



ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬСТВО РОССИИ В
СОВЕТЕ БАРЕНЦЕВА/ЕВРОАРКТИЧЕСКОГО
РЕГИОНА
2007 - 2009



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The Barents Cooperation

The cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) was launched in 1993 when all five Nordic Countries, the Russian Federation and the EU Commission signed a Declaration establishing the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) at a Foreign Minister's Conference in Kirkenes, Norway. At the same time the Barents region's county governors together with the representatives of indigenous peoples signed a cooperation protocol establishing the Barents Regional Council (BRC). Thus the cooperation in the region of the Barents Sea was set off on two levels: the BEAC is a forum for intergovernmental cooperation and the BRC is a forum for cooperation between the 13 regions of the Member States. The Working Group of Indigenous Peoples has an advisory role to both Councils and cooperates closely with them.

The overarching aim of the Barents Cooperation is to develop the region both socially and economically and to increase the region's competitiveness in Europe. Cohesion, good governance and sustainable growth of the region are issues regularly discussed at political level and they are promoted through sector projects and activities usually conducted under the working groups. In addition to the multilateral cooperation, there are many bilateral arrangements in the region.

The web-address of the Barents Cooperation: www.beac.st

This is a comprehensive information paper on the most important features of the Barents Cooperation

Barents geographic features

The area of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is roughly 1 755 800 square kilometres which is equivalent to the combined surface of France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, with a population of approximately 6 million inhabitants. The region is very rich in natural resources such as fish, timber, minerals, oil and gas. It also has important processing and engineering industries as well as high-quality universities, research institutions and science centres. The Barents region is characterised by harsh climate conditions, vulnerable environment and long distances which pose challenges to people, business and authorities alike.



Cooperation between nations

The member countries of BEAC are Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Commission. The BEAC chairmanship rotates every other year between Finland, Norway, Russian Federation and Sweden at the ministerial meetings. Between the meetings the **Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)** meets approximately three times per year. Observer states are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

The Russian Federation held the BEAC Chairmanship from November 2007 to October 2009. The priorities of Russia were:

- To ensure sustainable development in the Barents Region with emphasis on social and economic factors, linking it closely to the compliance with environmental requirements, and also to support for the indigenous peoples.

- To enhance the effectiveness of the architecture of multilateral cooperation in the North, the division of labor among the regional councils both in substance and geography, synchronization and coordination of their activity on rational use of the existing resources and avoidance of unnecessary duplication of efforts.

At the ministerial meeting in Murmansk, 14 – 15 October 2009, the BEAC chairmanship rotated to Sweden for 2009-2011. The number one priority of the Swedish Chairmanship is to strengthen cooperation by interlinking challenges of economic growth, climate change and sustainable use of natural resources towards an *eco-efficient economy*.

Activities will focus on:

- Revitalize work on climate change through policy, concrete cross sector activities and innovations;
- Increase the opportunities and facilitate for small and medium-sized enterprises to do business in the Barents region;
- Intensify cooperation in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency and build networks for and raise awareness of sustainable production and consumption in the Barents region;
- Promote activities to exclude 'hot spots' from the Barents environmental 'hot spots'-list, in close cooperation with the Arctic Council. Environmental issues will be its number one priority.

The Swedish chairmanship plans two ministerial meetings in 2010, one on environment and one on enterprise/economic development. The Ministerial Session will be held in 2011.

Cooperation between regions

The **Barents Regional Council** consists of the Heads of the 13 counties, regions or similar sub-national entities. The Norwegian member regions are Finnmark, Nordland and Troms, the Swedish member regions are Norrbotten and Västerbotten, the Russian member regions are Arkhangelsk, Republics of Karelia and Komi, Murmansk and Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and the Finnish member regions are Kainuu, Lapland and Oulu. In 2008 North Karelia of Finland was granted observer status.

The **Barents Regional Committee** consists of civil servants from the regions. The Committee prepares the Council meetings. The Committee drafted and the Council in November 2008 approved *the Barents Program 2009-2013*, which lists the visions and priorities of the regional cooperation for the next few years:

- Economic and commercial cooperation
- Sustainable living environment
- Human resources
- Indigenous peoples
- Transport and infrastructure
- Information and promotion of the Barents Cooperation.

