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## **Relocating to Kirkenes Handbook**

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## 1. THE INTERNATIONAL BARENTS SECRETARIAT

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the International Barents Secretariat (IBS) in Kirkenes, Norway. We hope that this introduction and other information given in this Handbook will be of use to you during your stay in Kirkenes.

### 1.2. PURPOSE AND TASKS OF THE SECRETARIAT

The Agreement on the Establishment of the International Barents Secretariat was signed at the 11th BEAC Ministerial session in Rovaniemi on 15 November 2007 in order to make the Barents cooperation more coherent and efficient. The purpose of the Secretariat is to provide administrative, informational and technical support for the multilaterally coordinated activities within the framework of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council and to serve thus both the governmental and regional levels of the Barents cooperation. One of the tasks of the Secretariat is to ensure the continuity of operational work of the Barents structures where the governmental and regional chairmanships are rotating biennially.

Detailed description of the organization and tasks of the Barents cooperation can be found on our website [www.barents-council.org](http://www.barents-council.org).

The IBS has six staff members. A list of the staff, their responsibilities and their contact information is available on the abovementioned web site.

These are the founding documents of the Secretariat:

- Agreement on the Establishment of an International Barents Secretariat ([Link](#))
- The Terms of Reference of the IBS ([Link](#))
- Host country Agreement between the Kingdom of Norway and IBS ([Link](#))

## 2. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 WORKING HOURS

Office working hours are generally from Monday to Friday from 08:00 – 16:00.

### 2.2 WORKING LANGUAGE

The working language of the IBS is English.

### 2.3 INCOMING AND OUTGOING MAIL/FAX/E-MAIL - TELEPHONES

Every employee will get his/her own E-mail account ([firstname@barents-council.org](mailto:firstname@barents-council.org)), PC and telephone.

### 2.4 ARRIVAL TO KIRKENES

In March 2020 travel restrictions related to Covid-19 pandemic were introduced at all national borders in the Barents region. Some categories including employees and students were still allowed to enter Norway following certain entry rules. Check the latest updates on the Entry quarantine and rules upon

arrival in Norway here: <https://www.fhi.no/en/op/novel-coronavirus-facts-advice/facts-and-general-advice/entry-quarantine-travel-covid19/>

## 2.5 ACCOMMODATION

In the beginning of your stay and if needed, employees may use the premises allocated to the interns of IBS. The premises provides an own bedded room in a student house with access to wi-fi. The accommodation includes bed sheets, pillows and blankets, bathroom (shared), washing machine, iron and kitchen with kitchenware and refrigerator. You are supposed to rent a flat/room at your own expense for the duration of your contract with the IBS.

## 2.6 RENTING AN APARTMENT

In Kirkenes there are many offers for renting apartments for incoming residents. Adverts may be found either on social media or on the websites of the real estate agents. You might get a tip from the office staff. Investing in the apartment is also an option when you are staying a longer period. For employees of IBS, the IBS will assist in search for a suitable apartment. There is a Facebook group with regard to renting an apartment in Kirkenes: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Tilleieonskesleidkirkenes> (Norwegian only), as well as an online marketplace: [https://www.finn.no/realestate/lettings/search.html?location=1.22054.20455&sort=PUBLISHED\\_DESC](https://www.finn.no/realestate/lettings/search.html?location=1.22054.20455&sort=PUBLISHED_DESC)

## 2.7 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Kirkenes is well connected by direct daily flights with Oslo (SAS, Norwegian) and with many smaller airports in Northern Norway (Widerøe). Kirkenes is also a turn-around stop for the Hurtigruten coastal cruiser. There used to be a daily bus shuttle between Murmansk and Kirkenes, especially popular on weekends among shoppers. Snelandia bus company is providing transport services both inside the city and connects Kirkenes with other settlements and cities in Finnmark. Here are some useful links:

- <https://avinor.no/>
- <https://www.hurtigruten.no/>
- <https://snelandia.no/>
- <http://www.kirkenestaxi.no/>

## 2.8 HEALTH SERVICES

There is a recently built regional hospital in Kirkenes. A health care centre is located inside the Amfi shopping centre (just two blocks away from the office). On the ground floor of the same shopping centre there is a pharmacy. Behind the Amfi one can find a drop-in Covid-19 testing station open on weekdays. There are several dentists in town.

To book an appointment with a doctor/nurse please visit the website of the health care centre: <http://www.kirkenes-legesenter.no/>

## 2.9 BANKING

There is only one bank office physically located in Kirkenes (Sparebank1). Please note that opening a bank account in Norway takes time for a foreigner but the IBS will assist you. It is possible to use the most common debit/credit cards as a payment method in many shops in Norway. Upon agreement in the beginning of your stay salary and remuneration of travel costs can be paid on your existing bank account in your home country.

