

# **THE BARENTS PROGRAMME**

**2004-2006**

(VERSION 4)

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## 1.0 Introduction

In line with the visions of the Northern Dimension, the Barents Region is, with its cultural multiplicity, a portal of possibilities for researchers, entrepreneurs, pioneers and explorers. The Northern Sea Route and the short cut to Asia represent even in the 21st century a challenge and a vision for Europe and the Barents cooperation

In this peripheral part of Europe the population has survived even under harsh climatic conditions, while borders were sometimes unclear during great political change. For a period of 700 years Finland was a part of Sweden. The union between Sweden and Norway lasted 90 years. Finland remained under Russian government for 108 years.

This is a large region with a population of more than 6 million. The size of the region is equal to Germany, France, Portugal and Spain combined and amounts to 1,75 million square kilometres, where 75% of the area and the population are Russian. Several indigenous groups live in the region: Sami, Nenets, Veps and Komi.

The nature is unique and the environment vulnerable. The region combines coastal and huge tundra areas in the north and large forest regions in the south. Unique and varied natural resources such as biotopes, forest, fish, minerals, oil and gas represent huge possibilities and challenges. Most of the northern territories were colonised and industrialised in the 19th century, which became a predominant reason why the north-south dimension still dominates much of the national infrastructure, communications, administration and economy.

## 2.0 Goals and development strategy

### 2.1 Goals

In the co-operation protocol of January 1993, the Regional Council indicated the main goal for the co-operation. The goals are characterized by a long perspective:

- Ensure a peaceful and stable development of the region
- Consolidate and further develop cultural ties among peoples of the region
- Encourage the establishment of new and expansion of existing bilateral and multilateral relations in the region
- Lay the foundation for an environmentally sustainable economic and social development in the region, with emphasis on an active and goal-orientated management of natural resources
- Contribute to a development that takes into consideration the interests of the indigenous people and arrange for an active participation from their side.

These goals are carried on during the programme period 2004-2006.

### 2.2 Strategy

The strategic choices made by the Regional Council regarding fields of contribution and projects will be based on concrete proposals from the Russian side and the common priorities made by the council. The co-operation will emphasise support of democratic and market economy reforms with ongoing development on the Russian side. The Regional Council's specific priorities will be included in a separate annual working plan.

The priorities that are set at the central level of the BEAC will be included in the decisions of the Regional Council.

The Regional Council decides which main strategic directions should be followed to obtain the chosen goals within the Barents Programme 2004-2006. The Regional Council will underline the necessity that the projects are anchored at a level where the population's engagement is taken care of. The following is valid for the Barents Programme:

- A fundamental strategy to influence other programmes in the region and co-operate with them to achieve a positive community development, especially in the Russian part of the Barents Region.
- Stimulate broad participation and variety.
- Engagement shall be according to demand, and projects shall be securely anchored at the receiving level that will contribute actively during the implementation.
- Engagement at the commercial level shall lead to development of networks and to stable and acceptable conditions for commercial activity.
- The engagements shall be co-ordinated between the different programmes.
- The Regional Council takes an active part – the development of annual working plans.
- Contribute to engagements/initiatives in organisations outside the established "Barents Structure".
- Active co-ordination of contributions with evaluation of effects.
- Co-ordination with other programmes, organisations and actors.

Co-ordination implies among other things that parts of the community development with less support from other programmes should have higher priority in the Barents Programme to ensure a balanced development.

It is extremely important that the regional Barents Programme, and work performed within its mandate, to the largest possible extent be co-ordinated and harmonised with efforts within:

- Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) / Committee of Senior Officials (CSO)
- Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)
- Nordic Council of Ministers
- Arctic Council
- Northern Dimension
- New Neighbourhood
- TACIS
- Interreg

In addition, a number of national and international funds will be used to solve specific tasks. Many of these are especially suitable for bilateral projects.

It is important to co-ordinate engagements already at the planning stage and through this to contribute to broader participation and responsibility.

### **2.3 Role and responsibility distribution**

The development in the region should happen on the regions' own premises and it presupposes that the regional actors receive increased rights and greater influence in the development process. Through the Barents Programme, the Regional Council declares its priorities and states conditions for how the co-operation shall be formed and adopts the programme. The Regional Committee has the responsibility for programme development and implementation. The secretariat supports the Regional Committee by collecting and editing supporting material for the programme. Together with the secretariat of the BEAC or county secretariat and associated working groups, the secretariat of the RC has the responsibility to oversee that the programme is being executed. The Regional Committee is responsible to co-ordinate the collective administrative resources. The counties appropriate the necessary

resources for this task. Principle questions discussed at the central level are promoted through the Regional Council. Regional participation in the central working groups is a prerequisite. The Regional Council meets during the meeting of ministers within BEAC and co-ordinates priorities of the Barents Programme. Central programmes are submitted to the regional level.

