



**NORWEGIAN CHAIR OF THE
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Committee of Senior Officials
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Terms of Reference Working Group on Education and Research

CSO Chair has the pleasure of circulating the Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Education and Research as adopted by the Committee of Senior Officials and the Barents Regional Committee by silence procedure on 10 June 2004 (cf. draft ToR circulated as doc.BEAC.CSO.2004.24).



Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Barents Regional Council

Terms of Reference

Working Group on Education and Research

Background

Quality and performance in the field of education and research are essential for sustainable development and the building of competitive societies and economies. The Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation aims at enhanced interaction to meet these objectives, both at the central and regional levels of cooperation.

The Regional Working Group on Education and Research, established in 2001, has mandate to serve as a consultative body for the Barents Regional Council and the Regional Committee, respond to questions of principal interest submitted by the Regional Council, and to initiate projects within its field, including a survey of cooperation projects of higher education and research. The WG is also working to facilitate Russian partners' participation in the Bologna-process.

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council in 1999 adopted an Exchange Programme for Higher Education and Research, with a Programme Board as steering organ. The Programme Board set up a web-site with updated information on all national programmes supporting academic exchanges in the Region. The web-site lists and links with universities and other higher learning and research institutions in the Region. The Programme Board has also produced an information brochure.

The exchange programme continues, but the Programme Board was closed at the end of 2003, with the intention to integrate its tasks with those of the Regional Working Group.

Objectives

The Working Group on Education and Research (WGER) shall take over the tasks previously performed by the Regional Working Group on Education and Research and the Programme Board for the Exchange Programme for Higher Education and Research and further develop multilateral and bilateral interdisciplinary cooperation in the Barents Region.

Objectives of the Working Group shall be:

- To promote enhanced cooperation, exchange of information and coordination between the participating universities and other higher learning and scientific research institutions in the Region, including regular updating of the inventory of ongoing cooperation activities;
- Promote academic exchanges, especially the promotion of multilateral exchange opportunities, in addition to the bilateral exchange opportunities already developed and

presented on the web-site (www.barents.no/exchange), and to maintain and update the data base and web-site as a working source for academic exchanges;

- Increase cooperation in fundamental and applied research in the Region;
- Advance the Bologna process and European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in the Region. To encourage universities in the Region to expand student mobility by mutual recognition of degrees and exams according to the ECTS, Lisbon convention, and by the use of Diploma Supplements as well as by increasing the number of courses offered in foreign languages;
- Support the further development of the Barents Virtual University;
- Serve as consultative body of the organs of the Barents cooperation and initiate appropriate initiatives in its field.

The Working Group shall also:

- Serve as steering body for the higher education work package of the “Barents 2010” Interreg IIB project, for the duration of the project;
- Promote cooperation and exchange in primary and secondary education, and vocational training, as appropriate.

Composition and chairmanship of the WGER

Members and alternate members of the Working Group should be nominated by:

- Each of the counties, republics, oblasts, okrugs which are members of the Barents Regional Council;
- The competent national (federal) authority of the countries which are members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council
- The Working Group of Indigenous Peoples

In addition, the European Commission, and the Nordic Council of Ministers or other regional or international organisations, may be represented in the Working Group, should they so desire.

The members of the Working Group may invite specialists to assist them during meetings or other activities whenever necessary.

In order to enhance the active participation between the different actors in the Working Group, a shared chairmanship should be practised. The chairmanship should rotate within intervals of two years with a central government representative and a representative of a regional authority or administrative entity working together.

If deemed necessary, a smaller executive group with one participating person from each country and national regional group may be established in order to manage tasks between the meetings of the Working Group

Methods of Work

The Working Group shall choose the working methods, which are the most appropriate in order to meet a particular objective and which are in line with financing possibilities. This may include a number of different actions such as using external experts, organising conferences or seminars, involving universities and other research institutions, and non-governmental organisations directly in agreed activities, etc.

The Working Group shall meet at least once a year. If desired, sub-groups or task forces may be formed in order to manage tasks between the meetings of the Working Group or perform special activities.

The working language shall be English.

Each participant shall cover his/her own expenses for travel, accommodation and per diem. The joint chair shall agree on cost sharing concerning meeting expenses, expenses for any secretarial function and translation/interpretation in specific cases.

The working group shall coordinate and cooperate, as appropriate, with other working groups of the Barents cooperation, such as on economic cooperation, indigenous peoples, etc., and with relevant subgroups of other regional bodies.

The working group shall receive instructions and requests from the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council through the Committee of Senior Officials and Regional Committee, and report on activities through the same channels. An annual progress report of the preceding year shall be submitted by 1 February of each year.

Duration

The Terms of Reference of the Working Group shall expire at the end of 2006, before which an assessment of the working group, its organisation and activities, shall be undertaken. The Committee of Senior Officials and Regional Committee may also before this time make changes in the Terms of Reference, should this be determined appropriate.

Approved by the BEAC/CSO on 10 June 2004
Approved by the Barents Regional Committee on 10 June 2004