



# The Norwegian Chairmanship of the Barents Euro Arctic Council 2019-2021

Photo: Audun Rikardsen



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

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*Dear friends of The Barents region*

Norway is pleased to be chairing the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in 2019-2021. The Barents cooperation has been a cornerstone of regional cooperation in the Arctic since 1993, and is a high priority for Norway.

The Barents region is rich in resources, in opportunities for economic growth, and most importantly, in human capital. It is people who create growth. The Norwegian chairmanship will focus on the people who live in the Barents region.

*We will focus on the areas of health, people-to-people contact and knowledge, with a view to building a stronger and more resilient Barents region.*

Sustainable development is a fundamental part of Norway's Arctic policy. We would like to encourage more people to choose to live in the north. To achieve this, we must ensure that there are attractive communities offering good welfare and health services and quality education at all levels, with innovative businesses and varied employment opportunities. We must ensure sustainable use of natural resources and adaptation to climate change, we must attract experience and expertise in order to build resilient Barents communities, and we must build trust and confidence across borders.

*The regions are key drivers of the Barents cooperation.*

The Norwegian chairmanship will work closely with Västerbotten county in its role as chair of the Barents Regional Council, as well as with the other regions to ensure the best possible basis for the further development of the Barents cooperation. We will also engage closely with the Barents working groups, which play a crucial role in achieving the strategic goals of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. And we will continue our support for civil society, including the media and NGOs, which play a key part in developing and enriching the Barents cooperation. We look forward to engaging in practical cooperation with the International Barents Secretariat and the Norwegian Barents Secretariat.



Ine Eriksen Søreide,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Photo: Asgeir Spange Brekke, FD/UD

Norway will focus on children and young people, who hold the key to the future of the Barents region. Everyone in the region, regardless of their start in life, should have equal opportunities and good living conditions. A central element of Barents youth policy should be to continue support for multilateral cooperation between young people in the region in the areas of sports, culture and education. Meetings and cross-border contacts give young people opportunities to understand other people's lives and backgrounds. Greater mobility is strengthening the sense of community between young people and helping to build a common identity and mutual understanding in the region.

*Peace, stability and well-functioning cooperation with our Arctic neighbours is at the top of Norway's foreign policy agenda. At a time when international cooperation is under pressure, we need strong multilateral structures like the Barents cooperation to maintain stability.*

Dialogue and common efforts are vital if we are to find the best solutions for the Barents region.

*Ine Eriksen Søreide*

Ine Eriksen Søreide,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs



## Health

A healthy population is an essential basis for a sound and prosperous Barents region. The Norwegian chairmanship will seek to give health issues the prominent place they deserve on the Barents agenda. We will strengthen efforts to prevent infectious diseases, to help children and young people who are at risk, and to improve health services in sparsely populated areas. The Norwegian chairmanship will focus on innovation and new technology in the health sector. We will also work closely with the Joint Working Group on Health and Social Issues to strengthen professional networks and improve the dissemination and exchange of knowledge on how to improve the health and social well-being of the peoples of the Barents region.

Norway is pleased to be hosting the first ever Ministerial Meeting on Health and Social Issues on 12 November 2019.

## People-to-people contact

The day-to-day people-to-people contact between our countries is at the heart of the Barents cooperation. The Norwegian chairmanship intends to highlight success stories in this area. We aim to strengthen cooperation and exchanges in the areas of culture and sports, which are key pillars in their own right.

We will listen to the region's indigenous peoples when they share their knowledge and experience, and look forward to working closely with the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples. We will give priority to the third indigenous peoples' summit, which will take place in Norway in 2021.

Infrastructure is vital to cooperation between the peoples of the Barents region. Norway will seek to strengthen cooperation in the transport sector. We will use the recommendations set out in the Draft Joint Barents Transport Plan in the development of our work programme, and will seek closer cooperation on smart transport solutions and more test activities in the Arctic region.

Sustainable cross-border economic cooperation and innovation are instrumental in ensuring long-term value creation throughout the Barents region and in safeguarding jobs and livelihoods. The Norwegian chairmanship will highlight the potential for closer economic cooperation across borders. Aquaculture, health innovation, tourism, mining, ICT, renewable energy

and the service and supply industry are all areas where there is significant potential for expansion.

In its role as chair, Norway will continue to work for good cross-border cooperation on search and rescue and emergency preparedness. This cooperation makes a valuable contribution to the friendly relations between the people in the Barents region.



## Knowledge

Knowledge generation is also vital for the development of a more sustainable and prosperous region. Knowledge is the key to sound management of the environment, and to building competence and enhancing education. Research cooperation between our countries can shed new light on the challenges and opportunities in the Barents region. During its chairmanship, Norway will promote contact and the exchange of information and best practices between students and researchers working in the fields of education, research and innovation.

We will seek to bring authorities, scientists and NGOs together to find ways for the Barents region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change without harming the natural environment or hindering traditional land use. The findings of the Barents 2050 report will serve as a guide.

Norway will continue the long-term strategy of focusing on the forest-based bioeconomy. This will help us to identify potential challenges relating to the transition to a low-carbon society. The Norwegian chairmanship will seek to engage with relevant organisations and with the forestry sector at the regional level.



Photo: Trude Pettersen



Photo: The Barents Secretariat



Photo: The Barents Secretariat



Photo: The Barents Secretariat



Photo: Thomas Nilsen, The Barents Observer

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