

Report from BEATA Chair 2011-2013

The Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications took over the Chair of the Steering Committee of Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA) autumn 2011 and handed over the responsibility to Finland in September 2013.

Introduction

The Norwegian Chair of the Barents Council announced at the BEAC meeting in Kiruna October 2011 that development of the transport system will be one of the priorities for the coming period. This was later outlined in the Work plan 2012-2013 for BEATA, discussed at the BEATA meeting in Tromsø May 2012. The main task for BEATA in the period was to develop a proposal for a joint Barents Transport Plan bridging current national studies and plans as well as analyzing transport need development of the transport system on short and long term.

In September 2013 a Ministerial Meeting was arranged, and adopted Declaration on the Future Transport System in the Barents region. An expert working group prepared a draft of the first Barents Transport Plan that could be an important input for cooperation on transport issues in the Barents region. Three meetings of the BEATA SC were held — in Oslo, Helsinki and Narvik. The meeting in Narvik was a joint meeting with the Barents Regional Working Group on Transport and Logistics (RWGTL).

Members of the BEATA

Members of the Steering Committee are the EU Commission and the governmental level in Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Federation. Representatives from the Barents regional level, the Barents Council, the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transport and Logistics are among the invitees for the meetings of the Steering Committee. The meetings of the Steering Committee were chaired by Mr. Paal Iversen (senior adviser at the Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications).

Activities

The work plan 2012-2013 outlined the main objectives and a time schedule for the proposed activities for the period. The Steering committee had four meetings, in Tromsø May 2012 and three meetings in 2013; in Oslo 18 June, Helsinki 3 September (extraordinary) and Narvik 23 September.

Main activities in the work plan, were:

- Establish an expert working group for preparation of a Joint Barents Transport Plan. The expert working group had representatives from the transport authorities from the four countries. Norway chaired the group and provided a secretariat to support the working group.
- The working group based its work on the mandate discussed at the meeting in Tromsø May 2012
- During the period to hold a Ministerial Meeting and make a declaration on the Future Transport System in the Barents region. The Ministerial Meeting was planned in cooperation with an international conference in Narvik, "Arctic Ports".
- Carrying out a brief evaluation of the future of BEATA, based on a simple questionnaire

Results

It took more time than anticipated to establish the expert working group, all the members were appointed by December 2012. This made it necessary for the Chair to adjust the work plan, hereunder postpone the BEATA Ministerial meeting from the spring 2013 to the autumn. When established, the group had an impressive progress and succeeded according to the mandate to make a document with overview and analysis over the transport system in the region. The first meeting took place in January 2013 and the report was delivered to the transport ministers at the BEATA Ministerial meeting in Narvik September 23. The process was carried out in a remarkable efficient and professional manner.

In the Ministerial Declaration, the four transport ministers expresses their gratitude for the work of the Expert Working Group and that the input from Joint Barents Transport Plan may serve as important recommendations on a national as well as regional level. The document can be downloaded at the BEAC website. The Joint Barents Transport Plan is for the time being in a consultation process which is carried out in different ways in the four countries. It has provided BEATA with a solid foundation for the future work.

Due to the abovementioned delay, the work with an evaluation of BEATA has been put on a hold. The issue of relationship and cooperation between BEATA and NDPTL will be followed up under the new Finnish Chair. The aim for all stakeholders is to avoid duplication and find a fruitful distribution of work.