



**Report 2008-2009**  
**of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)**  
**Working Group on Environment (WGE) and the**  
**Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE) to the**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment,**  
**Tromsø, 17 February 2010**

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**1. Working Group on Environment – Summary of the activity 2008-2009**

At the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BEAC Environment Ministers, held in Moscow, the Russian Federation 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007, the Ministers endorsed the report from the BEAC Working Group on Environment (WGE) 2005-2007 and adopted a declaration, and the chairmanship in the working group rotated from Russia to Norway. The declaration gave a renewed mandate to the Working Group on Environment for 2008-2009 and directions for further work in the fields of climate change, the Barents Environmental “Hot Spots”<sup>1</sup>, cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption, nature conservation, and water issues.

A priority for the working group has been to identify relevant areas of co-operation in the Barents Region relating to climate change. To pursue this aim, a cross sector conference of climate change was organised September 2009 in Vadsø, Norway. The conference arrived at a set of recommendations on areas of co-operation on mitigation, adaptation, research, and outreach, relevant for the Barents Region, which have been presented to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and now to the Ministers of Environment.

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The Barents Environmental “Hot Spots” refer to 42 key environmental issues, identified by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP) and Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) in the report *Updating of Environmental “Hot Spots” List in the Russian Part of the Barents Region: Proposal for Environmentally Sound Investment Projects* (2003).

The Barents environmental “hot spots” have been another priority. In 2008 an Ad-hoc Task Force on elaboration of procedures and criteria on excluding “hot spots” from the Barents environmental “hot spots” list was set up, chaired by the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) and with appointed members from Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. The Task Force has elaborated a report with recommended criteria and procedures for exclusion to be presented to the ministers.

Following up on the ministers’ decision from 2007, in spring 2008 three subgroups were established under the Working Group on Environment in order to enhance development of joint projects in the fields of cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption, nature protection, and water issues. The subgroups consist of appointed representatives from Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden but are otherwise open for participation from regional representatives and other stakeholders.

Based on the declaration and the mandates from the ministers, the subgroups have developed strategies and action plans/working programmes. A number of projects have been generated and are in various stages of implementation, see more detailed reports below. Projects funding is applied from various sources, such as member countries’ budgets for bilateral co-operation, NEFCO, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and EU programs.

The regional dimension is a feature which gives the Barents co-operation added value and the Working Group on Environment and the Regional Working Group on Environment have worked closely together in this period. However, regional representatives cannot always find financial means to participate in the co-operation. The Working Group and the Regional Working Group will raise this issue with the Barents Council and Regional Council.

The working group has pursued the goal to find synergies with the activity under the bilateral co-operation between the Barents countries, working groups under the Barents co-operation, the Arctic Council, and the Nordic Council of Ministers, especially relating to biodiversity and habitat conservation, reduction of environmentally harmful substances, and climate change.

The Working Group on Environment has under the Norwegian chairmanship held five meetings back-to-back with the Regional Working Group on Environment and the subgroups, Tromsø - April 2008, Pasvik - June 2008, Murmansk - October 2008, Vadsø - March 2009, and Arkhangelsk - October 2009, and one separate meeting in Oslo - January 2010. Some 25-45 representatives from the national and regional level, as well as affiliated organisations have participated in each meeting.

## 2. Regional Working Group on Environment

The Regional Working Group receives its official mandate from the Barents Regional Council, and tasks are also given by the BEAC Environment Ministers. The group has elaborated its own Programme of Action for 2007-2010. All 13 Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) member regions are represented, and a representative of the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples is invited as participant in the group. The Republic of Komi, Russia, chaired the Regional Working Group on Environment until October 2008, when the chairmanship passed to Finnmark County, Norway. Adoption of the Official Mandate, given by the Barents Regional Council took place in the beginning of 2009. There have been project activities in all the prioritised areas in the Action Programme:

*Surface and drinking water issues*; implementing the pre projects on environmentally sustainable small enterprises in the Barents region, project in the framework of flood forecasting and modelling to meet with the challenges of climate change and water laboratory co-operation with the aims of increasing the quality assurance level of the water quality monitoring laboratories in the Barents Region.

*Biodiversity*: Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park co-operation has accomplished certification through the Europarc Federation. Members of the RWGE participated in 5<sup>th</sup> Habitat Contact Forum.

*Sustainable management of natural resources and "hot spots" work*: Member Regions in co-operation with NEFCO have had activities as training seminars on enhancing control and reducing pollution from listed "hot spots" , pre project activities and seminars on the utilisation of natural resources like minerals and mining issues have been implemented by different actors in the co-operation.

