



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS
ANNUAL REPORT

Name of the Working Group: **Barents Forest Sector Network**

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: **Norway 2020-2021**

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

Norway will continue the long-term strategy of focusing on the **forest-based bioeconomy**.

Aim to identify potential challenges relating to the transition to a **low-carbon society**.

Focus on **knowledge** by engaging the **forestry sector** and **research organizations** located in the Barents region.

Strengthen regional **cooperation**, involve other working groups and the secretariats within Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation.

Encourage **youth participation**

2. Meetings (meetings held, main topics and outcomes of the meetings)

Barents Forest Sector Network (BFSN) conducted 3 meetings during 2020.

First meeting was initially planned to happen at Svanhovd research station, in Pasvik Norway. The COVID-19 pandemic changed this - and the working modalities for the remaining part of 2020. First meeting became virtual on the 1st April 2020. A review of the development of the forest sector and planning for the rest of the year was the main topics at this meeting. BFSN got a presentation on developments in the forest sector in Northern Norway by Helge Molvig from the County Governors office in Troms and Finnmark. The initial plans for a Barents Forest

Forum scheduled for second half of 2021 was elaborated in the meeting. Minutes from this meeting can be downloaded [here](#).

In the second virtual meeting BFSN received presentation on research activities at the Svanhovd research station and project cooperation with different research activities in Russia and Finland.

Initial discussion on the way to broaden the work by investigating the possibilities for cooperation with Biosphere reserves in the Barents region occurred in this meeting. BFSN decided to initiate a pilot study on the topic. The pilot study is scheduled finalised in late January 2021.

BFSN discussed and decided to proceed with an application for change of status from a network to an ordinary working group within BEAC. BFSN has in recent years worked and acted very similar to an ordinary working group, and the intention was to suggest a change in status that reflected this. The application was approved by CSO in a meeting on the 22nd September 2020. Minutes from this meeting can be downloaded [here](#).

Third BFSN meeting took place on December 16th and covered among other topics, the plans for revised BEAC Climate Action Plan and BFSN contributions and a discussion on the preliminary report from the pilot study on the potential for cooperation between BFSN and Biosphere reserves in the Barents region. BFSN received also a report from the International Junior Forest Contest that took place in Moscow early December. BFSN contributed to the contest by providing jury member.

Meeting between chair of BFSN and chair of WGE took place in November 2020. The two working groups will continue cooperation on topics of mutual interest. BFSN is also seeking to similarly interact with other working groups in BEAC.

BFSN chair participated in 3 CSO meetings in 2020.

3. Other activities (projects, events, programmes etc.)

Two separate activities, a pilot study and a report were a part of BFSN activities in 2020:

a) Pilot study on possibilities for collaboration between Biosphere Reserves in the Barents region and BEAC/BFSN.

The pilot study shall analyse the possibilities to use the Barents cooperation as a potential platform to:

- establish collaboration between BR areas within the Barents region. It could also be an opportunity to strengthen the regional cooperation within the Barents Cooperation
- use BR as platforms to implement BEAC own WG activities, strengthen cooperation between the different BEAC WGs and highlight forest and forestry in the natural resource sector.

Preliminary report is ready by December 2020 and a final report is scheduled for late January 2021.

b) Report: Forests in the emerging circular bioeconomy in Northern Europe

A report on “Forests in the emerging circular bioeconomy in Northern Europe. *Reflection on the forest role in bioeconomy.*” is in process. The work is coordinated by SLU/EFI Bioeconomy network. The report is scheduled for early 2021.

4. Results of the year (decisions, new initiatives, improvements)

Change of status of BFSN as a subgroup to a full working group approved by CSO September 22, 2020.

Initiative to investigate possibilities for increased cooperation with Biosphere reserves in the Barents region

Information and exchange of views on the development of the forest sector in the Barents region.

The change from physical to virtual meetings has been both a challenge, and improvement. The virtual format needs to be further developed and expanded.

5. Youth involvement (how has the working group included young people or worked with youth issues during the year)

BFSN contributed and participated as a jury member in a youth event organized by the Federal Forest Service of the Russian Federation (Rosleshoz). This International Youth Forestry Contest took place in early December.

6. Evaluation of the work (What went well, what needs improvement)

BFSN has been able to continue its core activities despite the changes in modalities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Still it is necessary to develop ways to interact and cooperate with external stakeholders on different platforms. The plan is to improve this further during 2021.

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[Barents Forest Sector Network](#) Secretariat

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