



**Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region  
2013-2016**

Working Group of Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (WGIP)

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## PREFACE

The Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (hereinafter BEAR) 2013-2016 contains proposed measures and projects aiming at development of the indigenous peoples' communities and societies within the BEAR. The measures are focused on Nenets, Veps and Saami areas. The Action Plan promotes measures within the fields of economic development, language and media, health and social related issues, environment and culture.

This document describes the goals and principles, of which the foundation for the proposals is made, as well as the current situation for the indigenous peoples of the region.

The Action Plan is adopted by the Barents Indigenous Peoples' Congress.

## PART I

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

##### 1.1.1 The Barents Cooperation

The Barents cooperation (the cooperation between the 4 states and the 13 regions in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region – BEAR) was established on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1993. Representatives for Norway, Sweden, the Russian Federation, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, the European Commission and the Nordic Saami Council signed the Kirkenes Declaration. This document, together with the Jubilee Declaration of 2003, sets the framework, the structure and the official goals for the cooperation.

Territorially speaking, the cooperation includes the thirteen regions Nordland Fylke, Troms Fylke, Finnmark Fylke (Norway), Västerbotten Län, Norrbotten Län (Sweden), Kainuu, Oulu, Lapland (Finland), Murmansk Oblast, the Republic of Karelia, Arkhangelsk Oblast, Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Republic of Komi (Russian Federation).

##### 1.1.2 WGIP and BIPO

The Working Group of Indigenous Peoples in the BEAR (WGIP) is appointed by the Barents Regional Council and was established on a permanent basis in 1995. WGIP has an advisory status towards the Barents Regional Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). By this, the WGIP has a particular political dimension within the formal structure of the Barents cooperation. The representatives from the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian side are appointed by the Saami Parliamentary Council for a four-year period. The representatives for the Saami, the Nenets and the Veps on the Russian side are appointed for a three-year period after proposals from their own organisations, the biennial Congress of the Saami in Murmansk Oblast, The Regional Non-Governmental Movement, Association of the Nenets People – “Yasavey” (hereinafter referred to as Yasavey) , and The Karelian Regional Non-Governmental Organization - “Vepsän kultursebr” (hereinafter referred to as “Veps Cultural society”).

The Barents Indigenous Peoples’ Office (hereinafter referred to as BIPO) was established in 2003. The office is financed by the Saami Parliament on the Norwegian side and it is administrated by the Norwegian Barents Secretariat. BIPO is located in Murmansk city and is the secretariat for the WGIP on the Russian side. BIPO is also a service- and information tool for partners and participants within the indigenous peoples’ cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

The adviser on indigenous peoples at the Norwegian Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes shares the secretarial function with BIPO and is responsible for the WGIP activities on the Norwegian side.

##### 1.1.3 Indigenous Peoples in the BEAR

Nenets, Veps and Saami are the indigenous peoples of the region, with ancient traditions for habitation, and traditions for usage of the areas' resources in a trade context from the times before the national states were established. The indigenous peoples are characterized by own languages, own cultures and own traditions for trade and society

In the Kirkenes Declaration of 1993, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs emphasized their support for the rights of indigenous peoples' in the north, in accordance with the goals of chapter 26 in Indigenous Peoples' Agenda 21.

The WGIP mandate for the development of an Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples in the BEAR is recognized through the appointing of the Working Groups in 1993. The present Action Plan replaces the Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples 2009-2012. The main focus is further development of an extended multilateral cooperation between indigenous peoples in the BEAR.

#### 1.1.4 Natural resources

The cultural landscapes of the indigenous peoples are often considered wilderness ready for industrial development. This leads to i.e. conflicts of interest which directly affect the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. The indigenous peoples' communities are face challenges attached to living standard, welfare, decline in public health- and social services, as well as serious problems with maintenance of traditional and necessary access to the natural resources.

Increased external access to natural resources, bring increased pressure on the renewable and non-renewable values and this constitutes a serious threat to indigenous peoples' livelihoods, culture, communities and further existence.

Co-existence should be a keyword in this context and participation from the indigenous peoples' communities and organizations ought to be considered an added value. The international principle of Free, prior and informed consent must be implemented in above mentioned situations.

#### 1.1.5 Distinct challenges

The situation of the indigenous peoples demands particular measures and priorities in the Barents cooperation. The Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples promotes the special needs and interests of the indigenous peoples. The ambition is that the indigenous peoples, through the program work, will set the premises themselves and develop a policy for development in their own living areas and local communities in a long-term perspective.