The Barents Working Group for Youth has initiated contact with the regional environment group. No joint actions have yet been initiated, but the groups intend to co-operate in the common fields of youth and environment in the future.

## 3. Climate Change

A the co-operation project between the Working Group on Environment and the Nordic Council of Ministers to study the effects of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem goods in the Barents Region was completed in 2009. The same year a follow up project was started to study the future capacity of the protected areas in the Barents Region to fulfil their aims under changing climatic conditions.

With the aim to identify relevant areas of co-operation on climate change in the Barents Region, the Working Group on Environment organised a cross sector conference *Climate change in the Barents Region* 1-3 September 2009 in Vadsø, Norway. Approximately 60 representatives from research institutions, central and regional

management, and non-governmental organisations from Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden participated in the conference. The main themes of the conference were effects of climate change on agriculture, forestry, infrastructure, hydrology, health, and living conditions, as well as adaptation strategies.

Building upon the presentations and panel discussions, as well as the document *Arctic climate change - Policy measures relevant for the Barents Region*, adopted by Committee of Senior Officials of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in 2005, the conference arrived at a set of recommendations on areas of co-operation on mitigation, adaptation, research, and outreach, relevant for the Barents Region. The recommended areas of co-operation concern several of the working groups under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Barents Regional Council. The recommendations were presented to the meeting of Barents Council Ministers in Murmansk October 2009, and are presented the BEAC Environment Ministers. A scientific report from the conference has been published.

#### **4. The Barents Environmental “Hot Spots”**

The work with the 42 Barents environmental “hot spots”, defined in the report *Updating of Environmental “Hot Spots” List in the Russian Part of the Barents Region: Proposal for Environmentally Sound Investment Projects* (2003), has been a particular priority for the WGE in 2008-2009. The Ministers have called for dedicated actions to be initiated towards the final exclusion of all “hot spots” from the list by the year 2013.

NEFCO has provided support to the “hot spot”-process in particular by managing the Barents Hot Spots Facility (BHSF) on behalf of the Governments of Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The BHSF provides grants to finance technical assistance, typically pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, business and financing plans, and environmental impact assessments. By the end of 2009 almost 50 projects and other specific measures have been confirmed for allocations from the facility.

In the period 2008-2009 BHSF has provided grants to finance studies and project preparations related to the waste sector, i. a. resulting in the elaboration of project at the landfill in Petrozavodsk, listed for potential co-financing by the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP). “Hot spot”-related potential NDEP projects include also water and waste water projects in Murmansk, Petrozavodsk, and several smaller communities in Karelia. Another particular area of identified and developed projects concern oil waste issues, i. a. at an oil terminal in Murmansk.

In some “hot spot”-related projects in large-scale heat-and-power production, pulp-and-paper and metallurgical sector, as well as the targeted clean-up of the Kola Bay, progress has fallen short of expectations. However, commercial investments in the industrial sector have in many cases improved the environmental situation.

The regional authorities in the Republics of Karelia (2007) and Komi (2008) have established regional working groups to co-ordinate the work on the “hot spots”. In October 2008 in order to promote regional activity regarding the “hot spots”, the Working Group on Environment in co-operation with The Committee of Natural Recourses and Environmental Protection in the Murmansk Region arranged a seminar on “hot spots” and cleaner production for “hot spot”-owners, enterprises, regional authorities and other interested parties. Subsequently a regional working group was set up in Murmansk. A similar seminar was conducted in Arkhangelsk in October 2009.

In 2007 the Ministers decided to set up an Ad-hoc Task Force on elaboration of procedures and criteria on excluding “hot spots” from the list. Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden have appointed representatives to the Task Force, which is chaired by NEFCO. The Task Force started up in March 2009 and has since worked to produce a report with recommended criteria and procedures for exclusion. The report and recommendations are approved by the working group and presented to the Ministers.

With proper criteria and procedures adopted, some “hot spots” may be primarily ready for exclusion. These may include “K10” concerning stocks of obsolete pesticides in Karelia. In the summer of 2008, as a result of a Finnish-Russian project 12 tonnes of obsolete pesticides from Karelia were exported to Finland and destroyed in an environmentally sound manner at Ekokem high temperature destruction facility in Riihimäki.

