



# The Barents Programme

2009 –2013

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The Barents Programme is the framework for the inter-regional Barents cooperation, where the priority areas of work for each period are identified. The inter-regional Barents cooperation was initiated in 1993, at the same time as the Barents Euro Arctic Council, hereinafter BEAC, was established by signing the Kirkenes Declaration on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1993. Regional representatives, together with a representative from the indigenous peoples have signed a cooperation protocol that established the Regional Council for the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. The member regions are Oulu Region, Lapland and Kainuu from Finland, Finnmark, Nordland and Troms from Norway and Norrbotten and Västerbotten from Sweden. The regional members from Russia are Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Karelia, Komi, and Nenets. There are also three observing members, which are the Region of North Karelia from Finland, the Council of Christian Churches in the Barents region and the Parliamentary Association of North West Russia.

The Barents member regions share a significant number of similarities, most notably the Arctic climate, sparse population, and long distances. These characteristics impose both challenges and potential for our mutual cooperation.

The Barents Regional Committee has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the decisions taken by the Regional Council. In order to deepen and make concrete cooperation, the Regional Council has established Working Groups in priority areas.

The Barents Programme 2009 –2013 is the sixth Barents Programme since the cooperation protocol was signed in 1993. The Chairmanship of the Barents Regional Council alternates between its 13 member counties or regions every second year. In the period 2007-2009 the chairmanship is held by Oulu region, Finland, followed by Troms, Norway for the period 2009-2011, and Norrbotten, Sweden for the period 2011-2013.

The aim of the Programme is to express our common aim and operational framework to strengthen the Barents cooperation. It is of a great importance to find the different regional competences that will benefit and bring more added value to and from multilateral cooperation. The Regional Council and Committee will pay attention to the goals of the programme in their work.

### **Overall vision for the Barents region**

The overall objective for the Barents cooperation is to generate social and economic growth through a knowledge driven economy and the sustainable development of the region's natural resources. Moreover, the objective is to make the Barents Region competitive on the world market.

The main goal is the sustainable development of the Barents Region, including striking a balance between environmental, economic and social aspects. There is a need to increase the competence in the region's labour force.

The Barents region is heavily dependent on its population which is the main resource of the region. It is therefore alarming that migration is high among women and youth. It creates a demographic imbalance and affects the societies as well as the labour market. Our common vision is to further develop the Barents region and create attractive cities and regions both for men, women and youth. All efforts should therefore be made to create a society for all and provide an environment where women and youth stay in the region. There is also a need to attract labour from outside the region due to many new industrial projects concerning the extraction of raw materials. The great potential in our natural resources and also the challenges that we face in our region make it also important to find effective ways to attract talented and educated work force from outside our region.

The Barents region has much potential and opportunities for better and more effective cooperation. Our potential is based on natural resources, education, research, and also on our long experience on mutual cooperation. Our goal is to bring these enormous potential into a higher level by pursuing joint multilateral projects and agenda based on our bilateral experience.

The potential of the Barents Region also requires strong emphasis on transportation and logistics. East-west connections especially must be developed. The vision is that the multimodal needs of our economic and people-to-people cooperation will be fully acknowledged by our central governments, resulting in necessary investments.

## Goals

In the cooperation protocol of January 1993, the Regional Council indicated the structure and general aims of the regional cooperation. They are:

- To ensure a peaceful and stable development of the region;
- To consolidate and further develop the cultural ties between the peoples of the region;
- To encourage the establishment of new, and expansion of existing bilateral and multilateral relations in the region;
- Lay the foundation for an environmentally sustainable economic and social development in the region with emphasis on an active and goal-oriented management of natural resources.
- Contribute to a development that takes into consideration the interests of the indigenous peoples with their participation.

The abovementioned goals will be carried out through the programme period 2009-2013.

## **2.0 Organisation**

### **2.1 Barents Regional Council and Regional Committee**

The members of the Regional Council are 13 regions or their equivalents and the indigenous peoples from the northernmost parts of the BEAC member countries. The representation of the Regional Council consists of highest-level regional decision makers and civil servants. The Barents Regional Council meets twice a year. Between meetings the activities are co-ordinated by the Regional Committee.