The WGIP focuses on the possibilities within the BEAR and points to the indigenous way of trade, languages, identity and cultural background of the indigenous peoples, together with a cooperation based on equality between partners, to make the foundation of the development of the BEAR.

## 1.2 Implementation and responsibility

The Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples in the BEAR is promoted towards the state and regional level of the Barents cooperation, according to the mandate, status and field of responsibility of the WGIP. The plan constitutes the foundation for the follow-up connected to the high priority set by the governments and regions for different measures of cooperation towards the North and the BEAR. This requires a solid coordination of measures and projects.

The Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples supplements the other work executed on the central, regional and local level. WGIP and the other partners within the BEAR share the responsibility for implementation of regional measures aimed at indigenous peoples, as well as the joint responsibility for conduct of the interests of the indigenous peoples. This means that each level in the cooperation should initiate and implement indigenous peoples' projects within their administrative framework.

The plan is evaluated annually by the WGIP. Priorities and measures will happen in accordance with the current status each year. Reporting and description of upcoming activities happen through the annual reports and activity plans of the WGIP. This way, the plan has a dynamic nature, taking conduct of new needs and creating an overview of the efforts within the field of indigenous peoples, and it facilitates the long-term planning.

## 2. COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

### 2.1 The indigenous peoples' dimension

The indigenous peoples in the BEAR are attached together by common traditions and aspects of history, although each people have their own culture and history. The Barents cooperation provides possibilities for further strengthening of this contact and cooperation, both within the BEAR and in a circumpolar perspective.

As citizens of different national states, the indigenous peoples depend on a healthy and good relationship with regional and state authorities. It is also important that the national states and the regions cooperate with indigenous peoples through safeguarding and promoting indigenous peoples' issues.

The indigenous peoples define their areas as central territories, with a particular need for specific regional and social measures. This means that the framing of politics, which affect indigenous peoples, must also contain a perspective relating to foreign politics.

### 2.2 Rights of indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples' work for their rights is about equality and acceptance. What is natural and reasonable for other peoples, must also be natural and reasonable for indigenous peoples. The existence of the Nenets, the Saami and the Veps peoples is attached to this specific region. Their way of living, their culture and languages have historical roots in the area, and future development of the region must take this into account. Negative trends of the development of indigenous peoples' communities must be handled with measures to correct these.

Regarding the rights of indigenous peoples, clarification and protection of indigenous peoples' rights to use of the land, water and belonging natural resources within their own areas are central aims for the current and future work of indigenous peoples, as it is important to preserve the indigenous peoples' areas for the future generations. Petroleum- and mining activities are important sources of income and employment, but the activities also have negative impacts on communities of indigenous peoples of the territories. Land-based activities are established on reindeer pastures and other areas of important use to the indigenous peoples, and the marine extraction happens on fishing areas, and these activities often lead to disturbance of traditional livelihood.

International corporations and large monetary interests must have the mentioned facts as a starting point in their planning of new and extended activity in the areas of indigenous peoples. The foundation for the indigenous peoples' own business activities and cultural exercise shall not be diminished by industrial activities or planned actions.

### 3. GOALS

#### 3.1 Main goals

The overall goal for the indigenous peoples' cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is to secure indigenous peoples' rights, foundation for economic development, society, culture and language through implementation of the Action Plan of Indigenous Peoples of the BEAR. The indigenous peoples' cooperation shall contribute to friendship and cooperation based on equality and non-discrimination, to promote co-existence and tolerance between the peoples of the region.

#### 3.2 Interim goals

- to obtain satisfying influence on issues with impact on the indigenous peoples and their territories
- to develop strong and healthy local communities with well-developed health-and welfare services, employment and satisfying school-and education possibilities
- to secure a solid material foundation for exercise of the indigenous peoples' cultures
- to establish solid conditions for the growth and development of indigenous peoples' languages
- to implement measures and projects aimed at indigenous women and families
- to secure solid conditions for further transmission and usage of indigenous peoples knowledge and competence
- to secure solid conditions for development of necessary indigenous peoples' institutions
- to spread correct information in order to increase the understanding of indigenous peoples' cultural, economic and social situation
- indigenous institutions and indigenous organizations are entitled to prior information and consultation regarding statistical data, measures and interventions in indigenous peoples' areas



## 4. GENERAL CONDITIONS

### 4.1 International rights of indigenous peoples

Parts of the states in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region are established on indigenous peoples' territories. Through this fact are the indigenous peoples, as peoples, entitled to recognition of the right to determination over their own culture, communities and territories. However, there are distinctions among the member states concerning ratification of international legislation (conventions and declarations) regarding indigenous peoples' rights, and transmission of these to national legislations.