The Oulu County, Finland, held the chairmanship of the Barents Regional Council from November 2007 to October 2009. The priorities of the Oulu chairmanship were:

- Reorganization of the Barents cooperation aimed at coordination of work between national, regional secretariats and the new International Barents Secretariat, activation of the working groups
- Development of the Barents region in the form of sector programmes by bringing focused multilateral cooperation into action (operative sector programmes are tourism, oil and gas, East-West logistics – Barents link; planned sector programmes include mining and minerals, education, ICT)

- Add the visibility of the Barents cooperation and integrate it into other regional and EU-level cooperation, including EU financing programmes

At the Regional Council meeting in Murmansk, October 14, 2009, the BRC chairmanship was rotated to Troms Region, Norway, for 2009-2011. The priorities of Troms are:

- Strengthen the political structures in the Barents co-operation, the contacts between the regional and national levels, and with other regional co-operations such as the NSPA (Northern Sparsely Populated Areas) network.
- Closely follow EU's Arctic Policy and the Northern Dimension partnership and other relevant programs.
- Becoming the leading region in modern environmental technology.
- Focus on maritime themes, people-to-people cooperation, cultural exchange, indigenous people culture and traditions.

The Regional Committee works hard to make all the 13 regions to come together on an application for project funding in the framework of the ENPI Baltic Sea Region Program with the aim to expand the range of tools for the implementation of the *Barents Program 2009-2013*. However, full scale participation of the 5 Russian Barents regions is not possible due to the failure of the EU Commission and the Russian Federation to reach an agreement on financial terms of the ENPI.

Barents cooperation structure

The Barents cooperation framework has developed successfully in various fields and it combines experts and specialists from various sectors. The main tools for implementing policies of both BEAC and BRC are the 16 working groups and task-forces some of which are based on joint national and regional representation, some only on national and some only on regional representation. They serve all the fields of the cooperation in the regions.

Cross-border cooperation is the main orientation of the multilateral activities in the Barents Region. However, the calls for emphasising coordination with the three neighbouring multilateral councils are increasing: the Arctic Council (AC), the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). During the previous Finnish BEAC Chairmanship (2005 - 2007), two pilot projects were initiated with the NCM. The projects focused on the indigenous peoples and the impact of climate change on biodiversity in the Barents region. The cooperation on project level between BEAC and the NCM continues within these two fields and there is a possibility that it also could be expanded into other fields where BEAC and NCM share interests.

The Northern Dimension (ND) focuses on issues of specific relevance in the North. The main objectives of the policy are to provide a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and cooperation, strengthen stability and well-being, promote and intensify economic cooperation and integration, competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe. The Barents Euro-Arctic Council is one of the participants of the ND. The renewed ND launched at the Helsinki Summit, 2006, supports the multilateral coordination between the Northern Regional Councils and aims at maximizing their synergies.

In order to facilitate the project implementation of the ND policy the following partnerships have been launched:

- The ND Environmental Partnership (NDEP)
- The ND Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS)

The following ND partnership will be launched in 2010:

- The ND Partnership on Transport and Logistics

In addition, one more possible ND Partner has been mentioned:

- The ND Partnership on Culture.

The partnerships are together with EU financial schemes – such as the Baltic Sea Region Program and Kolarctic - of significant importance in the project implementation within the framework of the Barents Cooperation.

Economic development

The **Working Group on Economic Cooperation (WGEC)** promotes cross-border economic cooperation, investments and information. The **Barents Business Advisory Group (BBAG)** consisting of regional Chambers of Commerce acts as an advisory board to the WGEC. The importance of economic ties in the Barents Region was recognised already when signing the Kirkenes Declaration, 1993, as the foundation for a future successful cooperation.

