



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS

ANNUAL REPORT

Name of the Working Group: (Joint) Working Group on Tourism (WGT)

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: Norway (Troms and Finnmark)

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

Due to the continued travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, plans to hold physical meetings during the Norwegian Chairmanship period have been replaced with limited digital interaction. The working group has managed to keep the constructive Barents dialogue. The priorities of the Norwegian Chairmanship continued to be to meet and remain active in information-sharing throughout the Chairmanship period. The national and the regional WGs went through the merger process in the sectors of the Environment, Economic Cooperation and Transport, as decided by the BEAC CSO. The (Joint) Working Group on Tourism remained to be active during 2021 by having regular digital meetings aiming at updating the Mandate for the next period and launching the Update of the Barents Tourism Action Plan.

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

In 2021 the group held three Working Group meetings in January, September, and November and conducted several workshops and questionnaires digitally with good attendance from all four Barents countries. In the meetings national and regional representative reported on the ongoing projects and developments in tourism industry in their respective countries and regions. In addition, current and incoming Chairs had several internal online meetings between the WG meetings and attended several thematic webinars and meetings, organized by the Norwegian and Västerbotten chairmanships. (J)WGT Chair conducted several questionnaires to better plan the meetings aiming at updating the Mandate and Tourism Action Plan. As a result, the new Mandate, covering the period of 2022-2025, was updated and approved by the (J)WGT. The Update of the Tourism Action Plan, initiated in 2021, will be carried out and finalized during the Finnish Presidency.

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

Conference on Development of Car Tourism in North-West Russia was held in Arkhangelsk region on 15 June in hybrid format.

International Seminar on Tourism “Spirit of Inari” was held on 12 November in hybrid format.

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

The main outcome for the (J)WGT in 2021 was to define the priorities and the new mandate of the Working Group for the next period. After having thorough discussions, the group decided to remain a joint one with the same composition, representing both national and regional level. NB: all Barents Working Groups in the future will be merged and the title of the Joint Working Group will be replaced by the Working Group in all sectors of the Barents Cooperation. The WG’s new webpage may be found on the new BEAC website www.barents-council.org

The Working Group on Tourism also held several workshops to provide input to the Action Plan on Climate Change (APCC) for the Barents Cooperation. The input was submitted in time and was included in the final version of the APCC. [The document](#) was adopted during the BEAC Ministerial meeting in Tromsø in October.

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

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

The digital meetings seem to work smoothly, providing an opportunity for a wider participation in the Working Groups activities. It is essential to have a continued dialogue within the group outside of the meetings, especially to secure the smooth transition between the chairmanships. The group will continue to find a common ground and interesting topics for the meetings during the Finnish Presidency. The proposed priorities are within extended cooperation with other Working Groups for instance in sustainable tourism and circular economy.

7. Other