The Barents Regional Council is the forum that is responsible for the political guidance in the multilateral cooperation. The main focus of the Regional Council's work should be in finding out the joint visions and views in how the cooperation should be carried out.

The Barents Regional Committee, which meets usually four times a year, has the overall responsibility for the implementation of the decisions taken by the Regional Council. In order to deepen and realise the cooperation the Regional Council has established Working Groups in priority areas of work.

### **2.2 Working groups**

In order to deepen the cooperation within certain areas the Regional Council has established **Regional Working Groups**, consisting of appointed experts from the member regions. At present there are regional working groups for environment, communications, youth issues and economic cooperation, and a specialist group having an advisory role for Information and Communication Technology (ICT). They report their activities to the Regional Council and Regional Committee.

There also are four **Joint Working Groups** with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council: health and related social issues, education and research (operating in a form of a Forum), energy and culture. The joint working groups have a shared chairmanship on national and regional levels. They report both to the Regional Council/Committee and the BEAC/CSO. The working group on indigenous peoples is the only working group established on a permanent basis and given an advisory role to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Regional Council.

The working groups will be supporting the Regional Council and Committee in implementing the Barents Programme. The work should be actively followed up which shall also include annual reporting practise. The working groups' mandates shall be updated in order to comply with the present Programme goals and objectives as well as the Regional Council resolutions. As the working group activities will be supporting the work of the regional level all the regions should give necessary commitment to this work.

## **2.3 International Barents Secretariat**

The International Barents Secretariat, hereinafter IBS, was established on the basis of the Intergovernmental Agreement, signed at the BEAC Ministerial Session, November 15, 2007, in order to make the Barents cooperation more coherent and efficient and to provide support to the coordinated activities in the region. The IBS has been operative from January 2008 and is located in Kirkenes, Norway.

The IBS aims to serve the multilateral cooperation both on national and regional levels and to be a tool for enhancing the interaction between national and regional levels as well as the indigenous people of the Barents Region. The IBS should therefore be actively and systematically used in the implementation of the Barents Program 2009-2013 in accordance with its Terms of Reference<sup>1</sup> adopted by the Committee of Senior Officials of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and of the Barents Regional Council.

The Barents Regional Council welcomes the IBS work on establishing better interaction between the national and regional activities, providing assistance to coordinated work and involvement of regional authorities in policy making. The Regional Council considers the IBS to be an integral partner in the present Programme implementation.

The Barents regions have stated their support to and expressed their welcome to the IBS establishment. Since it already exists and functions it is now important to emphasize the intention of the regions to fully utilize this new opportunity and present it as an essential tool for the Programme implementation.

## **2.4 National Barents Secretariats**

National Barents Secretariats should be seen as an important asset for the Region and its actors. Effective work for the multilateral cooperation requires sufficient resources and the national secretariats bring a much-needed help in the coordination and activation of the Barents cooperation.

### **2.4.1 Norwegian Barents Secretariat**

The Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes, Norway was established in the aftermath of the signing of the Kirkenes Declaration. Originally being a service and support institution for the first Norwegian chairmanship of the Barents Regional Council (1993 - 1995), the Secretariat subsequently prolonged its existence as a project under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1999 the ownership of the Secretariat was officially transferred to the counties of Finnmark, Troms and Nordland with the funding continuing to come from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

Today, the primary task of the Barents Secretariat is to finance Norwegian-Russian cooperation projects on

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<sup>1</sup> The Terms of Reference of the IBS is available on [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st)

behalf of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to assist the Barents Regional Council, Norwegian Authorities, and other major regional structures. The Secretariat has an extensive network of contacts and co-operates closely with EU institutions and international organizations.

### **2.4.2 Finnish Barents Secretariat**

The Finnish Barents Secretariat operates in Rovaniemi, by the Regional Council of Lapland. It was started in cooperation with the Lapland, Oulu and Kainuu Regions.

