



2-3 February 2021
Virtual Meeting

Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Working Group on Environment
58th meeting

MINUTES

Day 1. 2 February 2021

1. Welcome and introductions

The *WGE Chair Henna Haapala* welcomed participants to the third virtual WGE meeting of the Finnish Chairmanship. The introductory round followed (see list of participants in paragraph 10).

[Agenda of the Meeting](#) and [WGE#57 Minutes](#) (October 2020) were adopted without changes.

2. Update from the International Barents Secretariat

The Chair welcomed **Markus Karlsen**, the new *Head of the Secretariat*, previously representing the Finnmark County. Mr Karlsen introduced himself and presented past and upcoming Barents events:

- Barents High Level Meeting led by the BEAC Chair - Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway Ine Eriksen Søreide and the BRC Chair Helene Hellmark Knutsson held on 26 October 2020 ([see the recording](#) on the Barents YouTube channel);
- Indigenous Peoples Summit in Bodø on 7-8 June 2021;
- Parliamentary Conference in Kirkenes on 21-23 June;
- Forest Forum in Alta in September 2021;
- BEAC Ministerial Meeting in Tromsø on 26 October 2021;
- BEAC Committee of Senior Official and Barents Regional Committee continue their regular routine online.

3. EU-funded Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic (EUA-BCA)

[Presentation of the EU-funded Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic](#)

Stefan Åström from the Swedish Environmental Research Institute [IVL](#) presented EU-funded Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic, implemented in coordination with the Arctic Council's Working Groups. Both northern and southern emissions contribute to Arctic warming. More than 50% of global black carbon emissions come from the Arctic Council's member- and observer states. Global action on BC can reduce Arctic warming with 0,25 degrees by 2050. Thus, it is important to enhance international cooperation on reducing BC emissions. BCA project has developed a roadmap which focuses on emission sources, such as domestic heating, gas flaring, maritime shipping, diesel engines and open burning. Reports containing outlines and recommendations are published on the [project's homepage](#).



Following the presentation, **the Chair** underlined that Black Carbon issues could be included to the Update of the Action Plan on Climate Change. Experience in gas flaring can be particularly relevant for Barents cooperation (potential of utilizing gas from gas flaring for district heating). **Henrik G Forsström** mentioned that Nefco takes an active part in the work on BC in the Arctic Region, managing AC Project Support Instrument, [PSI](#). **Helena Dahlbo** added that a series of webinars on methane, to be held within Hot Spots work, could include gas flaring issues.

Read more in the [presentation of the EU-funded Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic](#). The report on Best Available Techniques Economically Achievable to address Black Carbon from Gas Flaring can be downloaded [here](#).

4. WGE Input to the Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation

[WGE Input to the Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation](#)

The Chair informed about the status of the work after the CSO meeting in December 9, 2020. At the last meeting, the Finnish chair-team presented a concept paper on climate action, which included proposals on how to proceed with the update of the Action plan on climate change for the Barents region. The WGE Chair presented this WGE's proposal to the CSOs in their meeting on 9th of December. The paper was well received and the WGE got a mandate from the CSOs to facilitate the update process in close cooperation with the IBS. A kick-off meeting for the CSO Chairs was arranged in January together with the IBS and WGE Chair, where we shared information on how the WGs to contribute to the process. The aim is that each WG will provide inputs, which will consist of ongoing and/or new actions of the Working Groups. In addition, we will identify some success stories of the previous Action Plan. The WGE Chair informed about the schedule of the process in 2021 with the aim to achieve the adoption of the Action Plan in October 2021 in the BEAC meeting. The Chair reminded the WGE that the Barents Environment Ministers will be invited to approve the content of the Action Plan before it will be presented for the Foreign Ministers for adoption.

*The Finnish WGE representative **Aino Lipsanen** presented draft proposal of the WGE input to the Action Plan on Climate Change. The first round of the proposals from the Barents Working Groups are to be collected by the end of February. The WGE proposal includes:*

- Contributions from the Subgroup on Nature and Water and Subgroup on Hot Spots Exclusion, including SNW ongoing projects and Hot Spots Supporting Activities;
- Revitalizing of the network on Regional Climate Strategies previously led by Norrbotten and the Arkhangelsk Region, if there's a clear interest from the regions (See the [project's page](#) and [proposals to go forward](#));
- Series of webinars for regions and municipalities (one webinar per quarter starting from October 2021), consisting of expert presentations, experience sharing and policy discussions. The regions are encouraged to propose relevant topics and indicate, whether they would be interested to host a webinar. Webinars could serve to identify topics for joint project development. Västerbotten has indicated interest to host a webinar on adaptation;
- More comments and suggestions are awaited by 15 February 2021. Request for feedback will follow from the Finnish Chairmanship.



