



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS
ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Name of the Working Group: **Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC)**

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: **Finnmark-Sweden 2017 – 2019**

Chair David Ek (Sweden) and Co-Chair Kirsti Riesto (Finnmark)

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

- The Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation
- Evaluation of the Scholarship guidelines and process
- Increasing cooperation with the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples (WGIP)
- Increasing cooperation with the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY)
- Developing a workshop about digitalisation and culture, with a view to youth involvement

2. Meetings (meetings held, main topics and outcomes of the meetings)

There have been two formal meetings – the first in Varanger in April, and the second in Umeå in October, within the framework of the BEAC Ministerial Meeting events. In addition, an informal ad-hoc meeting took place in Rovaniemi in June to discuss the Barents Scholarship ceremony.

In **Varanger**, the JWGC presented the regions candidates for the Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation and decided on the recipients. A decision on the recipient from Russia was delayed until autumn. The Scholarship ceremony was discussed, as well as the need to review the Scholarship guidelines.

Presentations were held by the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples in Barents (WGIP) as well as the Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY), with the aim of increasing the cooperation with these working groups. The development of a digitalisation workshop involving youth was also discussed.

The JWGC decided on its *Youth Recommendations*, and agreed that including youth in the Barents scholarship event is a constructive way to increase youth involvement in the cultural sphere of the Barents region. This involvement should also be emphasised for the long term. It was further decided to include youth experts in the events relating to digitalisation and culture.

In Umeå, the new and old scholarship recipients presented their work to the JWGC. On 3 October, the Scholarship ceremony took place within the framework of the events of the BEAC Ministerial Meeting, and the Scholarships were presented to the recipients by the foreign ministers/deputy foreign ministers of the Barents Countries.

The JWGC, as a preparation for the next Scholarship round, reviewed the Scholarship guidelines, and the Scholarship ceremony was discussed and evaluated.

Also in Umeå, the Finnmark-Sweden Chairmanship 2017 – 2019 handed the Chairmanship over to Västerbotten and Norway 2019 – 2021.

During these meetings, a lot of time was devoted to sharing information between the regions regarding current initiatives and calls for cooperation.

3. Other activities (projects, events, programmes etc.)

During the Varanger meeting in April, the JWGC visited the Kven Museum in Vadsø, the Pomor Museum in Vardø, had a guided bus tour of the history and cultures of the area, visited the Steilneset memorial and the monument “Drakkar”, and met with artist Pøbel / Komafest and with the cultural entrepreneurs Biotope from Vardø.

During the Umeå meeting, Västerbotten led a workshop on digitalisation where youth and the scholarship recipients were invited to take part and discuss how to promote culture through the internet and digital platforms.

The Co-Chair of the JWGC, Kirsti Riesto, Finnmark County Authority, took part in the meeting of the Barents Regional Council in Tromsø in April, presenting the work of the JWGC.

The members of the JWGC also attended the Arctic Arts Summit in Rovaniemi in June.

4. Results of the year (decisions, new initiatives, improvements)

The JWGC decided on the recipients of the second Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation (2019), a set of four persons or organizations exercising high-quality work within the field of culture in the Barents region, and contributing to cultural cooperation in our region.

The award was presented by foreign ministers/deputy foreign ministers of the Barents countries during an official Scholarship ceremony in Umeå 3 October 2019.

5. Youth involvement (how has the working group included young people or worked with youth issues during the year)

Youth involvement has been high on the agenda for the JWGC during the Chairmanship period. The JWGC decided on its *Youth Recommendations* during the Varanger meeting, and strengthened its cooperation with the JWGY. Finally, a digitalisation workshop took place in Umeå, where youth experts and Scholarship recipients could discuss ideas on how to promote culture through the internet and digital platforms.

6. Evaluation of the work (What went well, what needs improvement)

The cooperation within the JWGC is very positive and productive. The Barents regions are genuinely interested in exchanging ideas and developments from their regions and in finding new points of cooperation.

The effects of the Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation were made clear as the recipients from 2017 presented their work and developments since they received the scholarship. The meeting point between the new and the old scholarship recipients in Umeå also proved to be a useful session, where the recipients could share experiences and build networks.

During the meetings, there have also been study visits included, which has shown the varied cultural life in the Barents region.

The turnout to the meetings has been very good from all regions. We hope this will continue into the Västerbotten-Norway Chairmanship period 2019 – 2021.

The lack of sufficient funding for joint ventures makes further development and substantiation of the plans of the JWGC challenging.

7. Other