The secretariat coordinates participation of the actors in the Finnish Barents regions to the Barents cooperation, participates in preparation and execution of different issues in the Barents cooperation, assists the Finnish regions in participating in the Barents cooperation, activates information delivery, brings national as well as regional aspects to the Barents cooperation and supports the execution of sector programmes. In particular, the secretariat works actively especially in those sector programmes that are led by the Finnish regions or that have interest from the Finnish point of view.

### **2.4.3 Swedish Barents Secretariat**

The County Administrative Boards of Västerbotten and Norrbotten have a formal commission from the Swedish government to be in charge of the regional Barents work.

The work is done in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Presently there is no formal structure for the Swedish Barents Secretariat. In addition to the regional work there is an informal structure, which acts as a reference group with representatives from municipalities, county councils, universities, representatives from indigenous peoples, companies, and others.

The Västerbotten County Council has been the lead partner of the Barents 2010 project. Västerbotten and Norrbotten act actively also in the Baltic Sea cooperation.

### **2.4.4 Russian Barents Secretariat**

During the years 2007-2009 Russia is holding the chair in the Barents Council and therefore there's a temporary Barents secretariat established within the Russian MFA. However Russia has no permanent Barents secretariat. At the regional level Barents issues are dealt through the regional Administrations' international departments. The idea of the national Barents Secretariat presents certain interest but in practice financing becomes the key issue – regional budgets as a matter of fact are not available for this kind of establishment. This problem could be solved by holding a “virtual’ interregional secretariat in Russia meaning that all five member regions and Russian MFA can be in permanent contact in regard to Barents issues and in this way work out the unified position on this or that matter. This, indeed, is often the case – a lot of issues are discussed through web networks and phone-meetings.

### **3.0 Barents cooperation and the European Union**

The European Union, hereinafter EU, and its financing programmes will be important for the implementation of the Barents Programme and cooperation in the region. Natural resources represent an important asset and possibility for the Barents Region also from the EU point of view. Natural resources, such as oil and gas, wood, ore and minerals, bring not only global attention to the region, but also jobs and economic benefits, thus contributing to regional development and structural policies in the EU.

The renewal of the Northern Dimension (ND) policy as a common policy between the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland was adopted at the ND Summit in Helsinki 24 November 2006. For the first time the Northern Dimension policy has made the Barents Region a priority. BEAC and the other northern councils are voiced as participants. The regional and sub-regional organisations and the sub-national and local authorities are named as actors of the new ND policy. This will give new possibilities to the Barents Regional Council and the Regional Committee to influence the contents of the ND policy

The Barents Region is an important player in the Northern Dimension (ND). It is of a vital importance that the Regional Council coordinates and prioritises activities in the northern areas. Although the transport and energy issues are the main focus areas, all of the present Programme priorities shall be viewed within the ND context.

In general the Barents Regional Council would like to emphasise the importance of wide scope policy perspective for the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and for the coming EU Baltic Sea Strategy. The Northern Dimension, relevant EU policies, and financing instruments bring the backbone for the strategy, but as the region is large and heterogeneous there is a need for extensive policy considerations in order to exploit the full potential of the BSR.

In particular the BRC would like to stress the importance of economic cooperation in the BSR. As an integral part of the BSR, the Barents Region, with its natural resources, brings great potential and possibilities to the EU competitiveness and to the Lisbon Partnership for growth and jobs. The Barents Region includes the northern parts of Finland and Sweden, which are the most potential raw materials suppliers of the EU. Together with the north of Norway and Northwest Russia the Barents Region is even more important for the EU and the BSR.

As the Barents Region may strongly contribute to the EU raw materials needs, there is also a need to analyse the logistical and socio-economical needs of our region. This includes identification and financing of the logistical investments, and the increase of the refinement of the raw materials in the Barents region, thus contributing to the cohesion and the economical development.



