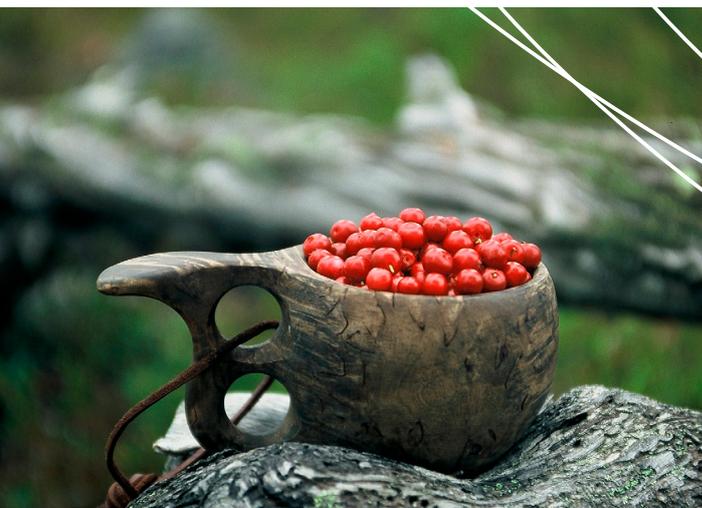
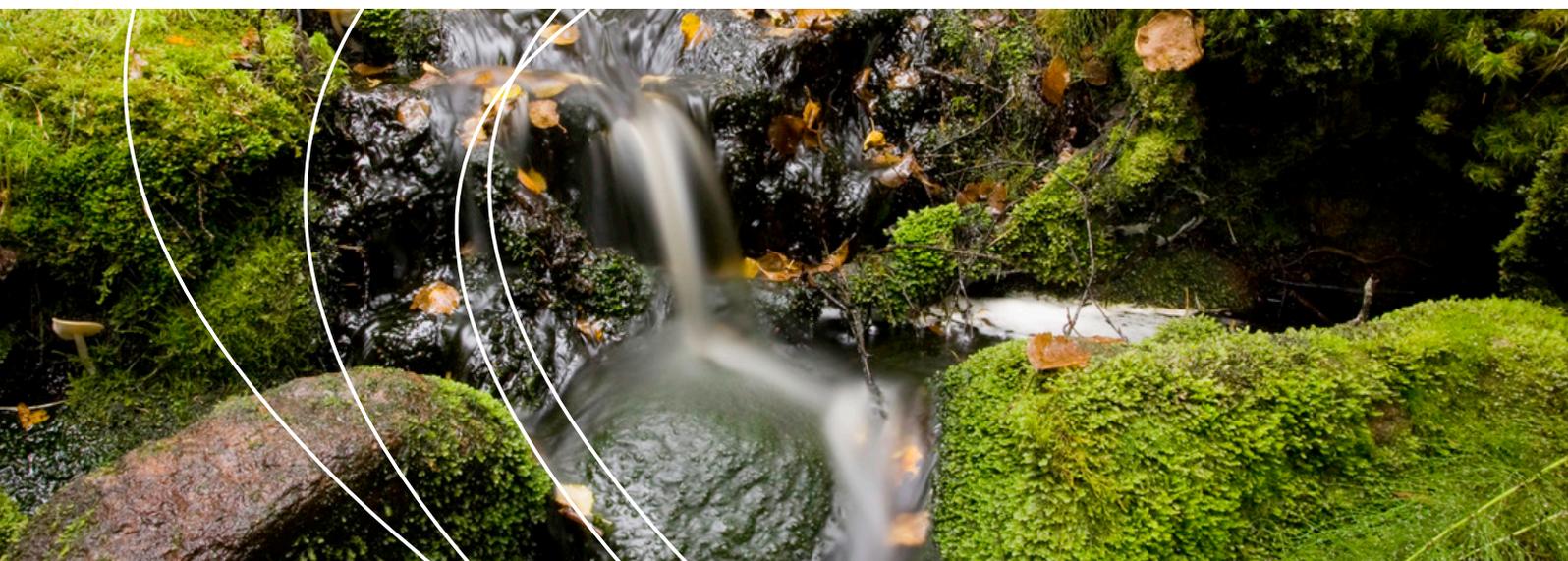