During the programme period 2004-2006 one ought, for practical reasons, to consider the necessity for a secretarial function to take care of many economic tasks, as well as tasks of co-ordinating, clarifying and operative character that the Regional Council, the Regional Committee and the working groups encounter.

The distribution of roles between the regional and central working groups should be clearly defined. One ought to endeavour to utilise organisations and organs already present in the region to implement the projects and further develop the regional competence.

### **3.0 The Barents Programme 2004 – 2006**

#### **3.1 Prioritised areas**

The Regional Council has prioritised the following working areas for the period 2004-2006 for co-operation and development within the Barents region:

1. Economic and commercial co-operation
2. Sustainable living environment
3. Human resources
4. Indigenous peoples

The Regional Committee is given a mandate to establish ad hoc working groups or in other ways secure expert support for realising the Barents Programme 2004–2006 and its four working areas.

There are five criteria to steer development and implementation of projects, with the further strengthening of the involvement of indigenous peoples in the Barents co-operation, and this will apply to all measures:

Environmental concerns: Through a sustainable exploitation of the natural resources, maintain a good environment and at the same time develop new working places.

Equality perspective: Community development based on men and women's equal rights, unequal conditions, requirements and experiences.

Youth perspective: Community development where the special needs of the young are taken into consideration.

Democratic development: Through the implementation of the Barents Programme 2004–2006 to stimulate strengthening of the democratic development.

Employment perspective: The Barents Programme 2004-2006 shall endeavour to increase employment and new establishments.

#### **3.1.1 Economic and commercial co-operation**

##### **Prioritised sectors**

1. Commercial efforts within forestry, minerals and oil and gas

2. Infrastructure
3. Energy, renewable energy
4. Transport east-west and maritime transport
5. IT and communication technology
6. Travel and eco-tourism
7. Strengthening of indigenous peoples' economical activities

## **Background**

To work for good framework conditions for commercial activity is one of Barents Co-operation's most important tasks. Commercial establishments must be prioritised. The member countries comparative advantages must be utilised to a greater degree. Better utilisation of the region's natural resources is necessary. This applies particularly to forestry, mining and oil & gas. New establishments must be encouraged in the new fields of IT and fish farming.

Further development of the Barents region is dependent on continuation in the heavy industry. Available energy is the Barents region's greatest advantage. This includes both today's production and the expected development of oil and gas reserves. The Barents region will be one of Europe's most important suppliers of energy during this century. This demands a development based on safety and a responsible environmental policy.

The energy production can be more effective and at the same time achieve reduced energy usage through goal-orientated energy programmes.

The communication systems in the Barents region are primarily developed for north-south transport in the individual countries. Increased transport east-west is limited by the infrastructure. The possibilities for the heavy base industries in the Barents region are very dependent on how these transport problems are solved. The basic transport network consists of the railways together with a few strategic harbours. The oil and gas sector will be required to make large investments in the infrastructure.

It is also necessary to focus on air, land and sea transport of goods and passengers. The efforts to develop more effective maritime transport of goods must be prioritised. Customs clearance through roads, railway and airports must be smoother.

Information technology is the only factor that has seen the greatest improvement both generally and within established Barents Co-operation. Continued development of the regional telecommunication and data-net must be prioritised.

## **Goals**

- Increase international promotion of the region
- Strengthen companies' international competitiveness
- Establish internal flight connections within the Barents region
- Increased effective use of energy
- Strengthen traditional trades of the indigenous peoples, such as reindeer husbandry and wilderness exploitation

## **Prioritised tasks**

- Improved framework conditions – financial instruments and guarantees
- Harmonising visa and customs treatment
- Simplified customs clearance and other cross-border issues

- Increased support of projects aimed at environmental improvements in the industrial sector
- Increased support for tourism / eco-tourism
- Contribute to the implementation of the multilateral Interreg III B project "Sustainable Transport in the Barents Region"
- Contribute to the development of the Northern Maritime Corridor and the Northern Sea Route

## **Implementation**

The Regional Council and the Regional Committee makes financial means available through regional/national programmes. Actors can be public institutions and private companies.

### **3.1.2 Sustainable living environment**

#### **Prioritised sectors**

1. Cleaner production
2. Water
3. Bio-diversity
4. Nuclear safety
5. Nefco / AMAP hot-spot list

#### **Background**

The Barents region has the highest population density and is the most industrialised part of the Arctic / Sub-Arctic region. At the same time this is the region with the largest virgin territories in Europe. The region's biodiversity includes vulnerable coastal areas, large forests and taiga/tundra regions in the north.

