



Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

## Concept Note: Promoting bio-economy in the Barents region

### Introduction

Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG:s) form the basis of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Barents Council. With this in mind, the suggested focus of the work in the Economic Working Group is bio-economy. A strengthened bio-economy sector can contribute to several of the SDG:s - for instance (but not exclusively):

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Goal 15: Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

Finding ways of developing the economy and our societies, while at the same time keeping within the planetary boundaries and fulfilling the SDG:s is a challenge that demands creativity, innovation and political will. Moving away from a fossil-based economy to a bio-based economy is one possibility. The number of initiatives in this field are plentiful. The Barents Region is

particularly suited for bio-economy considering its natural resources, particularly forests but also mines and other resources.

### **Aim**

The aim of the chairmanship is to highlight the possible role of bio-economy, discuss the concept of bio-economy and to strengthen the bio-economy sector in the region.

### **Proposed way forward (for discussion)**

- 1) Each meeting under the Swedish chairmanship will aim at increasing the joint knowledge of the bio-economy sector in the region by providing examples, highlight obstacles and opportunities as well as promoting dialogue. Examples from all member countries are welcomed.
- 2) A small task force of experts from a national and regional level, with a concrete mandate<sup>1</sup> and time frame, could be appointed with the aim of proposing a strategic roadmap to be decided by the WGEC. The roadmap could be followed by a plan of action. Synergies with other initiatives (Nordic, Circumboreal and other) should be taken into account.
- 3) The plan of action could be taken forward on a regional level, for instance by the region of Västerbotten, during their regional chairmanship 2019–2021. Sweden would welcome a continuation on a national level as well, if so decided by future chairmanships.

### **Questions for discussion**

- Do you agree that bio-economy in the Barents Region is a topic of interest for the work in the WGEC?
- What are your views on the proposed way forward?
- Which areas are particularly interesting to highlight?
  - Forests
  - Mining
  - Blue growth/marine industries
  - Aquaculture
  - Agriculture
  - Urban/rural development
  - Housing

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<sup>1</sup> The Swedish chair could propose such a mandate for discussion and decision during the next meeting of the WGEC in Haparanda in June 2018.