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EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL | Report of the WGE 2012–2013



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Working Group on Environment Report of the WGE 2012–2013

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ANNEXES

Reports from the Subgroups and the Regional Working Group on Environment

Summary

The main areas of cooperation of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) Working Group on Environment (WGE) are: the Barents Environmental “Hot Spots”, cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption, nature conservation, water issues, and climate change. In order to meet the environmental challenges connected to the increasing use of natural resources in the Barents Region, a crosscutting theme for the work is the focus on a green economy and ecosystem services. Special attention is paid to integrating environmental and climate issues into the work of the BEAC and its Working Groups. An overall goal of the Finnish chairmanship of the WGE has been to enhance synergies with relevant regional and global environmental processes.

The WGE has met six times during 2012–2013. In addition, the Subgroups and projects have had their own meetings. The WGE and its Subgroups have facilitated and carried out around 20 projects, and implemented long-term processes such as hot spots and developing the Barents Protected Area Network. We have developed a Communication Strategy to support our communication activities. Around 600–700 persons have participated in the events and projects launched by the WGE.

As a result of our activities in 2012-2013:

- We have enhanced the efforts to prevent and reduce pollution, to protect the fragile northern nature, and to integrate environmental issues into economic development in the Barents Region.
- We have contributed to the Millennium Development Goals on ensuring environmental sustainability (namely: 7A) Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources; 7B) Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss; 7C) Halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation).
- We have linked the regional cooperation to global environmental processes, such as the UN Rio+20 Conference and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.
- We have built cooperation networks with other regional organizations and processes, especially with the Arctic Council, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, and Nordic Council of Ministers.
- We have been active in engaging the Barents Working Groups to develop the Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation and, in addition, have had active coordination with many of the BEAC Working Groups, especially with the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples and the Joint Working Group on Education and Research.

1. General

WGE Chair: Henna Haapala (Finland)

The Chairmanship of the WGE was transferred from Sweden to Finland at the tenth Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment held in Umeå, 9th November 2011. At the meeting, the Ministers adopted a declaration that gave a renewed mandate to the WGE for 2012–2013 and directions for further work.

The work of the WGE is arranged under four Subgroups. Climate change is a cross-cutting issue and connected to the work of all of these Subgroups.

- Subgroup on “Hot Spots” Exclusion (SHE)
- Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption (CPESC)
- Subgroup on Nature Protection (NPS)
- Subgroup on Water Issues (SWI)

The Subgroups consist of expert members from each country and they may have observer participants taking part in their work. Regional representatives are welcome to participate in the work of the Subgroups.

The WGE has had six meetings during 2012–2013: 1) Helsinki, February 2012; 2) Helsinki, May 2012; 3) Kajaani, September 2012; 4) Rovaniemi, April 2013; 5) Oulu, September 2013; and 6) Helsinki, November 2013. The Subgroups have met back-to-back with the WGE meetings, and have held their own meetings (both physical and by telephone) in between the WGE meetings. There have been 40–45 participants in the WGE meetings. Several projects and events have been carried out by the WGE and its Subgroups.

To support and enhance communication activities, the WGE has developed a Communication Strategy. An internal workshop was held during the WGE meeting in April 2013 and the Communication Strategy was adopted at the WGE meeting in November 2013. The Communication Strategy will be a tool for each chairmanship.

The Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE) has arranged its meetings back-to-back with the WGE meetings. This has enabled active coordination and participation of the regional representatives also in the work of the WGE. Regions from all countries have been very active in carrying out the project work, and their contribution to the cooperation has been significant. In addition, the level of participation in the meetings from the regional level has increased.

2. Climate change

The Norwegian chairmanship of the BEAC 2011–2013 and the Finnish chairmanship of the WGE have ranked the elaboration of an Action Plan on Climate Change as one of the top priorities. During 2012–2013, the WGE has been focusing on contributing to the development of the Action Plan and on enhancing regional approaches, like regional climate change strategies. In addition, climate change issues are included in the work of the WGE Subgroups (see sections 3–6).