The region also has advantages including a relatively good infrastructure and available local and regional competence within many fields. Environmentally acceptable methods, developed in the individual countries can therefore be utilised throughout the Barents region with a few minor adjustments.

Co-operation in environmental questions has resulted in a good regional and central network. The requirements for an effective co-operation are good within most of the environmental areas. Many environmental problems are too serious to be solved only within the regional co-operation. This applies specially to nuclear and atmospheric contamination, protection of the maritime environment and oil contamination preparedness. It is also important to have a regional focus on nuclear contamination and oil contamination preparedness.

Oil and gas production in the region will demand increased focus on the environmental aspects during the next few years, which has also been brought forward through the environmental task in the Northern Maritime Corridor project.

#### **Prioritised tasks**

- Concrete environmental efforts with fast and direct improvements of the populations' health and living conditions
- Increased environmental awareness among the population of the Barents region

- Exchange of environmental technology and competence
- Efforts to secure the biological diversity

## **Implementation**

Central/regional environmental institutions, commercial activity, counties and voluntary organisations (NGO).

### **3.1.3 Human resources**

#### **Prioritised sectors**

1. Increased education, exchange and network building
2. Youth questions, Barents Youth Programme
3. Culture and identity, indigenous languages, exchange and network building
4. Health and related social issues in the Barents region

#### **Background**

Increased research and education are required to achieve change and renewal of the commercial and industrial activity in the region. Such development puts great demands on collaboration and co-operation between commercial/industrial institutions and research/educational institutions. Universities and university colleges in the regions are therefore important, and should be involved in these tasks.

Higher education is today in the process of internationalisation and globalisation. It is important that institutions of higher education in the Barents region actively take part in the Bologna process, which will remove the present barriers for co-operation.

The countries in the Barents region are experiencing several common challenges in relation to youth issues. Even with large differences in living conditions in the respective countries, a common factor is population reduction, lack of working places and good social conditions for the region's youth. The border regions have large differences in social-economic conditions, which lead to problems related to crime, drugs addiction and health that specially hit the regions' youth.

The youth question is given the highest priority in the regional Barents co-operation through the Regional Youth Programme 2003-2006. The Barents region shall be more attractive for the young population through increased living standards that will encourage them to remain in the region or return there after completed education. The youth programme, through multilateral co-operation, shall create better conditions for young people throughout the Barents region. It is emphasised to strengthen the youth's active participation in forming and developing its own region.

Cultural co-operation is one of the most important positive results in the process of creating the Barents region.

There are great differences in the health condition of the population of the Barents region. Health in North-western Russia is still characterised by a low life expectancy (specially among the indigenous peoples), health problems related to lifestyles, a large number of abortions and higher rates of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. These problems can mainly be associated with the greater

psychosocial upheavals experienced in Russia. Co-operation with the Russian health authorities has been developed through the Barents Health programme. The development of competence is a central requirement in this co-operation and the main focus has been on the fight against infectious diseases, promotion of health for mother and child and the development of primary services. The Barents Council adopted a new co-operation programme for health and socially related questions for 2004/2007 in 2003.

### **Goals**

- Internationalise competence and research institutions in the Barents region through participation in the Bologna process
- Create a common Barents area for education, harmonising the educational systems of the countries of the region while keeping their national and cultural characteristics
- Stimulate increased research about the region
- Develop and formalise the co-operation between educational institutions
- Produce educational material about the region for different age groups
- Strengthen the youth's active participation in forming and developing their region
- Further develop human cultural co-operation
- Evaluate and develop cultural multiplicity in the region
- Strengthen efforts towards preventive health programmes
- Further develop co-operation between health institutions together with institutions providing social services
- Support the development of rescue and safety co-operation

### **Prioritised tasks**

- Establishment of fixed-network base-competence centres attached to educational institutions in the region – Barents Virtual University
- Establish a formal forum for co-operation within higher education – Barents Rector Conference
- Develop English-language Bachelor's and Master's programmes
- Teachers exchange and educational programmes
- Increase available educational opportunities
- Implementation of the Regional Youth Programme (2003-2006)
- Implementation of the Cultural Programme "Voices in the Barents Region 2003 – 2006"
- Implementation of the Co-operation Programme on Health and Related Social Issues.

### **Implementation**

Regional/local institutions and voluntary organisations.

