

Annual report from RWGIEC

During 2013 the working group has had a meeting in Luleå, Sweden, where a project for investigation and compilation of border barriers was initiated by the members. This project was completed during the year by the Swedish Federation of Business Owners in Norrbotten, and the results has entailed a great need for further action to eliminate, or at least minimize, problems for future business exchanges in Barents.

Furthermore, information regarding our regional cooperation has been provided to different groups from the Swedish Parliament in connection with their visits to various businesses in Norrbotten, Sweden. We have, in connection to the meeting of the Russian-Swedish Council, held in Luleå with participants from Murmansk, pointed out the need of Russian participation on the meetings of the RWGIEC. Unfortunately, there is no activity from the Russian side in this working group.

In May 2013, some members from the working group were visiting Tromsø in Norway to take part in a number of formal and informal meetings considering different development opportunities. Among many other things, we pointed out the importance to coordinate the currently planned flight route Oulu-Luleå-Tromsø with flights to/from Murmansk. It is of great importance and need for the companies to be able to have quick transports of both goods and people. With a well thought-out schedule, we can shorten the time of logistics and, thus, further strengthen the cross-border cooperation.

The work of RWGIEC has also been described and informed about in connection with a cross-border seminar in Pajala, Sweden, where participants from all over Sweden, Norway and Finland was gathered to discuss barriers of cross-border business cooperation. On this meeting a lot of discussions with the Norwegian tax and custom administration took place, especially considering border barriers and the project mentioned earlier.

A meeting was planned to be held in Murmansk 19th November. But due to the lack of participation by members the meeting was canceled. The chairman of the RWGEIC, on the other hand, took part of the Business Week in Murmansk and the mining and tourism conference in Kirovsk. Many fruitful meetings with various representatives of public and private organizations and business owners were accomplished. The feeling is that there is a genuine interest from active entrepreneurs to develop cooperation across borders.

Luleå, 19 December 2013

Kjell Hjelm

Chairman