## **4.0 Prioritised areas for 2009-2013**

The Barents Regional Council will prioritise the following areas for the period 2009-2013:

1. Economic and commercial cooperation
2. Sustainable living environment
3. Human resources
4. Indigenous peoples
5. Transport and infrastructure
6. Information and promotion

### ***4.1 Economic and commercial cooperation***

To promote good framework conditions for commercial activity is one of the Barents Cooperation's most important tasks. Commercial establishments must be prioritised. The member countries' comparative advantage must be utilized to a greater degree. Better utilisation of the region's natural resources is necessary. This applies particularly to forestry, mining, oil and gas. Further development of the Barents Region is also dependent on continuation in the heavy industry, tourism, knowledge based industries - such as ICT, Creative Industries etc -, car testing and other branches of business that may utilise the region's resources and competence areas.

#### **Prioritised tasks:**

##### **- Sector Programmes**

The strategy that was defined in the Barents 2010 project will be executed in the form of sector programmes. Different regions that have special competencies in different areas should lead these sector programmes. The aim is to strengthen the development in the Barents region by bringing focused multilateral cooperation into action. In the sector programmes a specific region takes a leading role and identifies partner regions. The programme has an umbrella character and steps forward have to be taken by projects within each programme.

There are currently several Sector Programmes in progress or in the planning phase. Operative Sector Programmes are Tourism, Oil and Gas, and East-West logistics –Barents Link. Planned Sector Programmes include Mining and Minerals, Education and ICT.

##### **- Economic Cooperation arising from the work of the Working Group on Economic Cooperation (WGEC)**

##### **- Border Crossing**

- The Regional Council fully supports the implementation and further development of the Visa Facilitation Agreement between the EU and the Russian Federation, which went into force on 1 June 2007.

- It is also highly important to ease the visa issuing processes, especially for representatives of companies, business associations and tourist groups.
  - The Regional Council welcomes development, which would decrease bottlenecks and promote flexible border crossing transport and diversification of cargo transports (containers).
  - In border crossing:
    - One should stress the need of sufficient and modern infrastructure;
    - One should increase cooperation between border authorities for optimizing activities.
- Efficient Customs Clearance
- The Regional Council gives support to the member countries of BEAC and EU in their work to improve more efficient customs clearance.
  - In customs clearance:
    - One should promote diversification of tariff headings of items for customs clearance;
    - One should focus on the promotion of electronic clearance, since paper-based clearance of documents is slow and the risk of misuse increases;
    - One should implement procedures based on risk-analysis on the border crossings and customs posts.
- Favourable investment climate
- The Regional Council would like to initiate a Barents Economic Minister's Council. This would help in prioritising the economical and infrastructural needs in the Barents region.
  - Efforts will be made to mutually build down existing barriers to business establishment in neighbouring countries.
  - Of special importance is to ensure investments from Russia to the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish parts of the Region.
  - It is important also to use and further develop existing facilities and communications, for example project cooperation offices.
  - Cooperation between regulatory authorities will be developed so that in the future businesses can be established in the neighbouring countries from the country of origin. A system should be established so that national authorities can handle the bureaucratic procedures necessary for establishing a business in all neighbouring regions participating in the Barents Cooperation.
  - A plan for such a development will be discussed in the WGEC.

## ***4.2 Sustainable living environment***

Global warming represents a threat to the living environment, also in the Barents Region. The changing climate affects many different aspects of the environment, from the basis of existence for people whose living

is directly dependent on nature, to the possible change of the direction of the Gulf Stream. Immediate action must be taken. Climate change is especially affecting the Arctic climate.

The region's biodiversity includes vulnerable coastal areas, large forests and taiga/tundra areas in the north. The development of oil, gas and heavy industry in order to enhance economic development must be based on a safe, responsible and proactive environmental policy.

#### **Prioritised tasks:**

##### **- Reduce pollutant emissions**

- Emissions from all international flights made in connections to the inter-regional Barents cooperation will be balanced by purchasing CO<sub>2</sub> offsets. The CO<sub>2</sub> offsets should ideally come from emission reduction projects in the region.
- The Regional Council will work to support the implementation of legislation reducing emissions of industrial pollution.
- Support and encourage projects that will increase environmental awareness among industry leaders.
- Wider use of communication technology, for example video conferences in order to reduce pollutant emissions caused by travelling.

