



Annual Report 2014 on the work of the Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC) during Finnish Chairmanship (2013-2015) in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council meeting

New Chairmanship

Finland received the chairmanship in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council from Norway in November 2013. The chairmanship lasts for two years. The JWGC is chaired from national level by Ms Maija Lummepuro/Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and from regional level by Mr Lev Vostriakov/Minister of Culture of the Arkhangelsk region.

During the Finnish Presidency in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council as well as in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (2013-2014), Finland enhances three guiding principles - coherence, cooperation and continuity - when planning its regional activities.

The Joint Meeting of three Regional Working Groups, May, 21, 2014, Kotka

The Joint Meeting was organized in order to promote the guiding principles of the Finnish Presidencies. Barents Joint Working Group on Culture, CBSS Senior Officials Group for Culture and Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture Steering Committee took part in the joint meeting. Joint Meeting made following main recommendations:

- to convene at least once in two years in the joint format to discuss and up-date cultural and creative industries strategies in the region.
- that the secretariats (CBSS, IBS and NDPC) would help in coordinating future joint meetings in cooperation with the rotating chair of the regional councils and the NDPC's steering committee and find suitable meeting places with added-value.
- to strive towards continued self-evaluation and in the long run to create flexible working methods for the regional working groups, which would encourage groups to creation of the integration mechanisms on the basis of structural changes or thematic work regarding cultural and creative industries issues.

Barents JWGC supported the increasing of contacts with three regional working groups to exchange the information on state-of-play in the field of cultural cooperation in order to avoid the overlapping activities. At the same time the JWGC proposed that the joint meetings should be thematic, covering the themes of mutual interest that would benefit all parties.

Mandate and Strategy

JWGC renewed its mandate and strategy for the years 2014-2018 at the beginning of 2014. In the new Strategy important areas of regional cooperation are defined as creative sector, capacity building, competence, people-to-people and artistic co-productions.

New Strategy takes into account wide possibilities to enhance cultural policy dialogue and practical cooperation with the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC), the Senior Officials Group on Culture of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as well as with the relevant EU structures such as Creative Europe: the support programme for Europe's cultural and creative sector from 2014 and the European Neighborhood Instrument and its Cross-Border Cooperation programs. With this approach, the JWGC wants to strengthen the impact of regional interaction by actively taking part in cooperation between the different processes and cultural actors.

Barents Culture and Arts Scholarship

The JWGC continued its work and further elaborated proposal on the Scholarship. The JWGC decided to ask for the clarification and the final approval of the proposal from the national representatives. The national representatives are to clarify with the regional representatives the proposal, organizational procedures, financial possibilities and specific practical questions regarding establishment of the Scholarship. The official decision is to be presented by the national representatives to the first JWGC meeting in 2015.

Barents cultural project cooperation

Two large ENPI Kolarctic CBC projects have been realized during past two years. One of them was cross-sectorial project "New Horizons 2013/2014" and another was in the field of visual arts "Northern Beauty". "New Horizons 2013/2014" has been noted among the flagship ENPI projects 2013-2014. The cultural program "BEART: exhibition and concert" held in Murmansk on December 4, 2014 was announced as the closing event for the "New Horizons 2013-2014". The prolongation of the project until Aug, 31, 2015 has received the preliminary approval from ENPI Managing Authority. The JWGC supported the initiative as contributing to the regional cooperation. Earlier in September at the Murmansk Art Museum took place closing Art exhibition and symposium of the "Northern Beauty" project.

All in all since early 90ies there have been hundreds of projects running in different fields of art and culture, for example, between artists, libraries, museums, festivals and theaters in the Barents region.

The JWGC has started already the planning how to support the generation of a new Barents project initiatives. Working group is planning to launch in the beginning of 2015 a project "Barents Cultural Initiative Incubator". This project would help to create a meeting place for cultural operators where they can start planning larger projects and apply for possible financing from European Neighborhood Instrument and its Cross-Border-Cooperation programs or from other financing sources.

Meetings and Conferences

In 2014 JWGC has convened in City of Umeå, Sweden, on Feb, 27, 2014, in City of Kotka, Finland on May, 21, 2014 and in City of Murmansk, Russia on Dec 4, 2014 and took part in following conferences:

- ENPI Kolarctic CBC “New Horizons 2013/2014”: Barents Forum for strategic cultural planning and policy implementation, Feb, 28, 2014, Umeå, Sweden. First Barents Forum was held in connection to the JWGC meeting, Members of the JWGC had the opportunity to contribute to the new ENI Kolarctic program.
- Second inauguration of the European Capital of Culture 2014, Umeå, Sweden, Feb, 28, 2014
- Baltic Sea Cultural Routes – Eastern Viking Forum II, Kotka, Finland, May, 20-21, 2014 in the framework of the Finland’s CBSS Presidency 2013-2014
- International Forum on Cross-Border Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region “Culture of Barents Euro-Arctic Region: New Horizons of Development Strategy”, Murmansk, Russia, Dec, 5, 2014 in the framework of Russian Year of Culture 2014 and the ENPI Kolarctic CBC “New Horizons 2013/2014” project.