



Barents Euro-Arctic Conference of Ministers responsible for youth policy

Murmansk, 23 – 24 September 2009

Conclusions

The 2nd Conference of Ministers responsible for youth policy in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region was held in Murmansk 24th September 2009. The main aim of the Conference was to draw up principles, make proposals and recommendations in order to strengthen the cooperation in the field of youth policy in the Barents region. The main theme of the Conference was: “Barents – a region attractive to young people”.

Ministries responsible for youth policy from Sweden, Finland, Norway and the Russian Federation, all member states of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), took part in the Conference. The Conference was also attended by representatives from the International Barents Secretariat, the Council of Europe, the Presidency of the European Union as well as the Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC), Barents Regional Working Group on Youth Issues (RWGYI), the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, indigenous peoples of the Barents region, national and regional youth councils and other invited guests.

The cooperation in the Barents Region is based on the principles drawn up in the Kirkenes Declaration of 11th January 1993. Youth policy was included in the work of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Working Group on Youth Policy (WGYP) was established in 1999 – 10 years ago. At the 1st Conference of Ministers responsible for youth policy, in Tromsø 2001, a Plan of Action guiding the work of the WGYP was adopted.

The Conference in Tromsø also proposed to establish a mechanism for information and guidance for youth groups in the Barents region. As a result of this, the Barents Youth

Cooperation Office (BYCO) started its work in Murmansk, Russia in 2002. The overall objective for the establishment of such a service is a well functioning multilateral cooperation in the youth field, that contributes to an improved situation for young people in the Barents Region, as well as a sustainable development of the region.

The Conference noted the important activities and initiatives taken by all the chairmanships of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council during the last 10 years. The Conference appreciated financial support given to child and youth cooperation from governments and regional authorities.

The Conference expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Barents Regional Youth Council, especially the report from their activity in Archangelsk on 16th – 20th September 2009, “ReAction” against prejudice. The Conference supported BRYC and welcomed a close cooperation in the future.

The Conference also noted with a great interest the results of the youth meeting organized on the 23rd September 2009, devoted to the themes of the Ministerial Conference.

The Conference welcomed the cooperation in the field of youth policy carried out by the Barents Youth Cooperation Office. The BYCO has played an important role in facilitating youth exchange and youth cooperation projects in the region. The good results of work of the BYCO and the WGYP are confirmed by the evaluation report made by Dr. J.A. Zybok. The Conference asked the WGYP to find a proper way to prolong this work in future.

The Conference underlined the important work of the Regional Council in the field of youth policy and the good cooperation between the Regional Working Group on Youth Issues and the Working Group on Youth Policy. Attention was especially drawn to the Work Program 2007 – 2010.

The main theme of the Conference, “Barents - a region attractive to young people”, underlined that realization of the capacity of young people is a fundamental precondition for a prosperous future for the Barents Euro-Arctic region. Young people are an important strategic resource and will, within the cultural, social and economic policies, contribute to a sustainable development of the region. Among the most valuable advantages of young people are their education and skills, their mobility, quick adaptation and creative potential. Thanks to those characteristics the youth has a unique opportunity to activate cultural, social and economical mechanisms of intensive innovative development of their countries and the Barents Region as such.

Youth cooperation, exchanges and activities taking place across the national borders in the region will improve the mutual understanding and respect of different cultural,

social and economic traditions in the countries of the Barents Region. These are also main instruments in promoting peace and good neighborhood in the region.

Young people's ability to take initiatives and promote transition to innovative way of development is mainly connected with large investments into the human capital. Today youth policy should be considered as an instrument of cultural, social and economic development, providing for the competition capacity of the countries and the region, as well as strengthening of the civil society, providing for good living conditions of the citizens.

The member states of the BEAC present at the Conference of Ministers responsible for youth policy, Murmansk 24th September 2009 agreed to:

- Support the cooperation between child and youth groups and non-governmental organizations working with and for children and young people in the region.
- Support the Barents Regional Youth Council and invite them to contribute to the work of the Working Group on Youth Policy.
- Mandate the Working Group on Youth Policy to develop a new Plan of Action based on the general observations and conclusions from this document.
- Recommend to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Regional Council to investigate, in consultations with their working groups, to establish one common working group responsible for promoting youth cooperation in the region.
- Recommend the Working Group on Youth Policy to cooperate closely with other working groups of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council, especially the working groups on Environment, Health and Related Social Issues, Education and Research and on Culture.
- Ask the countries who have established the Barents Youth Cooperation Office to find necessary funds and administrative methods to secure the continuation of the BYCO.
- Invite the relevant ministries in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council as well as the relevant regional authorities of the Regional Council to make budget appropriations for the support of multilateral activities and projects involving children and young people in the region.

The participants of the Conference congratulated the Barents Euro-Arctic Working Group on Youth Policy on its 10 years anniversary and expressed their gratitude for the conducted work.

The Conference also thanked the Russian Chairmanship for the great contribution into the strengthening of youth cooperation in the Barents region and organizing the Conference.