



Minutes of The Barents Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC) Meeting

Date: 6 November 2018

Venue: Hotel Camp Ripan, Kiruna

Before the formal part of the meeting, the members had a digitalisation workshop. Concluding thoughts from the workshop were shared by the members of the JWGC under agenda item 7.

On the following day, 7 November 2018, the members also visited Konstmuseet i Norr, Norrbotten's County Art Museum in Kristallen.

Agenda of the formal meeting

1. *Opening of the meeting*
2. *Welcoming words from the hosting region, Norrbotten*
3. *Round of presentations*
4. *Adoption of the agenda*
5. *Minutes from the Kirkenes meeting in February 2018*
6. *Evaluation of the Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation process and preparations for the second round*
7. *Conclusions from the Digitalisation workshop*
8. *Steering documents for the JWGC – Strategy and Mandate*
9. *Information from the members*
10. *Meeting schedule planning for 2019*
11. *Any other business*
12. *Closing of the meeting*

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair, David Ek, opened the meeting.

2. Welcoming words from the hosting region, Norrbotten

The JWGC was welcomed by the hosting region through Kristina Nilsson, Head of Culture in Norrbotten. The role of Norrbotten County Council and the possibilities and challenges of the region were among the items in the welcoming presentation from Norrbotten.

3. Round of presentations

The JWGC members introduced themselves briefly.

4. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as is.

5. Minutes from the Kirkenes meeting in February 2018

The minutes of the Kirkenes meeting of 22 February 2018 were approved.

6. Evaluation of the Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation process and preparations for the second round

It was agreed that, by the next meeting of the JWGC during the spring of 2019, all participating regions will have found, in the way they see appropriate, one candidate to be nominated for the scholarship. All nominees are to be presented to the JWGC. The JWGC will decide on one nominee per country for the next meeting.

The participating regions of the JWGC are encouraged to start nomination procedures soon, with the aim of having them ready by April 2019.

The JWGC agrees that having the Ministers of foreign affairs at the scholarship ceremony is an important aim in terms of attaining news coverage of the scholarship event. Also, the JWGC agrees that it is an important and relevant point to let the scholarship recipients (current and previous) get to know each other, to share experiences and encourage future exchange and cooperation.

The countries and regions will ensure that there is sufficient funding for travelling for the recipients of the previous year of each respective country, so that they may join the scholarship ceremony. This is vital in order to promote the idea behind the scholarships. Should an organisation or group be chosen for the scholarship, it will be up to the region in which the organisation or group is active to decide how many individuals can get their travel expenses covered.

Sweden, Norway and Finland have confirmed funding for the scholarships as such (10 000 euro). The Chairmanship will be in contact with the federal Russian representative regarding a confirmation of the scholarship funding also from the Russian Federation.

The road map suggested in the agenda was confirmed by the members:

JWGC Meeting Fall 2018	Confirmation of funding for scholarship and travels
Spring 2019	Nomination procedures in the regions
JWGC Meeting Spring 2019	Regions present nominees and the JWGC decides
After Spring Meeting	Coordinate letters to the new recipients
June 2019	Ask old recipients for documentation
Summer 2019	Plan award ceremony
BEAC Session Fall 2019	Award ceremony or ceremonies

The representative from Västerbotten informed the JWGC that the XVII Session of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council will take place in Umeå, 2-4 October 2019, and that the scholarship award ceremony including the Ministers for foreign affairs will take place on 3 October, including lunch and an evening programme. The Chairmanship and Västerbotten will plan further scholarship activities in Umeå (for which there may be funding from Västerbotten County Administrative Board) and present ideas to the JWGC. The Chairmanship is welcoming any input which the members might have already now regarding these activities.

7. Conclusions from the Digitalisation workshop

Region Norrbotten presented conclusions from the Digitalisation workshop conducted during the morning. The JWGC discussed future possibilities for cooperation within this field.

Digitalisation is a field of relevance to all regions, both in the form of strategies and in terms of developing digitalisation projects for the good of the culture sector in the Barents region. Museums and cultural heritage, literature and libraries, as well as contemporary art are disciplines which may reach out to a bigger audience through digitalisation.