Sweden agreed that exchange of knowledge between the interested regions would strengthen climate initiatives; previous experience, such as GHG inventory of the Arkhangelsk Region or [workshop held in Luleå in 2019](#) should be utilized. Hot Spots Supporting Activities can be used to enhance climate efforts, as the scope of the target groups is not limited to HS owners only. Main contribution from **Norway** will be Climate Smart Barents Region webinar; country Governors offices of Nordland and Troms and Finnmark will be involved in regional network. **IBS** will contact members of the Arkhangelsk Region, who initiated work on climate strategies in the Russian Barents, to discuss their interest in further cooperation.

Read more in the presentation of the [WGE Input to the APCC](#).

Presentation of the [GHG Inventory of the Arkhangelsk Region](#) by Michael Yulkin, Arkhangelsk Environmental Investment Center, [WGE#51](#).

5. Conference on Climate Smart Barents Region

[Climate Smart Barents Region presentation](#)

*The Norwegian WGE representative **Anne Berteig** presented the concept of the Climate Smart Barents Region virtual conference to be held on **27 April 2021**. Topics for discussion will be divided into two sessions: 1) Climate smart infrastructure for transport, energy and industry and 2) Minimizing impacts on nature and traditional land-use. The webinar is seen as an input to the Action Plan on Climate Change, stimulating new initiatives of the Barents Working Groups. Center for International Climate Research [CICERO](#) will take part in the preparations; technical support to be provided by the Medvind company. WGE members are asked to suggest speakers for the Conference. Follow the [event page](#) on the Barents Calendar.*

Read more in the presentation of the [Climate Smart Barents Region](#) webinar.

Day 2. 3 February 2021

6. Biodiversity commitments from the Barents Region

[Biodiversity commitments presentation](#)

Aino Lipsanen presented development of the Finland's initiative to encourage voluntary biodiversity commitments to the [UN Convention on Biological Diversity](#) from the Barents Region ahead of the the COP 15 (China, 2021). Thematic focus of the initiative is freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity (read more in the [WGE#57 Minutes](#)). The proposal received a positive feedback since the last WGE meeting in October 2020. Finland will distribute an invitation to make commitments, including technical guidance and timeline for the process. Prior to the CBD COP, a stock-taking document will be prepared to make an overview of the supplied commitments. Final stock-taking will be ready in the beginning of 2023 (tentatively).

The presentation was followed by an active discussion. The wording and formulation need to be clarified: what implications will the commitments have; why the previous formulation 'voluntary commitment' on the [CBD web-page](#) was changed; should the commitments be discussed/approved on the ministerial level. The Finnish team clarified, that the CBD commitments are meant for a wide range non-state actors and all interested stakeholders



from regions to civil society, and don't have any further implications. Commitments are not given by countries or ministers, but on a project level. The CBD platform doesn't follow-up the supplied activities, but Finland is planning to self-monitor the commitments under the Barents umbrella.

Read more in the [presentation of the Biodiversity commitment from the Barents Region](#) and about [the CBD voluntary commitments](#)

7. Report from the Subgroup on Nature and Water

[SNW presentation](#)

The *SNW Secretary Ilona Grekelä* presented recent activities of the SNW:

- [Webinar on Sustainable Nature Tourism](#) held on 25 November 2021 with around 40 participants from all Barents countries;
- XIth Habitat Contact Forum tentatively planned for 2022; in addition, a webinar may be arranged in late 2021;
- The project 'Forest biodiversity protection in the Barents Region in 2020 and beyond: assessing the status and paving the way for mainstreaming biodiversity into forestry' got funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers. This is a follow-up of BPAN and other forest activities of the subgroup. Project's budget is appr. 67.000 Euro. SYKE is the lead partner of the project.
- The next SNW meeting is to be held in March 2021.

The report was met with the appreciation; no further comments from the WGE members were received. Read more in the [SNW presentation](#).

8. Report from the Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion Evaluation of Hot Spots Exclusion

[SHE presentation](#)

The *SHE co-Chair Helena Dahlbo* talked about the SHE work since October 2020:

- Two SHE meetings held on 2 December 2020 and 21 January 2021; regular meetings of the SHE branch-related Task Forces;
- Meetings between SHE and Regional Groups of HS Exclusion of the Murmansk Region and the Republic of Karelia held in December 2020 to discuss steps forward;
- The first [webinar on Contaminated Sites](#) held on 10 December 2020 with participation of the Nordic experts (HS Supporting Activity #2); More activities to follow in spring 2021 as a part of educational course arranged by the Russian BAT Bureau;
- [Webinar on BAT and Permit Granting in Mining and Metallurgy](#) arranged for M5 Kovdorkiy GOK (producing apatite concentrate) on 8 December 2020; Drafting of Environmental Efficiency Plan for M5 and Training in BAT-based Permit Granting (SA 4 and 5) will be implemented in coordination with the BAT-Bureau;
- Nickel smelter of the M1 Pechenganickel MMC of Kola GMK was closed down in December 2020; SO₂ emissions have therefore stopped. A meeting between SHE Task Force on Mining and Metallurgy, company administration and Murmansk authorities will be arranged in spring 2021 to enhance the exclusion procedure.



