



BARENTS PRESS INTERNATIONAL

REPORT FOR MEETING OF REGIONAL
COUNCIL ARKHANGELSK 2017

Summary

The Barents Press cooperation is one of the most successful and influential journalistic cross border cooperation that we know of in the world. For over 20 years journalists in the Barents Region has met regularly, discussed and evolved together. The work continues to strengthen independent journalists in the Barents region, and to create more connections between our four countries in this region of the world.

History

Barents Press was started in the early 1990's, a time when a lot of things were changing in the Barents region. The first and maybe one of the most important meetings that established Barents Press as an organisation by and for journalists were in March 1994 in Ivalo. First of all, the name was decided there as well as some of the main principles: it is an open forum for journalists, it shall develop contacts and networks between journalists, it shall arrange seminars for journalists, it has a board of two members from each country and the presidency shall follow the rotation of the presidency in the official Barents Council. And it co-operates with journalist trade unions but it is not a trade union itself.

At this first stage only Norway, Russia and Finland were represented. On the same time efforts were started to find interested journalists in Sweden as well. Contacts were taken to every newsroom in the area and the first list of interested journalists was published in printed form by the Finns. The first board was able to find enough financing from Norway, Finland and Nordic bodies to invite journalists to the first big meeting in Saariselkä, Finland, 18.-19. February 1995. This can be seen as the official birthday of the Barents Press International. The board of Barents Press International was invited to Barents Regional Council meeting and study trip in Bruxelles autumn 2002. There were round 10 representants of Barents Press International participating in the BRC schema. Before and after this trip we have had representants of BRC many times speaking in Annual Meetings.

Organisation

Barents Press International consists of: Barents Press Sweden, Barents Press Russia, Barents Press Finland and Barents Press Norway. Four independent national organizations, with their own boards and their own ways of doing things. Some Barents Press projects involve only one other national organisation, some the whole Barents Press organisation. This way of working creates a strong bond on a local level and makes sure that Barents Press is a democratic and transparent organisation.

Goal

The overall and the main goal of Barents Press is cooperation between journalists in the Barents region. This goal can be achieved in a number of ways, through the annual meeting in of the member countries, through joint projects or through seminars that focuses on different topics. But there are other goals as well, we believe in freedom of speech, we believe in independent journalism as a way to make our societies better and we work towards that goal as well. We typically do not finance journalism directly, but we try to give the tools and education when there is a chance to try to do something to improve the situation.

The situation today

Barents Press has around 150 journalists that has or is active in some way in the network. There are many courses and activities being started revolving around matters such as elections to environmental challenges. But there is also of course challenges, especially on the national levels. The level of support and financing from the national levels differs greatly, and there is hard to any long time planning of activities. Visa issues and different obstacles to be able to work as a journalist is also a great obstacle that has to be negotiated at every turn.

Recent examples of projects:

Barents Press Norway and Barents Press Russia has for many years been active with courses regarding different subjects. These courses is supported by the Barentssekretariat. The main goal with these courses is to improve the knowledge and competence in different media houses, to combat prejudice and one sided journalism. Barents Press Norway is noticing a big interest to take part of these courses that span a wide field of different matters such as, investigate journalism, fishery, elections, culture and Norwegian child protection.

Barents Press Sweden and Barents Press Russia have for two years been doing the project "Robota" which revolves around industry and environment. The first project was Robota 16 Industry and Environment in Northwest Russia, at that project a group of young journalists traveled from Saint Petersburg up to Murmansk. On their way they met with fellow journalists, visited companies and talked about how environment and industry is handled in Russia. In 2017 Robota 17 Industry and Environment in Northern Sweden took place with mainly the same goals as the previous year. During 2017 Barents Press Sweden is conducting the project: Arctic Journalism: Environmental and Societal Challenges. A project funded by the Swedish Foreign Ministry that contains five different project's which all revolve around the project title.

Learn more:

Barents Press website:

barentspress.org

Barents Press Swedens project page:

barentspressprojects.com

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