



## THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Name of the Working Group: Joint working group on youth, JWGY

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: Norway 2019-2021 (Sweden 2017-2019)

### **1. Priorities of the Chairmanship**

The Norwegian Chairmanship of the Barents Euro Arctic Council 2019-2021 have outlined the following key priorities: *health, people-to-people contact* and *knowledge*. The overall priorities of Norway's Chairmanship will also be reflected in the running of JWGY. Furthermore, the JWGY chair will, in close cooperation with the group, consider how to operationalize and implement the youth recommendations from the preceding Swedish Chairmanship, i.e. ensuring that youth issues are a natural part of all aspects of the Barents cooperation and to formalize the role of the BRYC (for more detailed information, see 5. below). The Norwegian Chair will present its priorities during the JWGY meeting in Oslo 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

During the Swedish Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) (October 2017-2019), Sweden have pursued an agenda based on sustainable development, respect for human rights and gender equality. In each of these areas, the emphasis will lie on enhancing people-to-people contacts, especially for the younger generation. For the JWGY, the first year in 2018 had focus on restarting the working group again after a few years of inactivity, and for 2019, focus was on getting the youth recommendations in the Barents cooperation in place, as well as looking at different means of facilitating cooperation between JWGY and BRYC.

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

JWGY have met once this year, in Tromsø 4 april, back to back to a workshop held April 3, on the Barents cooperation organized by the Swedish ministry of Foreign Affairs and Finnmark regional presidency. 16 persons were present at the meeting, including the national representatives from all four countries, representatives from two regions in Sweden, Norway and Finland, and one representative from Russia. Main topics on the meeting was to discuss proposed youth recommendations from our own working group and the process on how this was coordinated related to the other working groups in the Barents cooperation. Deadline of submitting the different youth recommendations was end of May, and after that the Swedish ministry of Foreign Affairs have coordinated and streamlined the different proposals. The outcome of the meeting was to set

a roadmap of finalizing the different youth recommendations for the final conference.

JWGY at regional level have also conducted a survey on how the different regions communicate with respective BRYC representative and how they are (s)ected in each region. Although there was a low response rate from the different members, the survey shows that currently there is not a similar approach in the regions, some work better and some regions have room for improvement. Most likely, some ideas to streamline parts of the processes or communication flow between regional members and BRYC-representatives could be foreseen in the future.

During the JWGY-meeting all the participants had the opportunity for a study visit to the youth center Tvibit, in the middle of Tromsø. The center offer a wide range of activities for young people, both leisure and cultural activities, but the center is also a meeting point for youth information center, health care etc. <http://tvibit.net/?fbclid=IwAR2ylzulNbLEcVo-JO1okUerbYndHgM93X2YUa1VraEP9n9UVqqvsc3V6pg>

Initially, JWGY had planned for another meeting back-to-back with the final conference in Umeå, but it was not feasible to do that this year.

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

Norrbotten together with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a follow-up conference June 12 in Luleå, where a youth panel discussed and debated the draft recommendations that had been compiled so far. Suggestions and ideas for improvements were made. During the same day, BRYC also launched the report book “#Barents #BeingYoungHere”, a collection from young journalists that have travelled across the Barents region. 31 persons were present at this event.

BRYC organized the event Sexual health conference, which gathered 13 youth workers in the Barents region in Kiruna in May. The conference was supported by MUCF which also represent Sweden at national levels. In addition to the Sexual Health Conference BRYC also organized it's annual event which took place in Kainuu, Kainuu Region, Finland with the theme on Social media versus nature. BRYC was also the host of the first Female Empowerment Camp called Glitter in Tromsø early spring.

Norway invited to a seminar on Norwegian-Swedish youth cooperation, held December 3rd in Stockholm as a part of their Chairmanship. Experiences from successful youth projects were presented, as well as reflections from youth representatives from Troms, Västerbotten, Kautokeino and Bodø on how to develop the youth cooperation in the future. The state secretary from the Norwegian MFA, the governor of Västerbotten, as well as regional and national representatives from JWGY, were present at this seminar.

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

The work within JWGY is now up and running, the formal framework documents such as terms of reference etc. are in place since the end of 2018. Youth issues have been put high on the Barents

agenda with the exercise of all the different working groups identifying and developing their own youth recommendations, which were adopted at the Umeå ministerial meeting October 4. Ten different working groups have put youth recommendations in place.

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

Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY)-youth recommendations. Goal: Keep youth issues high on the agenda, ensuring that youth issues become a natural part of all aspects of the Barents cooperation. Formalise the role of the Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC) within the cooperation. Encourage all the working groups to report on their youth-related activities in their annual reports.

### Recommendations

1. Invite a representative from the BRYC to take part in working group meetings on a regular basis, as an advisor.
2. Include a question in the working group annual report template, asking how the working group has included young people or worked with youth issues during the year. (which is this question)

Timeline Indefinite.

JWGY have continued to have representatives from BRYC present at all meetings, workshops, seminars etc.

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

We are pleased that all the national representatives were present in Tromsø, and that the regional representatives are active and contribute to discussion and exchange of ideas. For the future, it would be of benefit to meet at least twice/year, as foreseen in the terms of references, but due to a full agenda before Sweden handed over the chairmanship to Norway this was not feasible at this time. We have identified a need to continue discuss on how best to enhance regional JWGY members cooperation and support with the regional BRYC members. This may include a revision/remapping on how the BRYC members are (s)elected, and how youth perspectives can continue to be on the Barents agenda in the years to come.

## **7. Other**

Representatives of the JWGY were present at the October ministerial conference, with an input at the ministerial programme, taking part in a video presenting the Swedish Barents presidency in short, and presenting the JWGY work at a exhibition at the back-to-back event EU-ARCTIC Forum taking place 2-4 October in Umeå.