A successful implementation of the Action Plan depends on adaptation of general framework conditions regarding indigenous peoples' situation. The cooperation between indigenous peoples in the BEAR must be seen in connection with the international ongoing processes on the rights of indigenous peoples. Internal and national legislation in each state must adapt to international decisions. An important point is the rights of indigenous peoples to natural resources as a material foundation for their culture.

A main aim for the preservation of indigenous peoples' rights is to implement the principles of the Rio Conference (UNCED 1992) and the principles of the ILO Convention No. 169 (on indigenous peoples and tribal peoples in independent states). The UN Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (of 1966), mentioning minorities in independent states, is another important international agreement with large importance for indigenous peoples. Further, there is the UN Convention on Biodiversity of 1993. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007.

UN General Assembly has, by declaring the period of 1995-2004 as International Decade of Indigenous Peoples, expressed will of raising indigenous peoples' issues on the international agenda and, by declaring the period of 2005-2014 as following International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, acknowledged that implementation of measures aimed at indigenous peoples is time-consuming. The UN member states are, through the Decade, obliged to put efforts into the work of improving the living conditions of the indigenous peoples. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also challenges the indigenous peoples on adding a concrete and focused content to the Decade.

It is a challenge for the member states of the BEAC to frame a corresponding policy on indigenous peoples, in which the principles of the peoples' right to self-determination are followed. The UN Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples is an excellent opportunity to strive for such harmonisation. It is essential to point out that planned and executed measures and projects in the indigenous peoples' areas, must not be characterized as aid or missionary work towards indigenous peoples. Conditions must be facilitated so that the population participates actively.

### 4.2 International cooperation between indigenous peoples

The success of the Action Plan implementation depends on a solid cooperation between different partners/institutions. Yasavey (Public Association of the Nenets People in the NAO), the Vepsian Culture Society, OOSMO (Official Organisation of Saami in Murmansk Oblast) ,

the Kola Saami Association (AKS) and Guelnegk Neark Sam Sobbar (GNSS) are central partners on the Russian side, next to RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East).

The Saami Council, consisting of members from all four national states, is central in the cooperation. It is important to connect the border-crossing work on indigenous peoples' issues to the general work on indigenous peoples' issues on the Russian side. Further, it is important to coordinate the cooperation in accordance to activities initiated by the Arctic Council. The coordination must be executed by the state level.

Existing Saami parliaments within the Nordic states must monitor the work on establishment of an elected representative political body in the Russian side. In a future perspective, the strengthening of the Saami Parliamentary Council, as well as the establishment of a joint Nordic Saami Convention between Finland, Norway and Sweden will create a foundation and framework for the future work on indigenous peoples' issues in the BEAR. A future objective must be a joint cooperation between the four member states, based on the foundation of the Nordic Saami Convention. The WGIP emphasizes the importance of transferring information regarding the work on the Nordic Saami Convention to the indigenous peoples on the Russian side.

#### 4.3 The EU, the Nordic countries and the Arctic

The development in the indigenous peoples' territories in the BEAR must also be seen in a Nordic, an Arctic and a European perspective. Planned measures and programmes must be coordinated and implemented, and the initiatives promoted through the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers should be coordinated with the actions taken within the Barents cooperation. In addition, there is potential in the work executed by the European Union, as the Northern Dimension has a certain focus on indigenous peoples' issues and direct cooperation between people.

The WGIP highlights the cooperation with national state authorities and views coordination of the international cooperation between indigenous peoples in the Arctic and the BEAR as crucial. The WGIP will follow the work of the Arctic Council.

#### 4.4 The Barents Euro-Arctic Council

The 1<sup>st</sup> Barents Indigenous Peoples' Congress (Kirkenes 4 February 2010) stated that the three (3) indigenous peoples of the BEAR should participate through direct representation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Barents Regional Council (BRC). The Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the BEAC responded by inviting all three peoples to attend their meetings until a formal decision is made on the matter. The BRC also decided to invite all three peoples to their future meeting until a formal decision is made on the matter.

The Congress' mandate is to take position in the question about representation of the indigenous peoples within the formal structures of the Barents cooperation, as well as to adopt the Action Plan of Indigenous Peoples of the BEAR and to function as a forum for discussion for the indigenous peoples of the BEAR. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Barents Indigenous Peoples' Congress was held in Kirkenes, Norway, on 10 February 2012.