Igor Lyzlov representing the Republic of Komi requested to appoint experts in coal mining to enhance the exclusion of Ko1 Vorkuta Mine from the Barents List. Since there are no Nordic experts in coal mining, Nefco will work further on the pool of Russian and international experts. **Helena Dahlbo** proposed to take up this issues at the meeting of the SHE Task Force on Mining and Metallurgy.

Henrik G Forsström, Nefco, presented further actions on Evaluation of Hot Spots Exclusion and the shortlisted candidates (individual consultants, companies and organizations from the Barents countries) for WGE consideration. Kola Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Akvaplan-niva from Tromsø, LTU Business from Luleå are among the shortlisted candidates (they might be asked to form consortium). In addition, the Evaluation Committee will be formed to follow the process. Comments and suggestions from the WGE members will be appreciated.

The work done by SHE was positively reviewed by the WGE. **Norway** and **Sweden** expressed particular interest to the further process of the M1 exclusion from the Barents HS List. Chair noted that the news with regard to the M1 are very important for the Barents cooperation in whole, since this has been a major hot spot to find solutions because of its transboundary impacts. She encouraged the SHE to contact the company to establish a dialogue according to the exclusion procedure. One more project, on M4 Apatity Heat and Power Plant with a consultant from Norwegian Sigra Group, is pending due to changes in the plant's administration.

Read more in the [SHE presentation](#).

9. Conclusions, next meeting



Concluding the meeting, the Chair summarized list of the tasks for the WGE members:

- Comments to the WGE Input to the Action Plan on Climate Change by **15 February**;
- Comments to the Shortlisted candidates for the Hots Spots Evaluation to Henrik G Forsström

Barents event relevant for the WGE: Zero and Low Emissions Aviation held by BEATA on 4 February. Presentations and recordings are available on the [event's page](#).

The next WGE virtual meetings will be held on week 21 **25-28 May** and week 37 **13-17 September 2021** (one of these may be only for WGE members). Henna Haapala will continue chairing the WGE until early 2022, when Saija Vuola completes her one-year mission at the Finnish MFA.

Materials of the WGE#58 meeting can be found [here](#).

10. List of participants



1. Henna Haapala, WGE Chair, Ministry of the Environment (FI)
2. Aino Lipsanen, Ministry of the Environment (FI)



3. Anna Kuhmonen, SNW Chair, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
4. Helena Dahlbo, SHE co-Chair, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
5. Emmi Vähä, Finnish Environment Institute (FI)
6. Ilona Grekelä, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Lapland (FI)
7. Jari Pasanen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Lapland (FI)
8. Vilma Lehtovaara, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of North Karelia (FI)
9. Jukka Nykänen, Regional Council of North Karelia (FI)
10. Tero Väisänen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of North Ostrobothnia (FI)
11. Tatu Turunen, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Kainuu (FI), 1st day
12. Jari Vilen, Barents and Northern Dimension Ambassador (FI)
13. Anne Berteig, Ministry of Climate and Environment (NO)
14. Julia Loe, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
15. Olaug Bjertnaes, Norwegian Environment Agency (NO)
16. Lisa B. Helgason, County Governor of Troms and Finnmark (NO), 2nd day
17. Elin Kronqvist, WGE member, Ministry of the Environment (SE)
18. Åke Mikaelsson, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
19. Rickard Nätjehall, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
20. Yvonne Lundell, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
21. Anders Törngren, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
22. Markus Larsson, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SE)
23. Mats-Rune Bergström, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (SE)
24. Elin Söderberg, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (SE)
25. Sophie Forsberg Johansson, County Administrative Board of Norbotten (SE)
26. Tamara Dalgatova, SHE co-Chair, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (RU)
27. Ruslan Butovsky, VNII Ecology (RU)
28. Tatiana Guseva, Environmental Industrial Policy Centre (RU), 2nd day
29. Igor Lyzlov, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Republic of Komi (RU)
30. Larisa Kolokolnikova, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Republic of Karelia (RU), 2nd day
31. Natalia Polikarpova, Pasvik Nature Reserve, Murmansk Region (RU)
32. Vladimir Chizhov, Center of Regional Development 'Second School', Nikel, Murmansk Region (RU)
33. Henrik G Forsström, NEFCO
34. Vitaly Artyushchenko, NEFCO, 1st day
35. Markus Karlsen, IBS
36. Roman Gokkoev, IBS, 1st day
37. Maria Dianova, IBS
38. Elena Alexandrova, Interpreter
39. Yegor Zenov, Interpreter