



20 January 2010

**Barents Euro-Arctic Council's
Working Group on Youth Policy (WGYP)
Annual report 2008**

Background

The Working Group on Youth Policy (WGYP) was established as an Ad Hoc Working Group in 1999 upon a Finnish proposal. By a decision of the CSO in December 2002, the mandate of the group was prolonged and revised, and the group was transformed into a permanent working group, integrated in the structure of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The work of the WGYP is based on the Plan of Action adopted at the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth Policy in the member states of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Tromsø 14 -16 of May 2001.

Activities in 2009

In 2009 the WGYP celebrated its anniversary – ten years since it was first convened.

During 2009 the work of the WGYP focused on the following activities:

- Implementing the Tromsø Plan of Action;
- Cooperating with other bodies of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Regional Council, as well as with international organisations and relevant regional structures;
- Steering and supporting the Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO) activities.

The WGYP held four meetings in 2009:

1–3 April in Moscow, ordinary meeting chaired by Roman Aleksandrov, Deputy Head of Department of touristic activities and international cooperation of Ministry of sports, tourism and youth policy of the Russian Federation;

3 September in Murmansk, extra-ordinary preparatory meeting for the Ministerial Conference chaired by Philipp Kosov, Head of Division of intercultural cooperation in tourism and youth policy of Department of touristic activities and international cooperation of Ministry of sports, tourism and youth policy of the Russian Federation;

22 September in Murmansk, extra-ordinary preparatory meeting for the Ministerial Conference chaired by Roman Aleksandrov;

16–17 November in Stockholm, ordinary meeting chaired by Eva Theisz, *Director of International Affairs* at the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs.

In accordance with the programme of the chairmanship of the Russian Federation in the BEAC for 2007–2009 the WGYP organised the **“Barents Euro-Arctic Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth Policy”** that took place in Murmansk, Russia 23–24 September 2009.

About 70 participants from 4 countries of the Barents region attended the event: national delegations from Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden, the representatives of the International Barents Secretariat, the Council of Europe, the Presidency of the European Union as well as the Barents Regional Youth Council (BRYC), Barents Regional Working Group on Youth Issues (RWGYI), the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, indigenous peoples of the Barents region, national and regional youth councils and others.

The heads of the delegations were:

Olli Saarela, Ministry of Education of Finland,

Lotte Grepp Knutsen, Ministry of Children and Equality of Norway,

Boris Gusev, Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy of the Russian Federation,

Annica Dahl, Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality of Sweden.

The aim of the Conference was that young people, policymakers and researchers met together, discussed and worked out a common policy on how to make the Barents region attractive for young people and how to use young people as a resource and a driving force of the socio-economic development of the region.

The first day of the Conference featured a Youth Meeting which gathered young people from the Barents region. Their discussions according to the aim of the Conference resulted in youth proposals to the officials.

Researchers and experts of youth policy in the Barents region reviewed the current situation and tendencies in their keynote reports “International experience of youth cooperation” and “The role of youth in social-economic development of Barents Euro-Arctic region on example of oil and gas sphere”. The work of the Barents Regional Youth Council and Barents Youth Cooperation Office was presented. The youth representative appealed to the audience with the Declaration from the “reAction” event in Archangelsk.

The participants of the Conference shared their views, exchanged experiences and developed suggestions during discussions in working sessions: “Mutual understanding among the young people of Barents region”, “Involvement of young people in socio-economic development of the Barents region”, “Youth participation and role of youth organizations in the development of society. Environmental challenges in the Barents Region.”.

The heads of the delegations in their statements highly acknowledged the work done by the WGYP and regional cooperation structures. As a result of the Conference the Declaration of the Ministers in the form of Conclusions was adopted. The Declaration evaluates achievements in the youth policy in the Barents region over the previous 10 years, underlines importance of the youth cooperation and defines directions for the future efforts in this area.

The WGYP will publish a brochure with the Conference documents and materials.

Plans for 2010

The Swedish chairmanship together with members of the WGYP will work to implement the recommendations from of the Conference of Ministers of Youth Policy held in Murmansk in September of 2009. During 2010, an important task will be to develop a new Plan of Action for the

work of the WGYP. Further WGYP will continue to support and secure the activities of the Barents Youth Cooperation Office, and finding possible points of cooperation with other relevant working groups. An important priority will be to enhance cooperation with relevant working groups within the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council, as well as with other cooperation structures in the region.

Planned activities

2 WGYP meetings and joint meetings with RWGYI and BRYC, in Luleå (Feb) and Stockholm (Autumn)

First meeting to investigate the possibilities of a Swedish Presidency Youth Event