



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT

Barents Forest Sector Network (BFSN)

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: Sweden 2017- Oct 2019, Norway Oct 2019-2021

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

- a. Implement a strategy - to achieve a balanced and coherent view of the forests, products and services they provide with the aim of increasing knowledge and promoting the development of bioeconomy as part of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development
 - i. Identify the overall themes and focus areas of the BFSN that may last for an extended period during rotation of the BFSN Chairmanship.
 - ii. Strengthen collaboration with other organizations, forums and platforms and strengthen cooperation at regional level.
 - iii. Coordinate the chairmanship with the next chair-country.
- b. Sharing experiences and increased common knowledge of policies on climate change mitigation and adaptation and strategies for the development of forest bio-economy
- c. Arrange a Barents Forest Forum as the final event for the Swedish BFSN Chairmanship.
<https://www.slu.se/bff2019>

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

29-30 Jan 2019 in Stockholm. The aim of the meeting was to further discuss the outline of Forest Forum, what topics and which speakers to invite etc. We discussed a session with extra focus on education, labour supply and how forest and bioeconomic knowledge is communicated to professionals and public. The mandate of BFSN was discussed at the meeting. The draft for mandate was later circulated by e-mail and a conclusive version sent to IBS by the Chair. A small reference group for BFF 2019 was decided.

29 May 2019, teleconference. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the planning of Barents Forest Forum (speakers, program, how to reach young participants), and the official handing

over of the chairmanship to Norway. The outline and planning for a study and writing of a report (The forest in the emerging bioeconomy in Northern Europe) was also on the agenda. It was agreed to plan for a pre-conference day, to offer a grant for young participants (travel costs) and that Denmark and Island should be invited.

Oct 15-17 2019 in Umeå, Barents Forest Forum. During the forum a Barents Forum Network meeting was held, and Sweden described the work during Sweden's chairmanship. Norway informed about the aims for their chairmanship for BFSN, and County Board of Västerbotten informed about their plans for the regional chairmanship, 2019-2021.

Oct 15th. Preconference workshop. The topics were about working for a future forest sector – perspectives of education, labor supply, expectations of future employers, and equal opportunities. A total of 72 participated (20 youth). Results from the workshop will be handed over in some form to Norway (ongoing discussion).

Oct 16th. Main conference day with speakers from participating countries. The first session had the keynotes Forest in the Bioeconomy -Transformation and the second Climate Change Mitigation as Driver towards Bioeconomy. In a third session an open workshop for all participants was held and the purpose was to discuss the outline of the report (The forest in the emerging bioeconomy in Northern Europe). Proceedings are not completed yet.

Oct 17th. Excursion day. Two excursions with different topics. One tour was about bioeconomy in an Urban Region (urban forestry, wood design etc.). The other tour was about bioeconomy in county Västerbotten (forest technology companies, research stations etc.).

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

The Chairmanship attended Barents youth follow up seminar and XVII BEAC Foreign Ministers' Session and EU Arctic Forum. In connection with this event, a flyer was created describing the BFSN and the chairmanship period.

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

During 2019 the network has agreed upon youth recommendations. A mapping of ongoing initiatives concerning bioeconomy has been performed. During the Barents Forest forum a workshop about a report (The forest in the emerging bioeconomy in Northern Europe) was held and the report will be presented during the first half of 2020.

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

A youth recommendation has been presented and concluded during 2019. The pre-conference day (15 Oct) of BFF focused on employment of youth in the forest sector. Special efforts were made to increase the number of young people participating at the conference (travel funding).

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

The ambition to increase the exchange with other working groups and strengthen the collaboration with other organizations as well as to increased cooperation on regional level has been fruitful. Barents Forest Forum was successful and 123 people (of which 47 youth) attended, and 270 people followed the main conference by video-link.

There are recurring question marks about where BFSN sorts and many times it has been missed to invite BFSN as one of several BEAC groups to various meetings since BFSN is to be considered as a network (sub-working group) under WGEC.

7. Other

The possibility for BFSN to become an own working group, from present sub working group status, has been discussed and will be followed up during the Norwegian BFSN chairmanship.

Norway will also continue the BFSN long-term strategy of focusing on the forest-based bioeconomy with the aim to identify potential challenges relating to the transition to a low-carbon society.

Focus will be on knowledge by engaging the forestry sector and research organizations located in the Barents region to strengthen regional cooperation, involve other working groups and encourage youth participation.