##### **- Develop a long-term environmental strategy**

- Due to a great need of large investments in the industry, including of the oil, gas and mining industry, it is of high importance that a long-term strategy is made to safeguard environmental interest in the process. The strategy work should include the mapping of particularly vulnerable areas, water reserves, and problems related to securing the biological diversity.
- The environmental strategy should also include the necessary steps to be taken to develop and acquire technology that will minimize damage on the environment from growth in the industry. In connection with the above mentioned, it is very important to concentrate on the realization of projects from the "hot spot" list, as well as the use of new, environmentally friendly technology in the Barents Region.
- The environmental strategy will be discussed in the Working group on Environment.
- Adaptation to climate change.

##### **- Maintain biodiversity**

- Cooperation on development of national parks and protected areas.

### **4.3 Human resources**

Increased emphasis on research and education is vital to achieve change and renewal of the commercial and industry activity in the region. Such development is putting great demands on collaboration between commercial/industrial institutions and research/educational institutions. Exchange of students and teachers within the region takes place today to a limited extent. Student exchange and international study programmes contribute to break down language and cultural barriers, and to lay a solid foundation for the Barents cooperation in the future. Simplified procedures for student exchange and a broad range of available programme offers will therefore be an area of priority in the next period.

The countries in the Barents region are experiencing several common challenges in relation to the youth questions. Even with large differences in living conditions in the respective countries, a common factor is lack of educated work force on some sectors and lack of working places on some other sectors and net reduction of the population due to movement to central regions. This question has been given the highest priority in the Regional Youth Programme 2003-2006. A general aim is to make the Barents region more attractive for the younger population so that they will remain in the region. Youth's active participation in forming and developing the region is of high importance.

The Cooperation Programme on Health and Related Social Issues in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2004-2007 has been implemented with a strong emphasis on social aspects and multilateral action. Priority areas of the programme has been prevention and combat of communicable diseases, prevention of lifestyle-related health and social problems, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and the development and integration of primary health care and social services. The programme has been developed in co-ordination with the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan and the Northern Dimension Partnership in public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS).

The Working Group on Health and Related Social issues has drafted a new programme on cooperation on Health and Related Social issues beyond 2007. The implementation of the programme should take into account the changing priorities of health and social cooperation in the Barents Region, but also the need of the new ND policy adopted in November 2006. The main ND instrument of relevance is the Partnership on Public Health and Social Wellbeing.

The Barents cooperation does not only take place on the state level and the regional level. One of the greatest achievements of the cooperation has taken place on people-to-people level: this includes cooperation between NGO's, communities, and individuals.

Active support of cultural activities and business based on culture contributes to regional development in many ways. A rich and developed cultural life can serve as an important tool in the branding and marketing of the region to the outside world. Cultural activities and business based on culture has the potential to make the region creative and dynamic, which again can attract other investments and create more working-places.

It is important to focus on the economic value the cultural wealth of the Barents Region represent and manage this in the best possible way.

In the implementation of Barents Cultural Programme 2008-2010, the overall aim is to further develop multilateral, bilateral cultural cooperation in the Barents region and encourage new networks in order to develop better skills and knowledge in the field of arts and culture as part of the implementation of the ND policy. Cultural cooperation is a key issue in developing mutual understanding.

**Prioritised tasks:**

- International labour recruiting and development of a common labour market within the region
- Implementation of the Barents Youth Programme 2007-2010
  - The overall aim of the programme is to make the Barents Region more attractive for young people so that they stay in the region or return after completing their education. The programme offers young people opportunities for mobility and active participation in the Barents cooperation and the development of the Barents Region. It aims to contribute to the achievement of increased cross-border youth cooperation and the development of skills and competencies, which promote active citizenship.
  - Activities to promote entrepreneurship and to create active networks of young entrepreneurs in the region will be of high priority in the next period.
  - All regions will equally finance the programme.
  - The Working Group on Youth Issues will play an important part in the implementation of the Youth Programme.
- Increase the number of exchange students within the region
  - Support the development of new and strengthen the existing student exchange programmes with focus on language and common interest in the region.
  - The number of long-term exchange students going from Sweden, Finland and Norway to Russia should be balanced by the end of 2010.
- Further develop the Barents Region and create attractive cities and regions both for men, women and youth
  - All efforts should therefore be made to create a society for all and provide an environment where women and youth stay in the region.
- Implementation of the Cooperation Programme on Health and Related Social Issues in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2007-2010 in co-ordination with the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS).

