

Protocol of Regional Working Group on Investments and Economic Cooperation

Date: 14 May 2013, at 16.00-17.00 (local time)

Venue: Radisson Blue Hotel, Tromsø, Norway

Attendees:

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

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

Brynolf Tjärner, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Sweden

Sari Roininen, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Sweden

Not attending:

Jorma Teittinen, Joint Authority of Kainuu Region, Finland

Ilkka Yliniemi, Council of Oulu Region, Finland

Trond Skotvold, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, Troms, Norway

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

Irina Gladysheva, Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Competitive Policy of the Arkhangelsk Region

A.V. Fridman, Minister of Economic Development of Republic of Komi

Agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.

The chair, Kjell Hjelm, opens the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

3. Election of secretary of the protocol.

Sari Roininen was chosen as secretary.

4. Previous meeting and protocol.

The protocol from the previous meeting was adopted. The chair informed that the common application (item 8 in the last protocol) on a manual of Nordic Border Barriers to the Nordic Council of Ministers was rejected. The Swedish Federation of Business Owners is, however, funded by Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth to collect and document border barriers in the Nordic countries.

5. Information from the chair

The chair started with information from the meeting of the national working group on economic cooperation (WGEC), which took place 2013-05-13 in Tromsø, Norway. On this meeting, they got a presentation by Rune Rautio, Finland, on facts considering business cooperation between the countries in the Barents region, and Kjell Hjelm presented figures from their study of SMEs in the region.

Kjell Hjelm further remarked that the participation of RWGIEC members on the conference on economic cooperation, Barents Industrial Partnership (BIP), was low. In summary, the BIP had too much focus on large companies and lacked a focus on how to respond to the global demands that SMEs faces. Nor were there any focus on the value chain and how to connect SMEs to this process. In the end, it is SMEs that create 4 out of 5 jobs.

6. Business cooperation between SMEs

Kjell Hjelm informed about the progress in the Russian-Swedish council, and that various business cooperation issues will be highlighted in this forum as well as in RWGIEC. A suggestion to include the forest industry was discussed and the large investments that are being made in Arkhangelsk. An important question to continue to work with, and to investigate, is that of SMEs in different industries.

7. Discussion of participation in RWGEIC

Attention was paid to the fact that many participants of the working group were not attending the meeting, although the invitation was sent in due time, and the participants had informed that they were available this date. The commitment of participants needs to be increased. Brynolf Tjärner will contact the different regions considering vacant positions and/or election of new members in the working group. Suggestions were made to include other actors such as employment offices, people from border barrier projects and other cross-border projects and with political influence.

The working group still regret the missing contact with Russian member of the group and wishes to include a representative from the Russian Federation of Business or Chamber of Commerce.

8. Any other business.**9. Next meeting.**

Next meeting is suggested to take place in Pajala, Sweden, the 26th September 2013, in connection to some other events.

10. Closing of the meeting.