

Barents Forest Sector Task Force (BFSTF)

2007 Activity Report & 2008 plans

General

BFSTF is a forum to promote development of the forest sector in the region. For the period 2006-2007 two broader themes were selected for networking activities:

- Business environment in forestry sector in the Barents region, covering overall acceptability of the business, trade and investment barriers, role of small and medium sized industries/enterprises, delivering industries, entrepreneurship, logistic chain, transparency, certification, etc.) and
- Cost-effective forest land use in the Barents region, covering intensification of forest production to fulfill various needs of the society, expansion of forestry know-how, development of forest management planning, model forests, value adding in the wood chain and bioenergy needs.

The actual work of the BFSTF is related to above topics and usually carried out together with other stakeholders and players due to limited resources available and also with the aim to avoid overlap.

Activities

Planning of Barents sector programme. Members of the core group have participated in the planning of Barents sector programme (including different industrial sectors, forest sector one) based on triple helix principle. There were three planning meetings in 2007. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences has lead planning. Content / topic of possible proposal is not clear. Anyway if decision will be made to apply funding from the Neighbourhood / Interreg Programme and forestry issues are included, it would be important to get support from the WGEC.

WGEC. Chairman has participated and reported in the WGEC meetings 19.4.2007 in Saariselkä and 6-7.9.2007 in Helsinki about the BFSTF situation and activities.

National Barents group and CSO. Chairman has participated in the national Barents group meetings in Helsinki, as well as in CSO meeting 8-9.2.2007 in Helsinki and ministerial conference 14-15.11.2007 in Rovaniemi.

Facts and figures of the Barents forest sector report. Data for the report has been collected and content has been finalised. Report will be published in the Working papers of the Finnish Forest Research Institute in early 2008.

Barents Forest Forum. Major activity was preparation of the Barents Forest Forum that took place 8-9 November 2007 in Joensuu, Finland. Preparations started in early spring 2007 and organisers of the Forum were Barents Forest Sector Task Force, Finnish Forest Research Institute, Forestry Centre North Karelia, Forestry Development Centre Tapio,

Joensuu Regional Development Company Ltd., North Karelia Chamber of Commerce, North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, and University of Joensuu. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Regional Council of North Karelia, Joensuu Regional Development Company Ltd., and City of Joensuu provided funding for the Forum.

Very actual topics for the future of the forest sector not only in the Barents Region but more broadly in the Northern Europe were highlighted in the Forum. Aim of the Forum was to raise discussion how to secure conditions for forest sector investments in the Northern Europe, including security of sustainable supply of raw material, energy and labor, well functioning logistics, application and development of new technologies in forest management and wood procurement, and development of value chains for wood and know-how in forestry. Altogether 130 participants all over the Northern Europe (32 from Russia, 5 from Sweden, 2 from Norway and about 80 from Finland) participated, representing business, administration, financing, education, research and development organisations. Forum consisted of a high level morning seminar, three parallel afternoon seminars, excursion and business/company meetings. More information, including the conclusions and presentations are available from <http://www.metla.fi/tapahtumat/2007/barents/>.

BEAC. Report was prepared to the BEAC final report and also text to the the Joint Communique of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 11th Session in Rovaniemi, Finland, 14 -15 November 2007. Text was included in the Economic Development section 8.

Future of the BFSTF. WGEC has asked the task force to clarify possible continuation as the mandate of the BFSTF is expiring end of 2007. This was discussed at the core group meeting on the 7th November 2007 in Joensuu. Task force as such maybe not necessary, and forestry issues could be included in the WGEC work. It was concluded that it is up to the WGEC to decide how to continue and how to keep forest sector issues on the agenda. It is not possible to continue task force without financial support, and also without right and real participation, preferrably from respective ministries and / or nominations from the countries/regions.