It is important to emphasise health behaviour and habits among in Barents Region as a part of our wellbeing.

- Implementation of the Barents Cultural Programme

- Joint Working Group on Culture will play an important part in the implementation of the Cultural Programme.

- Prevention of HIV and STD in the Barents Region

- Effective information campaigns about causes of the infections and how to avoid them should be initiated and supported. Special attention should be paid to young people and risk groups, such as intravenous drug users, sex-workers, prisoners, and gay men.
- The number of people infected by HIV is increasing in the Russian part of the Barents Region and many consider the disease to be on the verge of becoming an epidemic. It has been estimated that 1-2 per cent of the Russian population is infected. Concrete actions must be taken to combat the infectious virus in the Barents Region, among them the further development of the Barents HIV/AIDS programme.
- The aim is that the number of HIV infections by the end of 2010 should have decreased rather than increased.

- Strengthen the people to people cooperation

- Bilateral people-to-people cooperation is fairly well developed, although some regions are more active than others. The multilateral people-to-people cooperation, including three or more nationalities shall be encouraged and further developed during the next programme period.
- Regions welcome activities to make visa process easier (for example in the Visa Facilitation Agreement between EU and the Russian Federation, athletes, students and some other are discharged the fees). The Group Visa procedures should be easier, because of the importance of the tourism industry and the people-to-people cooperation.

#### **4.4 Indigenous peoples**

The indigenous peoples of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region are the Saami in Norway, Finland, Sweden and Russia (Murmansk Oblast), the Nenets in Nenets Autonomous Okrug and the Vepsians in the Republic of Karelia. The indigenous peoples have historical roots established long before the present nation states existed, with language, cultural and trade characteristics and status as indigenous peoples and minorities in all co-operating countries. Active participation of indigenous peoples is a natural and necessary part of the Barents cooperation.

The indigenous peoples are represented at the regional level of the Barents cooperation, through participation in the Regional Council and the Regional Committee. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat and the Barents Indigenous Peoples' Office (BIPO) in Lovozero share the secretarial function of the Working

Group of the Indigenous Peoples (WGIP). The members of the working group are appointed by indigenous political bodies and organisations in the Saami, Nenets and Vepsian communities.

The Northern Dimension emphasizes the protection of indigenous peoples, and indigenous peoples' issues are in particular mentioned in their Policy Framework Document. Indigenous peoples' concerns include stewardship of the fragile northern environment, promotion of cultural diversity, health and social well-being, and their status. All must be emphasized in the work of the New Barents Programme.

**Prioritised tasks:**

- Health and social related issues
  - The Barents Regional Council stresses a focus on measures aimed at prevention and treatment of alcoholism and drug abuse.
  - Activities aimed at youth within the indigenous communities shall be promoted and encouraged.
  - Indigenous populations in the remote parts of Russia in the Barents Region must be secured proper health care, and the Barents Regional Council shall support projects aimed at maintaining the health care arrangements in these areas.
  - The Barents Regional Council strongly encourages its member bodies to take measures in order to secure the access of indigenous communities and inhabitants to clean water.
  
- Protection of indigenous peoples (according to the EU Northern Dimension)
  - The Barents Regional Council encourages its member bodies to include indigenous peoples' challenges and special needs in their communication with industrial companies who have commercial interests in land areas inhabited and used by indigenous peoples.
  - The Barents Regional Council will support and encourage projects aimed at preserving indigenous peoples' traditions, but also entrepreneurship within new trades.
  - The Barents Regional Council will support and encourage projects aimed at combining the preservation of traditions with economic development concerning exploitation of natural resources in traditional indigenous areas.
  