WGEC arranges **Barents Industrial Partnership (BIP)** meetings to promote regional cooperation between economic actors and authorities of the Barents region. The latest BIP meeting was held in Archangelsk, November 2008, with the title “Barents Industrial Partnership in Changing Economic Conditions: Experience and Prospects”. **Barents Forest Sector Task-Force** is a subordinate body to the WGEC with the aim to promote environmentally and economically sustainable forestry in the region.

Cooperation in the customs sector takes place through the **Working Group on Customs Cooperation**. The cooperation in this field has resulted in the awareness of the importance of improved customs procedures and the need for review of administrative regulations. One of the most important tasks of the group is the work on preventing and eliminating bottlenecks in the cross-border logistical chains.

The **Joint Energy Working Group** emphasizes energy efficiency as a means to increase economic performance and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Other activities include the promotion of bio energy and renewable energy sources – in particular wind power – for which there is a great potential in many parts of the Barents region.

The Barents Region suffers from lack of transport infrastructure in east-west directions making the mobility of people and goods slow and complicated. The **Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area (BEATA)** focuses on developing all transport connections in the region. Rail, road, air and sea routes, especially in the east-west direction are emphasized to promote region-wide industrial and economic development. Barents Link, a multimodal transport corridor, is one possible project that is promoted within the Northern Dimension Partnership on Transportation and Logistics.

The tourism industry is growing in the Barents Region. The vast wilderness and long coast lines make the region attractive for outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, hunting, and camping. The conditions for winter sports are excellent. Used wisely, the “Last Wilderness in Europe” is a huge opportunity to both travellers and tourism industry

entrepreneurs. The **Joint Working Group on Tourism** was launched in late 2008 to facilitate the development of tourism in the region.

Environmental protection

Environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources are central issues within the Barents cooperation. The environment in the Barents region is vulnerable and considerable challenges exist in all areas: industrial pollution, municipal waste and water issues.

The **Working Group on Environment** (WGE) gives particular attention to cleaner production, the elimination of environmental "hot-spots" in the Russian part of the Barents region, and the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable forest management. A fund earmarked for eliminating environmental "hot-spots" has been created in cooperation with The Nordic Environmental Financing Corporation (NEFCO) and some projects are now being implemented.

The activities of the WGE are organized into three sub-divisions:

- Cleaner production and sustainable consumption
- Nature Protection
- Water issues and trans-boundary cooperation

Climate change is a major concern for the Barents region and the issue has been on the WGE agenda after the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment report was published by the Arctic Council in 2004. BEAC and the NCM have cooperated in the sector of climate change through the project "*Impacts of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services in the Barents region*". An application for a continuation of the project has been filed to the NCM.

The Norwegian Ministry of Environment initiated the conference "*Climate Change in the Barents Region*", September 1-3, 2009, in Vadsø, Norway. The aim of the conference was to create an opportunity to exchange information and ideas on how to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and explore possibilities of cooperation within this field.

Human and social resources

Long distances, sparsely populated communities, limited rescue personnel and equipment, and restricted means for transport and hospital resources available in case of larger accidents make rescue cooperation important for the security of people living in and travelling to the Barents Region. The **Joint Committee on Rescue Cooperation** was launched to negotiate an agreement increasing the inter-operability of emergency and rescue services functions in the Barents Region to make optimal use of the widely dispersed resources and assistance in the region. The member countries signed the *Agreement between the Governments in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region on Cooperation within the field of Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response* in December, 2008. The agreement is one of the most important contributions of the Barents Cooperation and it is the second inter-governmental agreement within the framework of BEAC. (The inter-governmental agreement to start the International Barents Secretariat was the first.) The agreement provides a very solid basis for continued work of the Joint

Committee on Rescue Cooperation. The Committee also follows the Barents Rescue Exercises (The large scale Exercise with participation of other Barents countries was held in Russia, Murmansk region, 8 – 10 September. The next one would be in Sweden in 2011).

The **BEAC Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues** focuses on the prevention and combating of communicable diseases, lifestyle-related health and social problems, the development and integration of primary health care and social services. A comprehensive cooperation program on HIV/AIDS has been successfully developed. The HIV/AIDS Program that was originally operational only in the BEAC framework has been adopted as a vital part of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Public Health and Social Well-being.

