**JOINT WORKING GROUP ON YOUTH (JWGY)**

**Plan of Action** (2014 and beyond)

**Introduction**

The Conference of ministers responsible for youth policy in the member states of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, organized in Tromso, Norway, 14. – 16. May 2001, adopted a Plan of Action which should guide the Working Group on Youth Policy (WGYP). Based on the Plan of Action, the Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO), financed by Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden, was established in Murmansk in November 2002.

At the meeting of the Barents Regional Council in September 2001, it was decided to draw up a youth program for the Barents Region. The first Barents Regional Youth Program was adopted in 2002 and the Regional Working Group on Youth Issues (RWGYI) was established in April 2003 with the main purpose to implement the Youth Program.

Two working groups, WGYP on the national level and RWGYI on the regional level, established a close cooperation. During the Swedish Chairmanship (2009-2011), the WGYP and the RWGYI were merged into the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY). The first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY) was held in Oslo 2. – 4. November 2011. The Terms of Reference of the JWGY are annexed to this Draft Plan of Action.

In 2001, a youth conference was organized parallel to the Conference of Ministers responsible for youth. The participants of the youth conference were recruited from 13 regions and young indigenous peoples through the Barents Regional Youth Forum (BRYF). After the reorganization of the regional non-governmental structure, it took the name Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC). BRYC is the recognised partner of the JWGY in the cooperation with the non-governmental sector.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the Plan of Action are defined in the Terms of Reference for the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY).

The Plan of Action sets out to:

* enhance the cross-sectorial youth policy
* strengthen the dialogue between the young people and the decision makers
* increase the knowledge in the current youth issues in the region by promoting the cooperation between all structures
* promote and support multilateral cooperation between youth groups and non-governmental youth organizations in the region

**Target group**

The main target group of and actors in the activities stemming from the Plan of Action are all young people aged between 13 and 30 years who are legally resident in one of the administrative units being considered a part of the Barents regional cooperation.

The Plan of Action involves:

* young people and youth organizations
* youth workers and youth leaders
* youth researchers
* project managers or leaders in the field of youth
* other non-profit-making organisations, associations or structures working with and for young people

**Fields of action**

The fields of action include the objectives of the Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation signed by the Prime Ministers and other high-level representatives of the members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in Kirkenes, Norway, 3-4 June 2013. The aims and perspectives of the Barents Regional Youth Programme 2011-2014, and the conclusions of the Barents Youth Conference 2012 are reflected in the fields of action.

To achieve the overall objectives, the JWGY has to involve in the development and promotion of the following fields of action:

Enhance the cross-sectorial youth policy in order to spread the information with in the region and young people

* increase the knowledge of the current situation of young people in the region;
* promote the living conditions of young people in the region;
* strengthen the rights of indigenous young people and minorities;
* encourage young people to stay in the region or return to the region after completing their education;
* facilitate the transition from education to employment;
* facilitate internships and stimulate entrepreneurship of young people, and innovation

Strengthen the dialogue between young people and decision makers in order to

* promote the freedom of expression to all young people;
* strengthen the civil society development and democracy in the Barents region;
* encourage young people to play an active role in the society
* establish and further develop connections between the Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC) members and local and regional authorities.

Increase the knowledge in the current youth issues in the region by promoting the cooperation between all structures

* make greater use of the synergies with and between other working groups and structures of the Barents region

Promote and support multilateral cooperation between young people and youth organizations in the region in order to

* promote people-to-people contacts;
* take all possible measures to facilitate cross-border mobility of young people;
* foster positive involvement and interaction at the national and international levels;
* enhance cultural and educational exchanges;
* support the development of skills and competencies of young people necessary for active citizenship

**Implementation of the Plan of Action**

The Plan of Action is implemented through the Work Programme of the Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO) which is the key implementing body of the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY). The Barents Regional Youth Council, BRYC, is the main non-governmental partner of the JWGY ensuring youth participation.

**Assessment of the implementation of the Plan of Action**

The Joint Working Group on Youth will

* review its objectives in the beginning of every chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council
* monitor the work done, and report to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Sami parliaments in Finland, Sweden and Norway as well as the relevant Ministries on the implementation on the Plan of Action
* ensure that the ministries provide appropriate funding and support to the Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO) and the regional members of the JWGY secure funding availabilities for BRYC
* consult BRYC members in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Plan of Action