The JWGC agrees that focusing on items of common interest may provide a good point of departure for driving forward activities relating to digitalisation within the culture sector in the Barents region. The JWGC underlined the importance of facilitating arenas for experts in the field of digitalisation, as all regions are likely to have relevant experts who may help in developing good projects. The JWGC agreed to look more into the question of involving experts.

The JWGC welcomed the initiative by Norrbotten and Västerbotten regions and agreed that they are well equipped to lead the continued process on digitalisation.

The Chair also informed about the possibilities within the Nordic Council of Ministers for co-financing of projects in 2019.

8. Steering documents for the JWGC – Strategy and Mandate

The JWGC discussed its steering documents and provided input for the Chairmanship to implement for final review and adoption by the JWGC before the end of 2018.

Strategy

The JWGC discussed the new strategy, to be the current strategy from the start of 2019. The strategy will replace the document “Cultural cooperation in the Barents region”.

Working on a version drafted by the Chairmanship and basing on the earlier strategy as well as various statements by and steering documents for various important actors in the Barents cooperation, the JWGC had already provided input to the new strategy document before the meeting in Kiruna. The JWGC now went through the document in its entirety, and discussed and gave input on the content of and formulations in the new strategy. This session resulted in a final draft (Annex 1).

Mandate

Starting from 2019, the JWGC will need a new mandate, following the template sent out by the CSO. The Chairmanship sent out a draft mandate earlier this autumn, but did not receive any input from the JWGC members. The JWGC now discussed the new mandate in the light of the discussions around the strategy document, and a draft introduction was provided the next day by the Chair, which was accepted by the members of the JWGC (Annex 2).

The new draft strategy and draft mandate were sent out to the JWGC for final comments until 22 November 2018.

9. Information from the members

A tour de table was made where the members of the JWGC informed about upcoming activities from the cultural field in their region that might be of interest to their JWGC colleagues. To this agenda item, there were several ongoing projects presented from all countries.

In Russia, 2019 will be the year of the theatre, an event that will be reflected at both the regional and national levels. There have also been some positive changes in the cultural policy towards NGOs.

In Finland, a forum on cultural cooperation recently took place. In general, cooperation and related activities seem to be increasing. The regions are working to include culture as a central task in their mandates. The Arctic Arts Summit will take place in Rovaniemi in June, starting from June 3.

In Norway, regional reform and cuts in public expenditure are currently impacting the culture field at the regional level. On the national level a white paper on cultural policy in Norway is being developed. In addition, white papers are on the way concerning children and youth policy as well as on museums and language policies.

In Sweden, there is a process in Norrbotten to investigate the possibilities to establish an institution for the minority language Meänkieli in the region. The County Administrative Board of Västerbotten has established a regional network with Västerbotten-based representatives from all working groups, to provide them with a meeting point and arena to discuss issues from each group.

10. Meeting schedule planning for 2019

The JWGC discussed the meeting schedule for 2019. The proposal of Finnmark County Authority to meet in Vadsø – Varanger 24 – 25 April was agreed upon.

The JWGC agreed that having a meeting during the spring term provides enough time for completing the tasks connected to the scholarship, as there are many issues to solve before the scholarship ceremony. The experience from the previous year suggests that discussing the nominees during the summer leaves too little time for the remaining preparations. However, there would be the possibility for the JWGC to meet within the framework of the Arctic Arts Summit in early June, should there be such a need (for example for planning the Scholarship activities in Umeå in October 2019).

11. Any other business

The JWGC briefly touched on the turn-out to the meeting in Kiruna, and expressed hopes that more of the Russian JWGC members will be able to attend the meeting in Vadsø in April 2019. A mention was also made of putting more effort into facilitating participation by the representative of Indigenous Peoples Working Group (WGIP).

12. Closing the meeting

The meeting was closed by the Chair, who expressed gratitude to the host region of Norrbotten for facilitating this meeting.

Nina Merete Austad wrote the minutes.

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