The Prime Ministers urged in the Declaration 2003 to gain full control of the tuberculosis situation in the region no later than 2013. The working group reports that there is progress in this direction but that work still remains.

The Working Group on Health and Social Issues recently presented a special program for Children and Youth at Risk.

The **Joint Working Group on Education and Research** focuses on interaction between universities and other higher education institutions in the region. The **Working Group on Youth Policy** held a ministerial conference in Murmansk in September, 2009. The **Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO)** in Murmansk implements various projects ranging from business planning workshops to music festivals.

The **Working Group on Indigenous Peoples** focuses on cooperation among the Sámi, Nenets and Vepsians. **Barents Indigenous Peoples Office** is located in Lovozero, Murmansk region. BEAC and NCM are cooperating in the Murmansk region on projects focusing on traditional reindeer herding, Sámi languages, traditional Sámi crafts and family entrepreneurship training. Regional, national and organizational levels are currently coming together on a co-financing cross-border indigenous entrepreneurship project in the Barents Region.

The **Joint Working Group on Culture** aims at promoting cultural development, exchanges and networking and building common cultural identity across the Barents region. The programme of Cultural Cooperation 2008-2010 "New Winds in the Barents Region" highlights the cultural diversity and the importance of culture and cultural industry as a unique tool for the development of the region.

Parliamentary cooperation

The parliamentary dimension of the Barents cooperation has developed continuously. At their meetings the parliamentarians discuss pressing issues as well as practical aspects of cooperation for further consideration by national and regional executive bodies.

The first meeting of Barents parliamentarians - the Barents Forum - was held in Kirkenes 1997, and the first conference - in Alta (Norway) 1999. On the agenda were the establishment of lasting ties between parliamentarians in the region, as well as issues of transport, communications, gender equality and social wellbeing. The next conference was held six years later in June 2005 in Bodø (Norway), then in Rovaniemi in June

2007. It has become a tradition that each BEAC Chairmanship hosts a Barents Parliamentary Conference.

The last conference took place May 26-27, 2009, in Syktyvkar in the Komi Republic. It was the first of its kind to be held in Russia. The resolution reflected the priorities of the Russian chairmanship. The importance of the development of economically related issues, sustainable development, health and social well-being and indigenous peoples were given special attention at the conference. The next parliamentary conference is planned to be held in Sweden during the Swedish BEAC Chairmanship.

The Barents parliamentarians (unlike Baltic or Arctic) do not have their permanent body for coordination of their activities. Proposals made to this end have not been able to get enough support.

The International Barents Secretariat

The **International Barents Secretariat** (IBS) opened in Kirkenes, Norway, in January 2008 on the basis of an intergovernmental agreement with participation of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The IBS is expected to bring new dynamism and continuity to the cooperation. The IBS serves both the governmental and regional levels of the cooperation. One of the tasks is to maintain the web site: www.beac.st. The site contains all information on the cooperation including and contact information to the chairmanships and working groups. The website also has a document database, a media and communication section, information about the Barents Regions and links to related partners and organizations. As the IBS will gain experience and material it will become an institutional memory of the cooperation. The IBS has three permanent staff positions and in addition any of the member countries can second staff to the secretariat. Norway recently seconded an Indigenous People's Adviser to the IBS who has the development of indigenous peoples' entrepreneurship as a major task.

