



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT

Name of the Working Group: Barents-Euro Arctic Working Group on Economic Cooperation (WGEC)

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: Norway resumed the Chairmanship from Sweden in October 2019. The Norwegian Chairmanship will last from October 2019 – October 2021.

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

The priorities of the Swedish Chairmanship of the BEAC were Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Honoring that framework, the WGEC focused on highlighting bio economy as a basis for cooperation in the Barents region. The Swedish Chairmanship also prioritized discussions on the mandate and working methods of the group and adopted such a mandate within the chairmanship period.

The Norwegian Chairmanship (2019-2021) will aim to highlight the potential that exists in youth entrepreneurship and value-creation in the Barents region. We will seek to develop closer cooperation with other national and regional working groups, as well as building up the Working Group's interaction with the private sector and business circles of Norway, Sweden, Russia and Finland. The Working Group has been encouraged to have continuous interaction between sessions, and to share information on relevant events or developments that can be of interest to the group. In terms of our meetings, we will aim to hold meetings back-to-back with other business or entrepreneurship-related events in the Barents Region.

2. Meetings (meetings held, main topics and outcomes of the meetings)

The Swedish Chairmanship held one meeting during 2019 with the primary aim of adopting a mandate for the WGEC. The meeting was held on the 20th of March in Stockholm and it was, for the first time, held together with the RWGIEC. One of the outcomes of the meeting in Haparanda in 2018 was to have closer collaboration between the national and regional groups. During the meeting a brainstorming was held to identify future activities. Norway presented their preliminary priorities (health cooperation (eHealth), people-to-people cooperation and knowledge, research and youth,) Finland highlighted tourism, the Arctic Sea Route as well as sustainable mining and sustainable aquaculture. During the meeting, there were presentations from Business Sweden and

the Youth Group. After the meeting, the WGEC and the RWGIEC had the opportunity to visit Smart City Sweden.

The Norwegian Chairmanship has not held any Working Group meetings in 2019. We plan to have our first meeting in the spring of 2020. Introductory e-mail and information with a brochure on the Norwegian Chairmanship has been distributed from the coordinator of the Working Group.

3. Other activities (projects, events, programmes etc.)

Due to changes in the internal structure of the Swedish Ministry for Enterprise there were no possibilities to undertake any further activities on national level during the year.

4. Results of the year (decisions, new initiatives, improvements)

The mandate was adopted.

5. Youth involvement (how has the working group included young people or worked with youth issues during the year)

The chair of the Youth Committee was invited to the meeting of the WGEC on 20th of March 2019.

6. Evaluation of the work (What went well, what needs improvement)

The establishment of a mandate is a good step forward in structuring the work and having a basis to work from. It is however difficult to come up with concrete activities on national level. It is therefore very important to have close contact with the regional level in order to provide support where appropriate.

7. Other

The Norwegian Chairmanship is very pleased for the Swedish Chairmanship's initiative and efforts to adopt a mandate for BEAC Working Group, in close cooperation with all delegates. This is a step in the right direction towards making the group more functional, with a long-term scope and direction for our work.