

## Notat

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### **Working Group on Environment (BEAC WGE) Annual Report 2008**

Since the meeting of the Barents Environmental Ministers in Moscow November 2007, Norway has chaired the BEAC Working Group on Environment. The activity in the Working Group is based on the Ministerial Declaration of 8 November 2007 (Annex-1). The following areas are of priority to the Norwegian chairmanship:

- Climate change – consequences, adaptation and mitigation measures
- Environmentally hazardous substances – reduction of emissions and improvement of hazardous waste handling
- Biodiversity – protection of habitats and species, strengthening of the network of protected areas
- Hot spots and cleaner production – contribution to solving the 42 most urgent environmental problems in the Russian part of the Barents Region, the so called environmental “hot spots”, and promotion of cleaner production
- Water management – co-operation on cross boarder water bodies, reduction of emissions to water and supply of clean drinking water

The goal has been to establish some concrete project co-operation under the working group and to strengthen the co-operation between the national and regional levels.

#### **Working group meetings**

The Working group on Environment has held three meetings in 2008. The meetings were held in Tromsø 9-11 April, in Svanhovd (Pasvik) 16-18 June and in Murmansk 8-10 October.

#### **Establishment of subgroups, strategies and action plans**

In order to develop concrete projects it was decided in 2007 to establish the three subgroups under WGE. The three subgroups were established during the first meeting in Tromsø:

- Subgroup on cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption, chaired by Norwegian Pollution Control Authority,
- Subgroup on nature protection, chaired by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management
- Subgroup on water issues, chaired by the Environmental Department of Finnmark County Administration.

Sweden, Finland, Russia and Norway have appointed national representatives in the subgroups. The subgroups are open for participation from other interested parties and regional representatives.

Based on the declaration and the mandates from the ministers, the subgroups have formed strategies and action plans (Annexes 2-4). Projects will be financed by contribution from the member countries and by application to EU and Nordic sources of finance. For co-ordination and reference purposes the subgroups have created and will maintain lists of other environmental projects in the Barents region, related to the respective field of work.

The Second International Roundtable on sustainable lifestyles and cleaner production was held in Yasnaya Polyana, Tula oblast, Russia, 27-28 May 2008.

The Fifth meeting of the International Contact Forum on Habitat Conservation in the Barents Region was held in Umeå, Sweden 15-16 October 2008. The main topic of discussion was biodiversity and climate change. The Barents Habitat Contact Forum has since 1999 been a meeting place for Russian and Nordic experts in the field of biodiversity and habitat conservation in the Barents Region. In 2008 the Habitat Contact Forum officially became a part the Subgroup on nature protection.

A calendar of completed and planned events under the WGE and its subgroups is enclosed (Annex 5).

### **Environmental "hot spots" in the Barents Region**

Relating to the 42 environmental "hot spots", identified in 2003 by the AMAP/NEFCO "hot spots" report, by year-end 2008, 40 sector studies, pre-feasibility studies and other project development measures had been approved for support from the Barents Hot Spots Facility (BHSF), which is administrated by the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO). See NEFCO-report Annex-6.

Hot spot K10 in Karelia has eliminated summer 2008 as a result of a Finnish-Russian project. 12 tonnes of obsolete pesticides of Karelia were transferred to Finland and finally destroyed at Ekokem high thermal destruction facility in Finland.

WGE decided in 2007 to set up an information database on "hot spots", and to establish an international task force with the mandate to propose criteria for eliminating "hot spots" from the list. These tasks will be prioritized in 2009, with certain financial support from the BHSF

In 2008 there has been close contact between NEFCO and the WGE in order to promote work on the "hot spots". The goal has been to increase the commitment to elimination of the "hot spots" on the regional and central levels in Russia, and to promote cleaner production as a method to generate projects with relevance to the "hot spots".

In September 2008 there was a meeting between the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology, the WGE chair, NEFCO, and the Cleaner Production and Sustainable Development Centre(Moscow), where the parties discussed how to proceed the work on elimination of the "hot spots".

Some of the "hot spots" are owned by large industrial enterprises. If the enterprise belongs to the federal category, Rosprirodnadzor executes the control with their compliance to the environmental legislation. If the enterprise belongs to the regional category, environmental control is executed by the bodies of the subjects of the Russian Federation.

There are, however, "hot spots" of various categories, where regional authorities may play an important role in the solution. In the Republics of Komi and Karelia the regional authorities have established separate working groups to lead and co-ordinate the work on elimination of "hot spots" and promotion of cleaner production. WGE will promote this idea also in other subjects in the Russian part of Barents Region.

In October 2008 WGE in co-operation with The Committee of Natural Recourses and Environmental Protection in the Murmansk Region arranged a seminar on "hot spots" and cleaner production for "hot spot"-owners, enterprises, regional authorities and other interested parties. There were presentations related to elimination of "hot spots", including presentations from industrial enterprises on their experience with the cleaner production concept. The chairman of The Committee of Natural Recourses and Environmental Protection in the Murmansk Region presented his view and priorities related to elimination of the "hot spots" in Murmansk region, and suggested that some of the original "hot spots" may be eliminated from the list, as well as some new project ideas.

In 2009 WGE intends to follow up with corresponding seminars in Arkhangelsk and Nenets Autonomous District.

WGE has also taken an initiative to renew the co-operation with the Arctic Council's working group ACAP on "hot spots" with emissions of environmentally hazardous substances. This will be followed up in 2009.

### **Climate change**

The action plans of subgroups contain several projects and project areas, connected to climate change. Furthermore, a project is being conducted in co-operation between WGE and the Nordic Council of Ministers to study the effects of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem goods in the Barents Region. The project will be completed in 2009.

The WGE plans to arrange in a conference on climate change with main focus on the effects of climate change and possible adaptation measures for the Barents Region the autumn 2009. All Barents countries, regions and The International Barents Secretariat will contribute to the conference.

### **National and regional co-operation**

The Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE) has in 2008 held its meetings back-to-back with the WGE-meetings, which gives the regional representatives the opportunity to take part in the subgroup- and WGE-meetings. In this way the Barents co-operation provides a unique forum for contact between the national and regional level. It has been a problem to get Russian regional representation to the meetings. However, at the meeting in Murmansk in October all but one of the Russian Barents regions were present.

In October 2008 the chairmanship of RWGE was handed over from the Republic of Komi, Russia, to the County of Finnmark, Norway.