## 2.10 TAX

Salaries of the employees at the IBS are subject to national taxation in Norway. However, some exceptions are applied to foreign nationals, who have one of the positions of the Permanent Staff (about exemptions from taxes and duties pls. read Article 10 of the Host Country Agreement [link](#)). The Permanent Staff of the IBS is also entitled to use the ID and petrol cards, issued by the Norwegian MFA. IBS will assist you in getting the tax card from the local tax office.

## 2.11 SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN

It is possible to place your child(ren) in one of the municipal kindergartens and schools in Kirkenes, after being admitted. Pls. check the availability of such place prior to your child's arrival to Kirkenes. You may get advice from the experienced office staff. The list of kindergartens in Sør-Varanger municipality can be found here: <https://www.sor-varanger.kommune.no/kirkenes-barnehage.407785.no.html> IBS will provide assistance in obtaining further information regarding schooling and kindergarten.

## 2.12 KIRKENES – When you have some time off

Kirkenes is a small city with approximately 3 600 inhabitants and is the administrative center of the Sør-Varanger municipality. The Sør-Varanger municipality has approx. 10 000 inhabitants. A map of Kirkenes can be easily found at <http://maps.google.com/>.

What can I see and do in Kirkenes?

Some general information in English about Kirkenes and the surroundings can be found at various web pages, for example:

- Visit Kirkenes <https://www.visitkirkenes.no/>
- TripAdvisor [https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attractions-g227953-Activities-Kirkenes\\_Sor\\_Varanger\\_Municipality\\_Finmark\\_Northern\\_Norway.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attractions-g227953-Activities-Kirkenes_Sor_Varanger_Municipality_Finmark_Northern_Norway.html)

The surrounding nature (for fishing, hunting, hiking, skiing etc.) is highly appreciated by the people in the Kirkenes area. You may be interested in joining one of the pedestrian tours, organized by a local Turlag association:

- Sør-Varanger Turlag: <https://sor-varanger.dnt.no/>

There are also other sights and activities to take part in for a visitor, like:

Museums:

- The Borderland Museum, Kirkenes (information in Norwegian) <http://www.varangermuseum.no/besok-oss/besokssteder/grenselandmuseet/>
- Skolt Sami Museum in Neiden: <http://www.skoltesamismuseum.no/>
- Visitor Centre at Øvre Pasvik National park in Svanvik: <https://pasvik.no/elementor-1408/>

If you are interested in or want to take part in typical tourist activities, you can check out some of these providers:

- Barents Safari  
<http://www.barentssafari.no/en/home/>
- Kirkenes Snow Hotel  
<https://no.snowhotelkirkenes.com/>
- Pasvikturist AS, Kirkenes  
<http://www.pasvikturist.no/english/home/>

Shopping:

- Amfi Kirkenes  
<http://www.amfi.no/kjopesentre/amfi-kirkenes/>
- Kirkenes Handelspark  
<https://www.facebook.com/Kirkenes-handelspark-1475605376095887/?rf=700216033397508>

On weekends many border residents would go shopping over the border – either in Nikel/Zapolyarny on the Russian side or in Näätämö on the Finnish side. Both destinations are within one hour driving time from Kirkenes. NB: possibility of crossing the borders is subject to valid restrictions related to e.g. Covid-19 regulations! Before travelling across national borders, please confer with your supervisor and check the latest updates on the existing rules in Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia.

Swimming and gym:

- The employees will have free access to gym and swimming pool.

Culture and social life:

- There is a centrally located Library with large collections of international literature: <https://sorvarangerbibliotek.no/>
- Local Film club organizes each autumn/spring film screenings at the local Aurora cinema: <http://www.sorvarangerfilmklubb.no/>
- Many exhibitions and cultural events are held at the Terminal B: <http://www.pikene.no/>
- The awarded Samovar Theatre: <https://www.samovarteateret.com/>
- Norwegian-Finnish Society: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/255486484596069>
- Russians in Kirkenes: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2459994157550273>

If you are interested in learning Norwegian, the municipality offer courses:

<http://www.kirkeneskompetansesenter.no/norwegian-language-courses-for-adult-immigrants.4779373-157248.html>

Of course, the IBS staff will also be happy to inform you about activities and things to see and do.

## 2.13 MISCELLANEOUS

There is no dress code at the Secretariat, only a general rule of having a tidy orderly appearance.

Lunch is not provided at the Secretariat.