



**Forest Sector Task Force
Barents Euro-Arctic Council/Working Group on Economic Cooperation**

Progress report to the Committee of Senior Officials of Barents Euro-Arctic Council on activities undertaken by the Forest Sector Task Force during year 2003

Work plan for year 2004 will be presented by the Norwegian chairmanship



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Background

Barents Euro-Arctic Council/Working Group on Economic Cooperation (BEAC/ WGEC) at its meeting on 26 November 1999 decided to establish an interim Forest Sector Task Force based on the recommendations of the expert seminar, held in Petrozavodsk 12-13 October 1999 of Barents Region Forest Sector Initiative. The interim Task Force made a proposal for a work plan, which was approved by the Committee of Senior Officials and Ministerial Meeting of the BEAC in March 2000.

General objective for the Barents Euro-Arctic Forest Sector Task Force is to create necessary conditions for development of forestry, environmental care and wood based industries through co-operation, mutual concrete actions and projects and programmes within the forestry sector.

The task force has established three networks

1. Network for assessing logistic chain and trade of timber and other wood products (lead-country Norway)
2. Network concerning utilisation of forest resources and wood-based energy (lead-countries Russia and Finland)
3. Network for co-operation and collaboration between forest authorities (lead-country Sweden)

A framework document, Forest Sector Programme for the Northern Dimension, was presented in March 2001.

Activities during year 2003

Core members of the Barents Sector Forest Task Force (BSFTF) has been from Sweden Messrs. Bert-Åke Näslund, Mr. Leif Hemberg, Clas Fries, Ms. Malin Gunnarsson, Finland Messrs. Paavo Pelkonen, Jukka Eronen, Norway Mr. Kåre Venn, Mr Bernt-Håvard Öyen (since October) and Russian Federation Mr. Igor Korolev.



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The chairmanship of the task force was handed over from Sweden (Mr. Bert-Åke Näslund) to Norway (Mr. Bernt-Håvard Öien) in November 2003. The secretarial responsibility was transferred from Sweden to Norway at the same time.

BFSTF has in main parts fulfilled their Action Plan 2003 approved by WGEC. BFSTF has been active on the following issues during 2003:

Forest conference

The task force arranged a two-day forest conference "Partnership for Responsible and Sustainable Forestry in North-eastern Europe" in St Petersburg, 15-16 September. In total 57 participants from eight countries.

Network meetings

A meeting in network II concerning utilizing of forest resources and wood-based energy was held in Joensuu in January, with about 20 participants from Finland, Russia and Sweden. Network I and III has not held any meetings during year 2003.

Development of a Model Forest project

During 2003 the task force has focused its work on developing a model forest network in the Barents region. Model forests have proved to be a efficient tool when developing forest and forestry issues with broad participation from different stakeholders. Representatives for the task force has discussed organization and content in a model forest project with Russian authorities and forest enterprises in Archangelsk and Murmansk oblasts. This initiative is line with activities outlined in the Northern Dimension Action Plan 2004 – 2008. Work for achieving funding for the project from the European Union's Structural Funds with co-financing from primarily Finnish and Swedish authorities is ongoing.

Northern Dimension

BFSTF has contributed to the improvement of the role of forestry in the plans of EU for the northern European region. By the support of WGEC and its former chairman, Mr. Persson, paragraphs on forestry were included in the second Northern Dimension Action Plan, which was approved by the Commission in mid October.

Co-operation with the Baltic 21 Forestry Sector and the CBSS program

BFSTF has been is co-operating with Baltic 21 Forestry Sector mainly through the Swedish chairman of BFSTF being active in Baltic 21.

Meetings

12 February in St Petersburg
16 September in St Petersburg
17 December in Oslo



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The task force has also participated and reported at WGEC meetings in St Petersburg (13-14 February), in Kiruna (6 May), in Luleå (3 September) and in Bodö (25 November).