



THE BARENTS EURO- ARCTIC REGION

Swedish Chairmanship of

THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL, 2009–2011

Towards an Eco-efficient Economy in the Barents Region –
combining economic growth with environmental responsibility

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**SWEDISH CHAIR OF
THE BARENTS EURO-
ARCTIC COUNCIL
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Working for a more eco-efficient economy in the Barents region

We need to take both immediate and long-term action to come to terms with the global challenges of economic growth, energy security and climate change. There is a growing consensus that these issues are interlinked and that they must be tackled simultaneously. For the Barents region, which is rich in natural resources and clearly affected by climate change, these global challenges are crucial.

Therefore, during its two year Chairmanship of the *Barents Euro-Arctic Council*, Sweden will focus on the potential of the Barents region as a region where people can work together to take concrete steps towards a more eco-efficient economy. Together with our partners, we need to address the challenges of economic growth, sustainable use of natural resources, energy efficiency and climate change in an integrated way. To this end, we are planning three ministerial meetings during the Swedish Chairmanship – between the Ministers of Environment, between the Ministers of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, and, of course, the traditional meeting between the Foreign Ministers.

We will also continue to promote and facilitate business and trade, and to encourage new and ongoing work and new initiatives in other fields of cooperation.

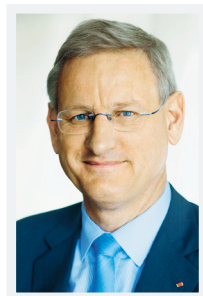
In all aspects of cooperation in the Barents region, the Swedish Chairmanship will take into consideration the special living conditions and interests of the indigenous peoples.

Cooperation in the Barents region gains strength from the interaction between stakeholders at national and regional levels. In order to achieve the best possible results, the Swedish Chairmanship will work closely with local and regional authorities, civil society and other actors. The Chairmanship will also strive towards coordination and synergies with work done in other forums, such as the Arctic Council and the Northern Dimension.

This folder briefly outlines the objectives of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Barents cooperation over the next two years.



Carl Bildt
Minister for Foreign Affairs



FOCUS AREA of the Swedish Chairmanship

Towards an eco-efficient economy – strengthening cooperation to meet the interlinked challenges of economic growth, climate change and sustainable use of natural resources

- revitalise work on climate change through policy, concrete cross-sector activities and innovations;
- increase the opportunities and facilitate for small and medium-sized enterprises to do business in the Barents region;
- intensify cooperation in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency and build networks for and raise awareness of sustainable production and consumption in the Barents region;
- promote activities to exclude ‘hot spots’ from the Barents environmental ‘hot spots’-list, in close cooperation with the Arctic Council.

OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS

Health and related social issues

- Implement the Cooperation Programme on Health and Related Social Issues including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and children and young people at risk, and support new initiatives.

Cultural cooperation

- Implement the Barents cultural programme ‘New Winds in the Barents Region’.

Youth participation and international exchange

- Promote young people’s active involvement in society and strengthen their international networks.

Transport infrastructure

- Integrate the Barents transport infrastructure issues into other pan-European East-West corridor discussions.

Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response

- Strengthen and expand ongoing, transboundary Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response cooperation in order to improve the interoperability of these services.

Barents cooperation – background

Multilateral cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) was launched in 1993 at a conference of foreign ministers in Kirkenes, Norway, when all five Nordic countries, the Russian Federation and the European Commission signed a declaration establishing the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC). At the same time the county governors of the Barents region, together with representatives of the indigenous peoples, signed a cooperation protocol which established the Barents Regional Council (BRC). Thus, cooperation in the region of the Barents Sea was launched on two levels: the BEAC is a forum for intergovernmental cooperation and the BRC is a forum for cooperation between the 13 regions of the Member States. The Working Group on Indigenous Peoples has an advisory role to both Councils and cooperates closely with them.

The members of the BEAC are Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Commission. The Chairmanship of the BEAC rotates biannually between Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation and Sweden. Between the biannual ministerial meetings, the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) meets approximately three times a year. Observer states are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The Barents Regional Council consists of the heads of the 13 counties, regions or similar sub-national entities. The Finnish member regions are Kainuu, Lapland and Oulu, the Norwegian member regions are Finnmark, Nordland and Troms, the Russian member regions are Arkhangelsk, the Republics of Karelia and Komi, Murmansk and Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the Swedish member regions are Norrbotten and Västerbotten. In 2008 North Karelia in Finland was granted observer status.

The cooperation supports the overall aim of developing the Barents region as a socially and economically competitive region in Europe. Increased cohesion, good governance and both environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth are promoted through this cooperation.

Barents cooperation structure

Between the BEAC meetings at foreign minister level every other year, work is organised by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO), in close cooperation with the International Barents Secretariat (IBS). The IBS opened in Kirkenes, Norway, in January 2008. The IBS is bringing new dynamism and continuity to cooperation, serving both the governmental and the regional levels.

The Barents cooperation framework has developed successfully in various fields and it combines experts and specialists from various sectors. The main tools for implementing the policies of both the BEAC and the BRC are working groups and task forces, some of which are based on joint national and regional representation, some only on national and some only on regional representation. These working groups and task forces cover the following spheres of activities and interests:

Working group with an advisory role to the councils on both national and regional level

- indigenous peoples

Working groups and task forces on national level

- economy
- forestry
- environment
- customs cooperation
- transport
- youth policy

Working groups and task forces on joint national and regional level

- health and related social issues
- education and research
- energy
- culture
- tourism
- rescue and emergency services

Working groups on regional level

- environment
- communications
- youth issues
- investments and economic cooperation

Barents geographic features

The area of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is roughly 1 755 800 square kilometres, which is equivalent to the combined surface of France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, with a population of approximately 6 million inhabitants. The region is very rich in natural resources such as fish, timber, minerals, oil and gas. It also has important processing and engineering industries, as well as high-quality universities, research institutions and science centres. The Barents region is characterised by harsh climatic conditions.



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