

Barents Euro-Arctic Council First Meeting of the Ministers for Competitiveness

Declaration

Ministers for Competitiveness, officials and regional representatives from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the European Commission and Indigenous peoples of the Barents Region met in Umeå on 18-19 May 2010 for the First Meeting of the Ministers for Competitiveness of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC).

Barents Euro-Arctic Council Competitiveness Ministers:

underlined the importance of developing the economic potential of the Barents region through a transition to an Eco-efficient Economy, thereby paving the way for sustainable economic growth and job creation whilst addressing the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation;

emphasised the potential of the Barents region, especially in natural resources and raw materials, as well as renewable energy and energy efficiency, and *recognised* the fundamental importance of these components to our prosperity and future economic growth - key challenges in a European as well as a global perspective;

stressed the necessity of creating policy and market conditions that stimulate investments, innovation and entrepreneurship in areas of strategic importance to an Eco-efficient Economic development and job-creation in all sectors. Multilateral co-operation at national and regional level is important in order to harvest the specific competitive advantages of the Barents region;

highlighted the significance of increased cross-border co-operation between business organisations in order to facilitate contacts between small and medium sized enterprises and *stressed* the special importance of establishing platforms for exchanges between young entrepreneurs, in the Barents region;

recognised the importance of minimizing administrative impediments for enterprises, especially in relation to customs and border crossing;

acknowledged the role of the Kolarctic European Neighbourhood Partnership CBC Instruments as tool for increased cross-border co-operation at the regional level;

highlighted the significance of active engagement of indigenous peoples in addressing challenges and opportunities in the Barents region;

welcomed a deepened cooperation with the European Union in order to harvest the potential of natural resources in the Barents region;

underlined the importance of regular meetings between Barents Ministers for Competitiveness, in order to *deepen the economic cooperation* and promoting the economic potential of the Barents region;

emphasised the following identified working areas for an increased competitiveness; promote an expanded sustainable use of natural resources; promote access to the global markets for the region's resources and thereby increase the region's interconnectedness for transport, support the development of energy efficiency and the supply of renewable energy, promote entrepreneurship by increased cross-border co-operation; and expand sustainable tourism. The Ministers *called* upon the BEAC Joint Working Group on Energy and the BEAC Working Group on Economic Co-operation, to identify and implement actions in these areas, also in co-operation with other BEAC working groups.

welcomed the up-coming meeting of the Ministers for Transport of Baltic Sea Region in Haparanda in June 2010, which aims at advancing the agenda on transport systems in northern Europe in order to facilitate the development of the region as a transport hub between Europe and Asia.