### ***3.1.4 Indigenous Peoples***

#### **Prioritised sectors**

1. The implementation areas of the Action Programme for Indigenous People
2. Annual priorities from the Working Group for Indigenous People (WGIP)
3. Securing economic resources for the indigenous peoples' tasks

#### 4. The Indigenous Peoples Year in Barents Co-operation – year 2005

##### **Background**

The indigenous peoples in the Barents region are the Sami (in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia), Nenets and Veps. The indigenous populations have historical roots established long before the present nation states existed, with language, cultural and trade characteristics and status as indigenous people and minorities in all co-operating countries. The indigenous dimension and its population's active participation is a natural and necessary part of the Barents Co-operation. The foundation for future work in this sphere will be the need to support the internal co-operation among these peoples, and the natural relationships to others in the region with other languages, cultural and trade characteristics. The work with indigenous people is founded in friendship and co-operation, based on equality, co-existence and tolerance between the people of the region.

The selection of members for the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples (WGIP), together with representation in the Regional Council and Regional Committee, is based on the principle of rotation with a functional period of 2 years. Effective use of limited resources plus the need for continuity in the indigenous peoples' co-operation have resulted in a multilateral secretarial function taken care of by the Barents secretariat in Kirkenes. This has been strengthened by the establishment of a Barents Indigenous Peoples Office in Murmansk. This is also in accordance with the Sami Parliamentary Council – the common political solution for co-operation established between the *Sameting* in Scandinavia. In addition to the co-operation forum in the working group (WGIP), the most important working tool for the different forums would be the Action Programme for indigenous peoples, an important supplement to the Barents Programme.

The basis for the Action Programme is the documented conditions in the indigenous peoples' own home regions, which again are based on their own evaluations and reflect their priorities in regard to measures and projects. The programme is renewed annually by proposing annual plans to take care of new requirements and priorities and at the same time create an overview of the activity and make long-term planning easier.

The geographical area of the Action Programme will be the Nenets, Sami and Veps regions in the Russian part of the Barents region.

##### **Goals**

- Well-developed health and social systems to ensure quick and effective treatment of suffering, and preventive programmes to reduce the risk of new cases and measures.
- Safeguard the nature and the environment as the material foundation for the indigenous populations cultural development.
- Conservation and development of the indigenous peoples' languages culture and trades.
- Well-developed infrastructure to make possible internal co-operation among indigenous peoples and ensure their active participation in the co-operation as a whole.
- Well-developed media and information channels to ensure correct, relevant and updated information dissemination both to the indigenous population and to the community as a whole.

##### **Prioritised tasks**

- Prepare for implementation of the intentions in "The Action Programme for Indigenous Peoples".

- Prepare economic conditions and resources to enable the collective indigenous population to take part in the co-operation as equal and active parties.
- Actively support equality by placing priority to tasks involving women.
- Priorities in the annual plan will provide the foundation for choice of projects.

## **Implementation**

Federal and regional institutions, Working Group of Indigenous Peoples, the Barents Secretariat, companies and institutions for indigenous people.

## **4.0 Information and promotion**

The Regional Council will give priority through the Barents Programme 2004-2006 to actively inform about Barents Co-operation. This will include internal information within the region and external promotions, further development of strategies for international promotion of the Barents region, further development of the work with the Barents Information System (BIS), and in addition work with goals and strategies outlined in eBarents and the Northern Dimension.

The different working groups in Barents Co-operation are given the possibility to publish their information for a larger and more goal-orientated target group through the Barents Information System (BIS). This will contribute to increased awareness about Barents Co-operation at the different levels, official and popular initiatives and projects.

It is a further priority to strengthen co-operation among journalists through, among other things, the organisation of Barents Press, and thus strengthen the freedom of the press and the democratic process.

An important task for communication and information is further development of broadband in the Barents region. In all four Barents-countries, the broadband is placed south to north. The existing nets could be connected by establishing an east-west broadband net and at the same time providing a regional high speed net in the region.

## **5.0 Active coordination and implementation**

There will be an active co-ordination and adjustment between the Barents Programme 2004–2006 and the Regional Council's running project Barents 2010 during the programme period. During the first half of 2005, the Barents Programme 2004-2006 will be evaluated, the results of the work with Barents 2010 will be compared with the Barents Programme, and experiences reached at that point will be used as a tool for implementation and start-up of measures and projects. One will also, based on this evaluation, come forward with proposals for revisions to the Barents Programme in midstream, where this may be advantageous.

This will ensure that the Barents Programme 2004-2006 will be a dynamic programme, where milestones and strategies to a greater extent will be developed and implemented through Barents 2010.

It is also expected that, through the work with Barents 2010, one will develop concrete projects and proposals for specific measures, which will be realised within the framework of the Barents Programme, and in co-ordination with it.

The Regional Council has joined the EU Action Plan for the Northern Dimension. This plan will therefore set the conditions for the Regional Council's priorities during the programme period. The activities within the frame of the Barents Programme must be co-ordinated with the priorities of the Action Plan to the largest possible extent.

The Regional Council and the council's working groups are invited to take part in the process of evaluation and adjustments of the new programme through input and concrete programme proposals and projects.

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