



Protocol of Regional Working Group on Investments and Economic Cooperation

Date: 26 September 2011, at 10.00-15.00 (Swedish time)

Venue: Swedish Federation of Business Owners, Luleå, Sweden.

Attendees:

Kjell Hjelm, Swedish Federation of Business Owners, Norrbotten, Sweden

Torbjörn Halvardsson, Swedish Federation of Business Owners, Västerbotten, Sweden

Trond Skotvold, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, Troms, Norway

Sari Roininen, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Sweden

Not attending:

Martti Kankaanranta, Organisation of SME-enterprises in Western Lapland, Finland

Sergey Mikhailovich Averin, Ministry of Economic Development in the Arkhangelsk Region, Russia

Jorma Teittinen, Joint Authority of Kainuu Region, Finland

Illka Yliniemi, Development Director, Council of Oulu Region, Finland

Agenda:

1. **Opening of the meeting** The chair opens the meeting and brief presentations of the attending members were made.
2. **Adoption of the agenda.** Adopted, no further additions were made.
3. **Election of secretary and adjuster of the protocol.** Sari Roininen were chosen as secretary and Trond Skotvold as adjuster.
4. **Adoption of the protocol from last meeting.** Adopted. The organisational belonging of Martti Hahl was adjusted. Sari sends the corrected version to all members and IBS for registration on the BEAC homepage.
5. **Presentation of Barents Industrial Partnership and a delegation trip to Murmansk.** Kjell presented the Approximately 80 participants attended. One participated from Norway and roughly 10 from Russia. It was an even distribution among Swedish and Finnish attendees. The event was appreciated and successful.

Kjell also presented a mapping and presentation of investments in the Barents region during 2010-2020. In the Arctic area of the Scandinavian countries (north Sweden, Norway and Finland) investments of at least 625 billion SEK are made, whereas in Barents (including Russia) investments of at least 1 200 billion SEK are made. These numbers are changing since new investments constantly arise. Barents enterprise council (Barents företagarråd) encourages thus companies to cross-border cooperation. A tool for this cooperation is a computer tool called Partnerbook which consists of

contacts among other things. Other important activities to consider is border hindrances and regulations as well as meeting places for companies.

Trond tells that only in Troms there are today 2.500 vacancies at the labour market and they thus need more qualified workforce. One of the problems with the workforce is that 50 % of the youth do not complete their upper secondary school. The education today consists of too much theory and the youth needs a qualified certificate for their qualification on the labour market.

Kjell also presented a delegation to Murmansk consisting of meetings with the Duma and other politicians as well as business and university meetings to find potential partners for the future. On this tour IBS also got the opportunity to inform about its activities and the new opportunity that Norwegian and Russian people has to commute on a daily basis between the countries.

The working group came to the resolution that it is important for the group to think of future investments that could cause challenges for SMEs and their need of competence. There is, for instance, a lack of engineers today. The economic situation in Europe and Kina could likewise affect Barents and the world economy. This in turn could result in financial issues for larger investments. Kina, India and Brazil are driving the development on the market today, and they are also the greatest users of raw material at the same time.

6. **Development of an action plan.** The working group discussed the action plan and came to the agreement to work with three prioritized areas. The overall purpose is to develop a multilateral cooperation and business climate among the member regions that is productive and progressive for the SMEs. The working group will try to create a Barents Border forum to work with various cross-border hindrance and difficulties. To accomplish this, project description and project budget is needed to be able to apply for funding of continued work. (For more information see the action plan.)

In relation to discussions of planned activities in the action plan, present activities were also discussed. For example, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise has invited Russia to Norwegian-Russian cooperation within trade and industry. Information of diverse ongoing initiatives between the countries is emphasized. And RWGIEC activities are thus important to stress in this context.

The Swedish Federation of Business Owners in Norr- and Västerbotten will attend two activities this fall in Brussels. The first is a NSPA (Northern Sparsely Populated Areas) meeting and the other is a work shop on Open Days. The RWGIEC activities are important to highlight in these circumstances as well.

The Swedish Federation of Business Owners in Norrbotten has also initiated an annual activity in form of Barents Business golf. This will take place during the Barents Union activities in Haparanda.

Trond also informed of a group called Norrområdesgruppen (Northern area group) and that he will inform them of the work by RWGIEC.

A Norwegian-Russian government commission has been established during a bilateral agreement between Norway and Russia. This commission works with cooperation in economy, industry and technological science. The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise participates in this on a central level together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway. Trond will also pay attention of the work done by RWGIEC in context.

Finally, Trond informs of a cooperation between the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise and LO in three of the northern counties in Norway. They have established an Industry Forum North where they have annual spring and autumn meetings with members of the parliament. Trond will inform of RWGIEC at the first meeting during spring 2012.

7. **Other issues.** No other issues were brought up.
8. **Next meeting.** The next meeting will be in Kirkenes 6th of March 2012. The working group agreed to have two principal meetings per year and other meetings, if necessary, will be called for in due time. The second meeting for 2012 will preliminary be held in Brussels during week 41 when the next Open Days will be held.
9. **Closing of the meeting.**

Sari Roininen
Secretary

Kjell Hjelm
Chair

Trond Skotvold
Adjuster