## PART II

### 5. PRIORITISED AREAS AND MEASURES

#### 5.1 Background

Mutual cooperation between equal partners is the starting point for the work on indigenous peoples' issues in the BEAR. The ambition is to develop more multilateral projects with participation from most of the cooperating states. Municipality cooperation, institutions and organisations, as well as official bodies, are important partners in this context. The dimension of indigenous peoples in the Barents cooperation, and measures aimed at indigenous peoples' communities, will also benefit the remaining population.

#### 5.2 Geographical territories

The cooperation between indigenous peoples in the BEAR includes Nenets, Veps and Saami areas of living on the Russian side of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

#### 5.3 Prioritised areas and proposed measures

##### 5.3.1 Business development

Indigenous peoples' participation in business development is decisive for the survival of the indigenous peoples' communities. The population must have a framework for protection and development of their communities in a long-term perspective.

The economic development of the region must to a larger extent increase the participation of the indigenous peoples in the fields of protection and development of their own communities. Primary industries, such as fisheries, reindeer husbandry, catching and traditional handicraft are the ground pillars for the indigenous peoples' business activity. These industries constitute the foundation for further development of new and modern industries, such as tourism and production- and trade business based on local indigenous peoples' traditions. This depends on access to the nature and securing of quality through a clean and sustainable environment. Solid multilateral projects is a tool for value creation through processing of raw materials and trade in the global market. This might create the foundation for future business activity in indigenous peoples' communities.

Reindeer husbandry has a special position among indigenous peoples of the north and in particular among Saami and Nenets in the BEAR. Production and processing of reindeer meat and reindeer hides has a large potential on the Russian side, as the demand for reindeer meat increases and the global market wants access to raw materials for production. Usage of material from reindeer in other industries, such as handicraft, is another part of the economic development in the BEAR and requires adaption and establishment of network across borders.

Proposed measures:

- continuation of Indigee - Indigenous Entrepreneurship – a multilateral entrepreneurship project gathering young indigenous entrepreneurs from the BEAR
- preparation of an ethical Code of Conduct for industrial companies' activities in indigenous peoples' areas, according to obligations established in international law, through the Árran Lulesaami Center in Divtasvuotna/Tysfjord

### 5.3.2 Languages and media

Education is the key to transmission of indigenous languages. Research produces new knowledge, and this creates a ground for growth and development of indigenous peoples' communities. A satisfying level on indigenous peoples' educational institutions is a central point for further development of the competence level among indigenous peoples. Saami educational institutions have a particular responsibility for development of Saami languages – also on the Russian side. The Kildin Saami language – and other Saami languages on the Russian side - is threatened. Teaching in Kildin Saami must be intensified both on elementary level and as adult education, in order for the language to have a real chance of survival.

The stream of information between indigenous peoples in the BEAR must be improved, but it also depends on external factors. Kola Saami Radio is no longer a project, but an independent enterprise based on financing through news production aimed for sale to cooperating Saami media stations in the Nordic countries. Transmissions in Saami must be further developed, but there is also a demand for expansion of transmissions in Russian, in order to reach other indigenous peoples in the region. An improved informational service will strengthen the cooperation between indigenous peoples, and another point is to include existing networks of indigenous media in the circumpolar area.

Proposed measures:

- encourage the establishment of an information network of indigenous media within the BEAR through the establishment of a Nenets broadcasting department in Naryan-Mar, and cooperation with existing media in Greenland and Canada
- establishment and protection of language education in the indigenous peoples' language areas, through establishment of local language centres
- encourage cooperation projects aimed at strengthening language environments in indigenous peoples' communities in the BEAR
- cooperation with Barents Press and other relevant media organizations

### 5.3.3 Health and social related issues

The curative health service in areas populated by indigenous peoples in the Russian side is variant, and actually absent among people with a nomadic way of life, in particular in areas outside larger cities and towns. Lack of personnel and funds for maintenance of the services are among the reasons for this.

Parts of the indigenous population in the Russian side live nomadic lives, while others are resident in cities, towns and smaller villages and settlements. This leads to a varied need for health care among indigenous peoples in the Russian side. With that, it is important to secure a satisfying health service for the population as a whole, irrespective of residence.

The largest challenge for mobile health care is definitely expenses connected to transport and equipment. The indigenous peoples inhabit areas with an imperfect infrastructure, and this presupposes use of extraordinary measures (such as helicopter).