In 2007 the Ministers also approved a concept to create a web-based information system to inform the public and decision makers about the Barents “hot spots” as well as to enhance the process of solving the connected environmental issues. The system will be a tool for the practical implementation of the criteria and procedure for exclusion of “hot spots” from the list, and serve as a platform for sharing experience and lessons learnt. A preliminary model for the information system has been worked out that will be connected to the website of the Barents co-operation ([www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st)). Financial support for developing and maintaining the system has been allocated from the Barents Hot Spots Facility. The goal is to have the system running by the end of 2010.

## **5. Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption**

The Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption received a mandate from the Ministers to work with projects on environmental “hot spots”, best available techniques (BAT), implementation of the cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption strategy, projects on reduction of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, cleaner production, energy efficiency and sustainable consumption, and prevention and reduction of the pollution of environment by dangerous and harmful substances.

In the reporting period the Subgroup has been chaired by the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority (from 2010, the Climate and Pollution Agency). Based on the Ministers' declaration and mandate the subgroup started its work by developing a working programme and a list of priority projects to implement the mandate and help structure the work of the subgroup. The priority list contains 16 projects. The subgroup has finalized 11 out of the 16 projects and will continue to follow up the projects that are not completed yet. The list of priority projects has been updated regularly and gives an overview of the subgroup activities.

The finalized projects include i. a. 3 Cleaner Production training programmes for engineers in industrial and municipal companies (Vorkuta, Nyandoma, Petrozavodsk), sharing of information between universities and technical colleges in the Barents region about including Cleaner Production in the curricula, seminars on Sustainable Consumption and Production, engaging North West Russia in the work of the Marrakech Process and the global work to develop a 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, as well as arranging the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Roundtable in Yasnaya Polyana on sustainable lifestyles and cleaner production.

A project documentation template has been developed in order to provide a fixed format for the essential project information, including the objectives, participants, roles and responsibilities, activities, timeframe, deadlines, budget and funding, of the projects. The final report of the project is also included, giving the whole history of the project comprised in one document.

The Cleaner Production Policy Document, developed for the period 2003-2005, has been revised and developed into a Strategy Document for Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption in a life cycle perspective.

The subgroup has also focused on the Barents environmental "hot spots" and supported the work of the Task Force on creating criteria for exclusion of "hot spots" from the list.

In order to share knowledge on Best Available Techniques in the mining sector, the subgroup has discussed a project on permit granting for an iron mine in Pajala, Sweden, near the border to Finland. Sweden has invited Russian, Finnish and Norwegian authorities, enterprises and other stakeholders to participate in the project.

The subgroup has taken steps to initiate co-operation with the re-established Barents Working Group on Energy. Furthermore, ideas for project co-operation with the Arctic Contaminants Action Program (ACAP) under the Arctic Council have been presented. The subgroup will continue to seek co-operation and synergies with these working groups.

The Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) has taken active part in the work of the subgroup and supports its aims. NEFCO has also carried out several projects aiming at cleaner production and sustainable development mainly by providing financial support from its Cleaner Production and Energy Savings Credit Facility. One such project consisted in the reconstruction of a sewage water treatment system at a plywood factory in the Komi Republic. Moreover, energy savings measures have been conducted in the Republic of Karelia and the Arkhangelsk Oblast, leading to an average decrease of energy consumption by 44%.

## **6. Subgroup on Nature Protection**

The Subgroup on Nature Protection received a mandate from the Barents Environmental Ministers to work with projects on biodiversity conservation, ecosystem approach, protected areas, conservation of natural and cultural heritage sites, co-operation with the Working Group on Economic Co-operation on sustainable forestry management and forests protection, projects on increase of absorption and deposition of greenhouse gases by natural ecosystems and other projects on mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The Subgroup on Nature Protection has been chaired by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management. The Subgroup has had five meetings back to back with the Working Group on Environment, as well as several project meetings. As requested by the Working Group on Environment a strategy and action plan was developed and endorsed June 2008. Based on identified project areas, a list of priority projects was made. The following projects have been executed, finalized or initiated in 2008-2009:

The International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region (HCF), established in 1999, was formally included as an activity in the Subgroup on Nature Protection in 2008. In October 2008 the 5<sup>th</sup> HCF meeting was held in Umeå, Sweden. Main topics were conservation of forest biodiversity, management and networks of protected areas, and protection and sustainable use of wetlands, and climate change and biodiversity. The meeting was compact and successful with about 50 participants. The resolution and proceedings from the meeting have been widely distributed. The 6<sup>th</sup> Habitat Contact Forum meeting will take place in Arkhangelsk in June 2010 in co-operation with the Arkhangelsk Regional Administration. Main topics will be conservation of wetlands, forests, and coastal ecosystems, and synergy of natural and spiritual values.