Staff:

Alexander Ignatiev, Head of Secretariat

Anna Lund, Executive Officer

Lars Miguel Utsi, Indigenous Peoples' Adviser

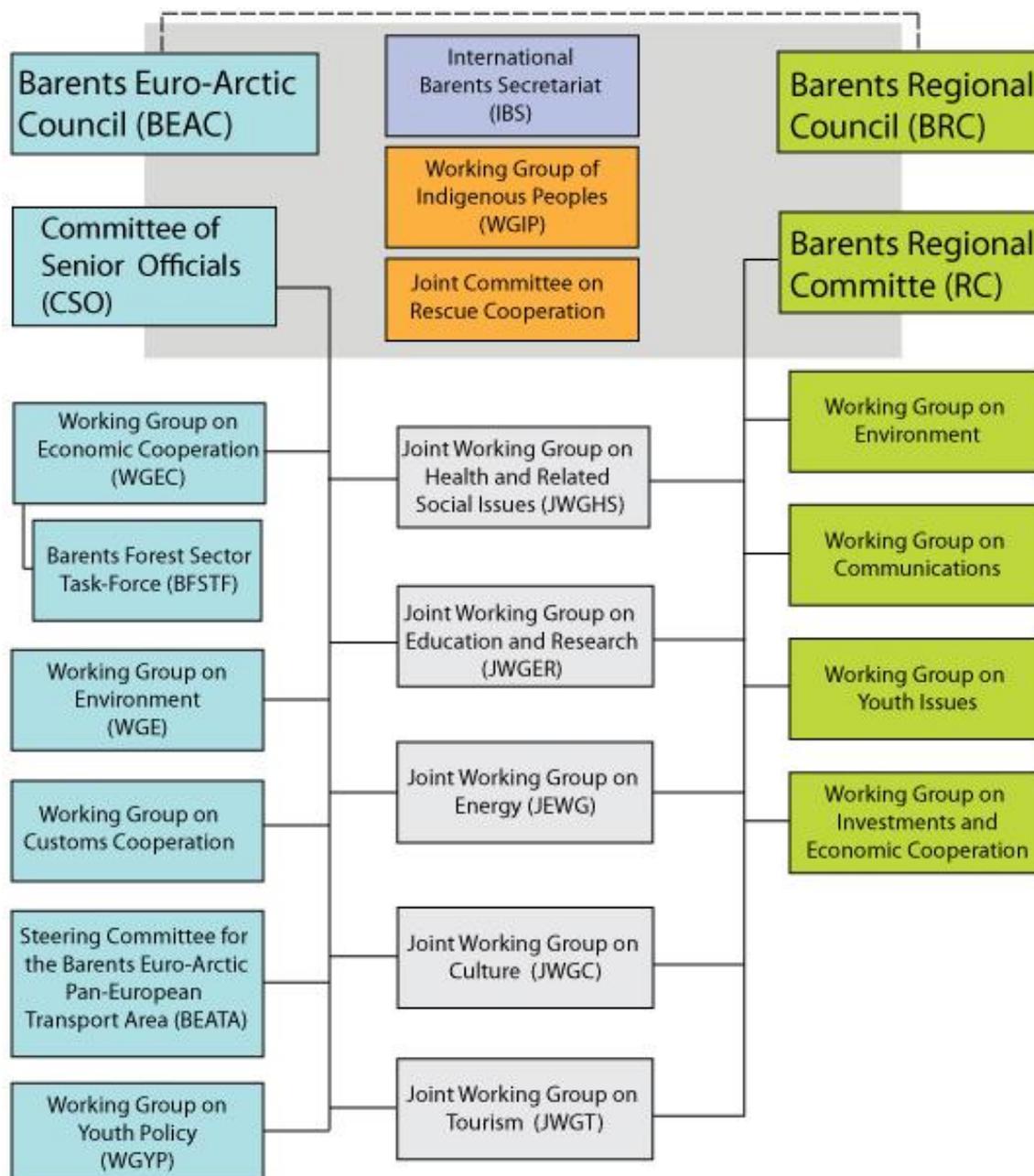
Roy Hojem, Accounting/Administration

Contact: ibs@beac.st, (all detailed contact information on www.beac.st)

The IBS shares offices with the Norwegian Barents Secretariat.

The national Barents secretariats in Norway and Finland play important roles in both project implementation and policy making. Every chair country establishes its own secretariat for the period of its chairmanship. The Swedish Barents Secretariat is headed by Senior Advisor, Per Wallen, (per.wallen@foreign.ministry.se).

Structure of the Barents Cooperation



International Barents Secretariat