The BEAC Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region was endorsed at the BEAC 14th Session, 29 October 2013, in Tromsø, and will be formally adopted at the BEAC Meeting of Environment Ministers on 4–5 December 2013 in Inari. The plan will be followed up by the BEAC Committee of Senior Officials. The Action Plan includes recommendations for a number of selected measures and projects to be carried out by the working group within the BEAC which give the BEAC an added value compared to the work on climate change going on in other arenas. The measures are proposed for mitigation, adaptation, research, observations, monitoring and modelling, and outreach.

A workshop for the preparation of the Action Plan was arranged in Oslo in March 2012. After the workshop each BEAC WG has elaborated proposals for the Action Plan. The WGE proposed 5 activities of its own and 5 cross-sectoral issues.

Regional climate strategies: An analysis of Regional Climate Strategies in the Barents Region was published in autumn 2012. It is based on the regional climate strategies done in Northern Finland in 2010–2011. The aim of the publication was to assess how national climate targets have been implemented in regional and local strategies and programmes. Further cooperation on this issue will be promoted by organizing a seminar on “Climate Smart Regional Planning — from strategies to practice”, which is planned for 2014.

3. Barents environmental “hot spots”

Subgroup on “Hot Spots” Exclusion (SHE),
CO-Chairs: Riitta Hemmi (Finland), Maria Dronova (Russia)

The Ministers in 2003 set the target to launch environmental measures at all of the hot spots on the Barents Hot Spots List by 2013.

The priorities set by SHE for its work during 2012–2013 were:

- to promote and facilitate the Exclusion Procedure in all five federation subjects and ensure that relevant environmental measures at all the “hot spots” are launched by 2013;
- to decide in consultation with the WGE on a possible revision and updating of the AMAP/NEFCO Hot Spots Report, describing the state of all 42 original environmental “hot spots”;
- to strengthen information activities.

SHE has continued to implement the exclusion procedure adopted by the Ministers in 2010. The focus has been on gathering Screening and Analysis reports from all 39 remaining hot spots (Step 2 of the exclusion procedure), describing measures taken and the current status for each "hot spot". Thirty-one Screening and Analysis reports have been received in 2012–2013. The Regional Hot Spot Exclusion Groups (HEG) in the Russian part of the Barents Region have been responsible for providing these reports.

During 2012–2013, SHE has received 6 proposals from the HEGs for exclusion. A decision to exclude A2 "Arkhangelsk Heat and Power Plant" was made at the WGE meeting in September 2013. Decisions to exclude K1 "Gas emissions from Kondopoga pulp and paper combined mill" and N4 "Handling of mercury containing wastes" were made at the WGE meeting in November 2013.

In the light of the target set by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Foreign and Environment Ministers to launch environmental measures at all of the "hot spots" by 2013, the WGE decided to carry out an assessment of the Barents Hot Spots Report, describing the current state of all 42 original Barents environmental hot spots. The Assessment Report has been prepared by Akvaplan-niva AS, Norway, and the System Development Agency, Russia, within an assignment financed by the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO).

The conclusion of the Assessment Report is that since 2003, certain measures aimed at solving environmental problems or issues associated with the 42 "hot spots" have been launched at 42 out of 42 "hot spots". Those measures were and are of different levels, in terms of: a) character – from elaboration of management plans to modernization of industry or elimination of waste; b) stage of implementation – from launched to completed; and c) scale – in terms of investment, and in terms of target area and environmental effect. The results of the Assessment Report will be reported to the BEAC Meeting of Ministers of the Environment.

A Communication Plan for the SHE Subgroup has been developed in 2013. Development of the Hot Spots Information System website has been on hold, waiting for the finalization of the Hot Spots Assessment Report. A lot of information has been produced by the regions and it should be now agreed with the Russian stakeholders whether its further development is relevant.

4. Cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption

Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption (CPESC), Chair: Emma Nurmi (Finland)

The goal in 2012–2013 was to promote cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption through multilateral and bilateral projects. The aim was also to strengthen cooperation and coordination with other BEAC working groups and working groups under the Barents Regional Council. The activities under the Finnish chairmanship contributed to the implementation of the results of the Rio+20 Conference and to the challenges of the green economy in the Barents Region.