Proposed measures:

- encourage strengthening of mobile health service aimed at reindeer herders and indigenous population outside larger cities and towns in North-West Russia
- encourage cooperation projects aimed at securing safe and healthy communities / aimed at prevention of alcohol and drug problems in indigenous peoples' communities in the BEASR
- encourage implementation of projects aimed at indigenous youth

#### 5.3.4 Environment and use of nature

Indigenous peoples are attached to the nature and usage of natural resources. Renewable resources in indigenous peoples' territories have constituted the living conditions for indigenous peoples in the BEAR, and there is a close connection between nature, resources and habitation. That is why the areas of population can not be considered as wilderness or so-called untouched nature, but rather as areas of usage with an adjusted harvest of the natural resources as the regulating element.

The present increased selection of resources does not necessarily lead to development of the local communities and indigenous peoples' communities, but rather to problems of industrial, environmental and social kind. National and international corporations establish activities in the areas of the indigenous peoples without involving the local inhabitants and the users of the areas in an overall strategy. The regional administrations often prioritise development of central areas, and that leaves the indigenous population with next to nothing. It must be emphasized that it is the reindeer herders in the Nenets tundra who surrender land areas for petroleum activities, and the mining industry in the Kola Peninsula demand land areas from the Saami and Komi reindeer herders and fishermen.

The development of the north, and indigenous peoples' areas of usage and residence, must include a strategy with concrete prospects for the future, in order to secure sustainable societies when the industrial activities are finished. Protection of, as well as access to, areas of natural resources is decisive for the future of the indigenous peoples' cultures, which is an important part of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region and the global diversity.

Proposed measures:

- follow up on extractive industries and in particular mining companies, with regard to their dialogue (or lack of) with IPs, according to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including the aspect of health
- support and encourage projects aimed at improving the quality of drinking and surface water, and water management, as mentioned in the BEAC joint communiqué from the Ministerial meeting in Kiruna (October 2011)
- support and encourage the work of the Barents Protected Areas Network, and projects aimed at documenting indigenous peoples' usage of territories

- encourage joint effort aimed at cleansing and restoration of abandoned industrial and military areas in the BEAR

### 5.3.5 Culture

The cultures of the indigenous peoples have been threatened by different national, regional and local efforts. Active assimilation policies have been executed towards the indigenous peoples of the region, with concrete measures aimed at destruction of expressions and symbols that characterizes the indigenous peoples' cultures. Indigenous peoples have, in certain areas, been forced to leave their home areas in favour of other areas that do not harmonise with their traditional way of living.

Indigenous peoples' cultures tie peoples together and the various cultures are closely attached to primary industries, the nature, their languages, traditions and history through solidarity, socialization and identity. Maintenance and development of the indigenous peoples' cultures must have an overall perspective including a focus on both society and individuals. Maintenance of cultural varieties within the region is a challenge, and culture does also include sports activities.

Proposed measures:

- support meeting arenas for indigenous peoples, such as annual festivals, seminars, meeting and cultural exhibitions
- establishment of scholarships and exchange agreements for the indigenous artists of the region
- encourage regional authorities to oblige to secure funding for indigenous peoples' cultural activities

### 5.3.6 Political cooperation

The indigenous peoples of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region share challenges attached to their livelihoods and the development of their communities. Indigenous peoples of the BEAR are taking active part in the global indigenous peoples' cooperation. Transfer of knowledge and competence regarding political work and international legislation regarding indigenous peoples' rights is a priority of the WGIP during the Action Plan period.

Proposed measures:

- \* strongly encourage Saami parliaments, through Saami Parliamentary Council, to provide the necessary assistance regarding the establishment of an elected representative Saami political body in the Russian side
- \* further development of Barents Indigenous Peoples' Congress as a forum for discussion and cooperation between indigenous politicians of the BEAR
- \* joint seminars and conferences on cooperation and current political issues

### 5.3.7 Youth

Indigenous youth in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region share common challenges and constitutes a crucial part of the cooperation between indigenous peoples, both in the North, and also in a global perspective. Indigenous youth participate in the cooperation through the Barents Regional Youth Council and the Joint Working Group on Youth. Enhancement of the youth participation in the general cooperation between indigenous peoples in the BEAR is a goal for the WGIP.

- Encourage establishment of the Barents Indigenous Youth Ambassadors' Project, teaching indigenous youth from the entire BEAR about the BEAR and the cooperation and including youth in the existing indigenous peoples' networks

#### 5.4 Economy

The measures of the Action Plan for Indigenous Peoples in the BEAR 2009-2012 include both concrete projects and proposals for further project development. Implementation of these measures requires funding from national, regional and local authorities, as well as from Nordic, European and international financing instruments. The WGIP actively initiates and promotes projects and welcomes input and initiatives from external partners.