



BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL
BARENTS REGIONAL COUNCIL

Mandate for Working Group on Tourism (WGT) 2022 – 2025

1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism is a major economic activity in the Barents Region with wide-ranging impact on economic growth, employment, and social development. It will strengthen cross border human contacts and can be a powerful tool in fighting economic decline and unemployment. Nevertheless, the tourism sector so far north faces a series of challenges.

The main challenges are:

- ✚ **economic competitiveness** - recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, seasonality, regulatory and administrative burdens, difficulty of finding and keeping skilled staff, promoting entrepreneurship etc.
- ✚ **technological and digital development** – keeping up to date with digital developments caused by the globalisation of information and advances in technology (digital tools for booking holidays, social media providing advice on tourism services, etc.)
- ✚ **markets and competition** - growing demand for customised experiences, new products, growing competition from other EU destinations (place identity)
- ✚ **accessibility** - transportation infrastructure and public transportation
- ✚ **security and safety** - environmental, political, social and health security; safety of food and accommodation; and socio-cultural sustainability threat

The attractive but fragile arctic environment, natural phenomena and cultural diversity are the key factors that attract tourists to the Barents region. The tourism business needs to be developed in a sustainable way; ecological, economic, social, cultural and political, and therefore maintain these tourism resources. Sustainability is especially important when facing the challenges caused by climate change, which can affect as well promote tourism industry considerably.

Major improvements are needed related to the availability of good cross border transportation capacities. In that sense visa handling procedures between Russia and Nordic countries need improvements. Today's and tomorrow's visitors require fast and flexible solutions.

2. Development goals in cooperation

The purpose of the Working Group on Tourism (WGT) is to address these challenges with co-operation, good planning and promoting solid actions. It will aim to maintain the Barents Region as a leading, sustainable Arctic Tourism Destination while maximizing the industry's contribution to growth and employment and promoting cooperation between the BEAC member countries, particularly through the exchange of good practices and excellent working plans. The WGT's competence in tourism supports the implementation of the development actions in member countries and helps to coordinate common objectives. Therefore, the WGT has developed the "Barents Tourism Action Plan", based on extensive research, background material and expert consultations. It gives an overview of needs and expectations of tourism enterprises related to development and communication of joint goals and actions to be influenced by the Group.

The development goals to which the WGT tries to affect, will be:

1. stimulating competitiveness of the Barents tourism/visitor sector
2. inspiring to innovate more in tourism products, travel concepts and services on offer
3. enhancing tourism quality, sustainability, skills and education, and use of digital solutions
4. influence to increase better cross border mobility
5. increasing sustainable tourism demand, from within the EU and beyond, by delivering experiences that meet the client's expectations and motivations for travelling.
6. working with future scenarios for tourism industry in the Barents region

3. Method of Work

The WGT meets at least twice a year. If possible, meetings are connected to international tourism seminars in the Barents region. All communications between group members are secured through e-mail and other online correspondence or mobile phone calls. Meetings can also be held digitally.

The first note about the up-coming meetings should be made asap and no later than 30 days prior to meeting. The official agenda must be sent out at least two weeks before the meeting.

The Working Group chooses working methods appropriate to the questions raised, projects proposed or already financed. It may include appointing consultative expert groups, task forces, organizing conferences or seminars, involving educational and scientific institutions, cultural and non-governmental organizations etc. if deemed necessary.

Co-operation and joint meetings with other working Groups are arranged in order to explore points of common interest.

The methods of work will be:

1. **Raising awareness** of the tourism and tourism industry in the BEAC
2. **Communicating the challenges** of the tourism in the region on a national, BEAC and EU level
3. **Exchanging best practices**
4. **Initiating the cross-border co-operation** in the region, e.g., joint projects
5. **Making statements and recommendations** for the political decision making
6. **Informing and influencing** the member's background organizations in order to reach common goals

4. Decision-making

All decisions of the BEAC and its subsidiary bodies shall be taken by a consensus of all the members. If a WGT meeting is held without the attendance of all members, decisions may be taken by a consensus of all the members present. If the decision concerns a member that is not present at the meeting, the decision is subject to any objection in writing by the absent member within 30 days after receiving a report containing the decision.

5. Language

The language of the WGT is English

6. Membership

The BWGT has appointed members on national (federal) and region levels. They are selected by public servants on relevant levels in the four member states. All members work on tourism related issues in their daily work. Regional, national or international organizations and specialists may be represented in the Working Group upon invitation. The number of permanent members is a result of how many counties there are in the member countries. Exception is the region of Northern Norway (the counties of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark) who has appointed the official Tourism organization, Northern Norway Tourism Board, to represent them.

Representative of Working Group of Indigenous Peoples (WGIP) also takes part in the group.

7. Chairmanship

The chairmanship shall follow the rotation of the BEAC and the BRC with a central government representative and a representative of a regional authority or administrative entity working together.

8. Financing

All travel costs are covered by the individual members and their background organizations. Meeting rooms and facilities are normally paid by the hosting member.

9. External Communications

The WGT communicate with the IBS on regular bases, also between the meetings, by e-mail and mobile phone. The Chair of the group takes part in the CSO meetings upon invitations. (Also check number 3: Method of work)

10. Reporting

Reporting is documented through minutes from each meeting. Annual report is written by the end of December.

11. Duration

Duration of the mandate is from 2022 to 2025.

12. Amendments and review

The mandate will be reviewed every four years.

13. Other

This mandate has been adopted by the WGT in November 2021 and approved by the CSO in February 2022.