A Conference on Best Environmental Practices in the Mining Sector in the Barents Region was organized in Rovaniemi on 23–25 April 2013. More than 150 experts, operators, authorities and NGO representatives participated in the conference. The purpose of the Conference was to get an overall understanding of the present and future development of the mining sector, increase awareness of the key environmental and social challenges of the mining sector in the Barents Region, present and disseminate knowledge about the best environmental practices in this sector in Barents countries, and promote the exchange of information on assessing and managing environmental and social concerns in the mining sector. In addition to the Conference, a Finnish report on Best Environmental Practices in Metal Ore Mining has been translated into English and Russian, for use in the Barents Region. www.barentsminingconference.fi

An overview of facilities for treatment and destruction of organic hazardous waste in the Barents and Baltic Sea region countries has been published in May 2013. The aim of the report is to present information on technical, operational and legal conditions for a selection of facilities that are granted licenses for environmentally-sound treatment and/or destruction of organic hazardous waste. The report has also been translated into Russian.

A seminar series on environmentally sound consumption and cleaner production training in universities was launched in cooperation with the Joint Working Group on Education and Research (JWGER). During 2013, 4 seminars were arranged at universities and technical institutions in the Russian part of the Barents Region.

5. Nature protection

Subgroup on Nature Protection (NPS), Chair: Anna Kuhmonen (Finland)

The overall goal in 2012–2013 was to strengthen cooperation and coordination in biodiversity and habitat conservation with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity in the Barents Region in the future, bearing in mind the aspects of climate change. The establishment of protected areas is an essential tool for conserving biodiversity.

Promoting a representative and effectively managed Barents Protected Area Network (BPAN) has been the main effort of the NPS. The project is being implemented in all four countries and 13 regions of the Barents Region. A Steering Committee and expert working group with thematic Subgroups are working to promote and analyse the protected area network, along with national and regional authorities and experts. The Programme of Work on Protected Areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been used as a framework. Several workshops, seminars, a conference and working group meetings have been held during the project. More information: www.bpan.fi

The 7th International Contact Forum Meeting on Habitat Conservation (HCF VII) in the Barents Region was held in June 2013 in Bodø, Norway. There were about 50 participants from all of the Barents countries. The main themes of the HCF meeting were habitat conservation, wetlands and coastal areas, protection of boreal forests, geodiversity, implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Barents Protected Area Network project.

Cooperation on developing the Green Belt of Fennoscandia is based on Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2010 between Finland, Russia and Norway. Barents experts organized a few preparation meetings, and the first meetings of the Steering Committee and expert working group were held in autumn 2012 in Kotka, Finland. In addition, many ongoing activities and projects, e.g. related to nature tourism, in the border area are being implemented and these support developing the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. A Conference on the Green Belt of Fennoscandia, an official event of the Year of the Environment of the Russian Federation, was organized in October 2013 in Petrozavodsk, Russia.

The remaining pristine boreal forest plays an important role regarding biodiversity and climate change. The strategy for the conservation of the last old-growth forests in the Barents Region is soon to be finalized. An evaluation report that summarizes the results of several field studies in the Russian part of the Barents Region has been completed, giving recommendations for further follow up on forest conservation in the region. There have also been activities to follow up the GAP analysis project in the Russian part of the Barents Region, as well as a study on the effects of climate change and ecosystem services in the Barents Region.

6. Water issues

Subgroup on Water Issues (SWI), **Chair: Jari Pasanen (Finland)**

The overall goal in 2012–2013 was to strengthen multilateral cooperation in the Barents Region and coordination in water resources management issues in the transboundary fresh water areas. Special priority has been given to water resources management activities in international and national river basins and interactions between water resources and climate change.

Projects have been bilateral or multilateral and a broad range of financing instruments (Interreg IV A Nord €1 million, Ministry of the Environment of Finland, Nordic Council of Ministers, Kolarctic ENPI €4.7 million, Karelia ENPI €250 000) has been used for the project implementation.

