegian borders.

Activities: Arrange two ATA- carnet seminars together with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, BBAG and the Customs to promote the use of Carnets among interested parties (business life) on both sides of the border and to secure the maintenance and

to increase the knowledge about the use of ATA- Carnet in the Region. The goal is that ATA-Carnet can be used on all international border- crossing stations without exceptions.

Time and place for the seminars will be decided later. These seminars could, however, be combined with the seminars mentioned above under point 3.

Budget: 11000 Euro.

Travelling and accomodation	9000
Interpreter and external costs	1000
Other expences	1000

8. Continue the co-operation between WGTB in BEAC and comparable group of experts in the CBSS, eg. Customs Liaison Committee (CLC).

Expected results: Improve and harmonize the border crossing procedures in the CBSS areas according to the work made by WGTB in BEAC, compare best practice.

Activities: Support in every way the mission to avoid double work by taking part in the work of closer co- operation between the different expert groups under the bodies of both BEAC and CBSS.

Budget: 7000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accommodation	6500
Other expences	500

9. Continue the development of an open Forum for Chambers of Commerce, BBAG and other Business representatives to meet Customs Authorities/representatives and exchange information once a year.

Expected results: Avoid misunderstandings and future border crossing problems by having an open dialogue between border crossing authorities and companies.

Activities: By informing, in good time and in advance, respective parts of planned and ongoing public projects, eg. Opening of a new international border crossing point or introduction and presentation of new laws and regulations.

The business sector should present to relevant authorities investments in new factories and production capacity, goods terminals, new traffic on sea- and airports and roads as well as improvements that could be made in the public sector by changing routines etc.

Budget: 7000 Euro.

Travelling and accomodation	6000
Other expences	1000

10. To continue the publishing of a North West Customs information catalogue.

Expected results: A direct information channel from the Customs services in the Barents Region to business life and other interested parties.

Activities: To print an information catalogue free of charge in English and Russian language. The Russian Customs, through the North West Customs Administration in St. Petersburg in co-operation with business life and other interested parties in the Barents Region, will take the whole responsibility for the publishing and distribution of the catalogue.

Budget: 1000 Euro.

Travelling and accomodation	800
Other expenses	200

11. Arrange seminars in order to promote the use of a common language, eg. English, to develop the co-operation on local and regional level.

Expected results: To improve general fluency in English, to increase and activate the customs- related vocabulary, to develop and practise listening skills and improve the knowledge both on personal level as well as to improve the information flow between the border crossing stations on local and regional level.

Activities: Arrange two seminars during 2005 to strengthen co-operation between the customs authorities in the Barents Region by providing an opportunity for customs officers to get to know each other on a personal level, to exchange information and experiences about customs procedures, to identify possible problems in cooperation and suggest ways to solve or eliminate them and at last to discuss other customs- related issues of mutual interest.

- a) *Seminar (3 days) for customs officers working at the border crossing stations (10 participants)*

Budget: 4000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accomodation	4000
Other expenses	500

- b) *Seminar (3 days) for leading customs officers on regional level. (10 participants)*

Budget: 3000 Euro.

Travelling costs and accomodation	3000
Other expenses	500

Total estimated budget for 2005 €77000

Final words.

The budget is based upon the experience and outcome of former Action Plans and in accordance with the the draft budget of 77000 Euro. Norway, Finland and Sweden contributes each with 25700 Euro.

The activities and the budget is also based upon frequent help from the Finnish Customs in the Northern Region in form of internal English-Russian interpreters and transport service from the Russian border to and from different seminars and other activities/meetings.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland is supporting the WGTB with the secretary function.

Each country supports the WGTB with translation- and transport service as well as conference premises when the meetings are held at customs places in the Region.

The budget includes special missions laid upon the chair, co- chair or other members of the WGTB when representing the Working group in various national and international forums.