In 2009 the project “Development of management tools and tourism in the National Park “Yugyd Va” in the Republic of Komi was finalized. “Yugyd Va” is the largest protected area in Europe and part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “Virgin Forests of Komi”. The project yielded good results, among them the development and release of a series of information material about the park in the Russian, English and Komi

languages, including a photo album, brochures about the rivers of the National Park, maps for tourists and a web-site.

A conference on management of natural and mixed World Heritage sites in the Barents Region was successfully convened in Syktyvkar, The Republic of Komi, in May 2009. The resolution from the conference was forwarded to UNESCO and IUCN. Creating a partnership between the World Heritage Sites Laponia in Sweden and the Komi Virgin Forest in Russia is being considered. Proceedings from the conference are available.

The issue of forest conservation has been given much attention. In December 2007 the conference “The last large intact forests in Northwest Russia – protection and use” was held in Steinkjer, Norway. The conference proceedings have been widely distributed and used. In August 2009 Nordic and Russian experts took part in the expedition to Pyoza River in East Arkhangelsk Oblast to study the nature values of this ecosystem. The experts recommend that the Pyoza River area should receive status as protected area. The resolution has been distributed by the Institute of Northern Environmental Problems in Arkhangelsk to regional stakeholders and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology.

Establishment of a representative network of protected areas - Barents Protected Area Network (BPAN) is a key project. Additional networks under the BPAN-umbrella are being considered, such as networks between botanical gardens, sacred sites, and geological sites. An action plan for the project is in preparation, including application for project funding to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. An application has been sent to the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The subgroup has discussed and contributed to the Memorandum of Understanding between Russia, Norway and Finland aimed at promoting co-operation on developing of the protected areas along the “Green Belt of Fennoscandia”. The agreement has been prepared for signing in at the Meeting of the Ministers of Environment in February 2010. Applications to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument for projects to develop the “Green Belt of Fennoscandia” are being prepared. The 4th Pan European Green Belt Meeting is planned to be held in Northern Finland, fall 2010.

A project on co-operation between protected areas on the border between Finland, Norway and Sweden in the Tretriksørøysa area was initiated in 2008. In 2010 discussions will continue on how to utilise the experience from the Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park co-operation concerning establishment and management of transboundary protected areas and development of ecotourism.

## **7. Subgroup on Water Issues**

The subgroup was given the mandate by the Barents Environmental Ministers in Moscow 2007 to work with projects on sustainable management of water resources and water use, transboundary water bodies, improvement of drinking water quality, studies



of correlation of climate change and condition of water bodies and wetlands, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, as well as projects on prevention and reduction of the pollution of water bodies and marine environment from land based sources.

The Subgroup on Water Issues has been chaired by the County Governor of Finnmark. The subgroup has conducted five meetings back to back with the Working Group on Environment in 2008-2009. The subgroup has worked out a Strategy and Action Plan document, updated and revised a list of successfully completed water related projects in the Barents Region, and compiled a list of new projects on water topics to be conducted in the reporting period and in the future.

Issues discussed in the reporting period include: state of natural waters in the Barents Region, pollution by heavy metals and persistent organic pollutants due to industrial emissions and long transported pollutants to the Arctic, insufficient purification of municipal waste waters and other drinking water sources, UNECE/WHO Protocol on Water and Health, harmonising monitoring and research methodology, mining issues in the Barents Region, climate change and flooding issues, and transboundary water management. Information has been provided about work on water issues in the EU-Russia Environmental Dialogue. Results and status on new and ongoing water projects have been disseminated at the subgroup meetings.

Ongoing projects in the subgroup include: implementation of groundwater based, small- and medium-scale drinking water projects in the Russian Barents, water laboratory co-operation with the aims of increasing the quality assurance level of the water quality monitoring laboratories and methods in the Barents Region, project on flood forecasting and modelling to meet with the challenges of climate change, pre-project on knowledge and competence exchange in water management sector and pre-project study on development of sewage systems.

The water subgroup has initiated contact with the other two subgroups under the Working Group on Environment in order to identify joint areas of interest and new project ideas. Mining issues, prevention and reduction of pollution and contamination of water resources, mitigation and adaption to climate change, and wetland issues have been identified as possible joint areas between the three subgroups.

The Subgroup on Water Issues has followed closely water related activities in the Regional Working Group on Environment, in particular the regional initiative on implementing the pre-project on environmentally sustainable small enterprises in the Barents region.