The following projects have been carried out in 2012–2013:

- In the project “Forestry impact and water management in Torne International River Basin”, the need for restoration activities in certain rivers has been clarified and ecological inventories have been made according to the EU Water Framework Directive.
- Information has been exchanged between environmental monitoring authorities in Murmansk, Finnmark and Lapland on the EU Water Framework Directive and the Russian water strategy. Seminars and expert meetings have been used as a tool for the project goals.
- In the project “Water Management Initiative in Archangelsk and other Barents regions”, seminars and study tours have been arranged and during these activities water experts in the Barents Region have exchanged experiences on topics relating to surface waters and sustainable urban water systems.
- Mitigation of the harmful effects of climate change, water regulation and contamination have been studied in the Finnish, Norwegian and Russian border area through trilateral cooperation on the Environmental Challenges in the Joint Border Area project. Information will be produced on environmental impacts and adaptation to climate change and other anthropogenic effects on a regional level.

- In the project “Kolarctic Salmon” (“Trilateral cooperation on our common resource the Atlantic salmon in the Barents Region”), management of the shared Atlantic salmon resource in the Barents Region has been developed and enhanced for enabling a sustainable harvesting regime and conservation of the salmon stocks and fishing traditions.
- Construction designs for ground water intake, treatment and pipelines have been developed for two pilot areas in Kaalamo and Ruskeala, located in the Sortavala district, for a project on ground water supply in the Sortavala district.

7. Cooperation with the BEAC WGs

The Working Group of Indigenous Peoples has nominated Ms Anna Prakhova to follow the work of the WGE. She has actively participated in the meetings of the WGE.

In spring 2012 the Chair of the Joint Working Group on Education and Research initiated cooperation between the JWGER and WGE. As a response, the WGE proposed joint activities in the field of cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption (see section 5).

The WGE Chair participated in the 9th Barents Industrial Partnership, organized by the Working Group on Economic Cooperation, in May 2013 in Tromsø and presented the results of the WGE Conference on Best Environmental Practices in the Mining Sector in the Barents Region.

There have been some contacts between the WGE and the Joint Working Group on Youth. In addition, there has been a wish within the WGE to cooperate more closely with the Joint Working Group on Energy. There are relevant joint issues for cooperation with the Barents Forest Sector Task Force in the field of forests and biodiversity, as well as with the Joint Working Group on Culture on cultural and natural heritage issues.

In connection with the development of the Action Plan on Climate Change, several BEAC working groups have been involved. Also the Barents Regional Council and the Regional Working Group on Environment contributed to this work.

8. Cooperation with the other regional councils

There has been a lot of cooperation with some of the regional “sister” organizations in the North. The cooperation has brought practical results and opened up interesting opportunities for enhancing the synergies between the organizations.

The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) has directly contributed to improved water and wastewater services with completed projects in Syktyvkar, Vologda and Arkhangelsk (in the final stages). A similar project is getting started in Petrozavodsk and another is soon to be launched in Murmansk. Future project developments include Petrozavodsk Solid Waste Management and improvement of water/wastewater facilities in the Republic of Karelia. More detailed information can be found at www.ndep.org.

The Arctic Council’s Arctic Contaminants Action Program Working Group has contributed to solving some of the hot spots, especially concerning obsolete pesticides. There are further cooperation possibilities, e.g. regarding dioxins, mercury, black carbon and hazardous wastes.

The Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) has been originally involved in identifying the hot spots in the report in 2003. There were some contacts with the AMAP during the organization of the Conference on Best Environmental Practices in the Mining Sector in the Barents Region. There have been cooperation contacts between the Arctic Council's Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group and the BPAN project. In the future, there could be cooperation possibilities with the Arctic Council, e.g. within the Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic project.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has financed several important WGE projects, namely: Barents Protected Area Network (BPAN), Water Management Initiative in Arkhangelsk, a project on Effects of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem services in Barents Region, and the Conference on Best Environmental Practices in the Mining Sector in the Barents Region.

There has been coordination with the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) on exchanging information on the hot spots processes within the Baltic Sea and Barents regions, as well as on the mining sector and hazardous wastes.

In addition to the regional councils, there are some possibilities for presentation of the results of the Barents environmental cooperation in connection with international and global events. There are plans to present the results of the BPAN project at the World Park Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 2014 in Sydney, and at the 12th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in autumn 2014.

9. Outreach events

Events of the other organizations where the Barents WGE has presented its work or where the other organizations have participated in the WGE events.

- Rio+20, UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, 20–22 June 2012. BEAC WGE cooperation was presented by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment of Finland, Ms Pokka, in a side-event "Northern Lights on Sustainable Development", arranged by the CBSS, 20 June 2012.
- The WGE Chair and SHE Russian Chair introduced the Barents hot spots process at HELCOM's and the Black Sea Commission's Seminar "Monitoring and reducing nutrient loads to the Black Sea" in Istanbul, 31 January–1 February 2013.
- The WGE Chair introduced the Barents hot spots process and status at the meeting of the ACAP Working Group in St. Petersburg, 12–13 February 2013.
- A representative of the HELCOM Secretariat introduced the HELCOM hot spots process and status to the SHE Subgroup on 14–15 February, in Helsinki.
- The NPS Chair introduced the BPAN project at the biennial meeting of the Arctic Council's CAFF Working Group in Yakutsk, 11–14 February 2013.
- The WGE Chair introduced the BPAN project at the Baltic Sea Forum in St. Petersburg, 5–6 April 2013.
- A representative from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat participated in the Barents Habitat Contact Forum Meeting in Bodø, 11–13 June 2013.
- The Manager of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership presented the NDEP projects in the Barents Region at the WGE meeting in Oulu, 4–6 September 2013.
- The ACAP Chair introduced the Barents-relevant ACAP projects at the WGE meeting in Oulu, 4–6 September 2013.
- The "Kolarctic salmon" project has been presented by the partners at annual meetings and scientific seminars, i.e. ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) and NASCO (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization) in 2012 and 2013.



1. Ingrid Lillehagen (NOR), Leena Voutilainen (FIN), Henna Haapala (FIN), Åke Mikaelsson (SWE), Maria Dronova (RUS), WGE meeting in Helsinki, May 2012. Photo: Lotten Sjölander



2. Green Belt of Fennoscandia meeting, September 2012, Kotka, Finland. Photo: Finnish Environment Institute



3. Meeting of the BEAC Working Group on Environment in Kajaani, 24.09.2012, Talvivaara Mine. Photo: Ministry of the Environment of Finland



4. Subgroup on Hot Spots Exclusion and the Regional Hot Spot Exclusion groups met in Moscow, 10.12.2012 at the Ministry of on Natural Resources and Environment. Photo: Henna Haapala



5. Tia Kalske (NOR, Finnmark) and Bente Christiansen (NOR, Finnmark) at Ukonkivi in Inari, 04.09.2012, Meeting of Finnish-Norwegian Transboundary Water Commission. Photo: Henna Haapala



6. Åke Mikaelsson (SWE) and Henna Haapala (FIN) in the train on the way to the Hot Spots meeting in Moscow, 09.12.2012. Photo: Ministry of the Environment of Finland



7. BPAN meeting in Helsinki, 19.03.2013. Photo: Hanna Aho



8. Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment of Finland opened the Conference on Best Environmental Practices in the Mining Sector in the Barents Region, 23.04.2013, Rovaniemi, Finland.
Photo: Ulla Ahonen



9. Henna Haapala (FIN), Nadezhda Maslova (SWE), Åke Mikaelsson (SWE), Tatiana Tiupenko (Komi), Maria Dronova (RUS), Ruslan Butovski (RUS), BEAC WGE meeting in Rovaniemi, 26.04.2013, Ounasvaara.
Photo: Leena Voutilainen



10. Maria Dronova (RUS) and Jan-Petter Hubert-Hansen (NOR) fishing in Bodø, Barents Habitat Contact Forum, 12.06.2013, midnight. Photo: Henna Haapala



11. Tatiana Tiupenko (Komi), Minister Yuri Lisin (Komi) and Larisa Kolokolnikova (Karelia) at the joint meeting of the Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion and Regional Hot Spot Groups in St Petersburg, Finland's Consulate General, 27.06.2013. Photo: Henna Haapala



12. BEAC WGE meeting in Oulu Finland, 04.09.2013, Hailuoto island, Yan Tsykangov (RUS) in front. Photo: Henna Haapala



13. Maria Dronova (RUS), Tero Väisänen (FIN, Oulu) and Åke Mikaelsson (SWE), Banja award, 05.09.2013, Oulu, Finland. Photo: Henna Haapala