- Education and competence building
  - The Barents Regional Council encourages the establishment of educational institutions within the indigenous communities, in order to avoid financial and geographical obstacles for indigenous population seeking education.
  - The Barents Regional Council strongly encourages its member bodies to stress the inclusion of the indigenous languages in school curricula.

- The Barents Regional Council supports and encourages the implementation of the Action Plan of Indigenous Peoples in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2009 – 2012.

## **4.5 Transport and infrastructure**

Sustainable growth and economic cooperation in the Barents Region is heavily depending on our transport possibilities and infrastructure. Inadequate infrastructure hinders economic development. Efforts should be made to improve the Barents infrastructure, especially the east-west connections in all forms of transport, including roads, railways, and flight and sea routes. Regional, national, EU and other international financing possibilities should be thoroughly evaluated in this respect. The planned Northern Dimension partnership on transport and logistics is an interesting new possibility. This partnership should be thoroughly evaluated in order to implement the Barents Programme.

The communication systems in the Barents Region are primarily developed for north-south transport within the individual countries. Increased transport East-West is limited by an underdeveloped infrastructure. The possibilities for the heavy based industry in the Barents Region are dependent on how the transport issues are solved. Development of the oil and gas sector in the region will also require large investments in infrastructure.

Road connections leading to and from international border crossing points should be maintained on the national/federal level. Development of railway connections in the region offers significant benefits for our economic cooperation. The regions will provide further support and develop the Barents Link logistic concept and other railway connections in the region.

Proper flight connections inside the Barents Regions are a prerequisite for increasing economic cooperation. Also the maritime activities are a vital part of region's economic activities, both in the Barents Sea and in the Gulf of Bothnia.

### **Prioritised tasks:**

- East-West Transport and Communications Connections
  - Efficient cargo and passenger transportation from east to west must be developed. Today the Region's citizens are often forced to go south within their own country before going east or west. Such a practice is inefficient and unacceptable.
  - The Regional Working Group on Communications has, during the period of 2003-2007 (5 years), practically been replaced by the Sustainable Transport in the Barents Region (STBR) project. The county administration board of Norrbotten has been the lead partner of the project. STBR is a common interest for the EU/ministry and the regional level. As agreed between these levels, STBR takes care of the practical transport cooperation in the Barents region. The partners have agreed to



continue the cooperation organized in the same way. The partners are now working on a new application for the Barents Sea Region Interreg IV B Programme.

- Regional Authorities will co-operate with private companies in developing transportation issues.
- The Barents Regional Council gives special support to the east-west transport developments, including Barents Link, Salla-Kandalaksha railroad, Norrbotnia Bana, and Tjernfjell tunnel.
- The Barents Regional Council should act in organising special industry related events in the main fields of economic cooperation.
- It is important to use and further develop data communications, for example optic fibre broadband connections.

- The Working Group on Communication / STBR project management group will play an important part in defining logistical needs and the implementation of the Barents Programme's logistical issues.

#### **4.6 Information and promotion**

The Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland (AC) and the International Barents Secretariat (IBS) have signed the Contract for Information and Data Management and Dissemination within the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation for the period of four years (2008-2011). According to the Contract AC and IBS will cooperate in the following areas and they shall perform the following tasks:

- The IBS and AC develop in cooperation general information and data management strategy for the Barents cooperation with a view to improve the information dissemination. One goal of the strategy is to improve the flow of information to the general public.
- The AC hosts and maintains the beac.st and barentsinfo.org websites, including their regional segments, and relevant links as appropriate, and any other websites or databases to be decided, promoting the dissemination of information on Barents issues in general. Beac.st will contain official information for authorities and decision-makers. Barentsinfo.org contains general information for the public and serves as a platform where Barents related projects can publish information. These websites will be integrated and linked compatible with cross-references.
- The AC enhances coordination and organization of the data and information providers in the Barents region into a tight network on the basis of work already done with barentsinfo.org.
- The AC develops data and information management and utilization of new technologies, such as the semantic web to facilitate better utilization and use of information.
- The AC coordinates web hosting for Barents working groups and, as agreed upon separately, initiates/maintains web pages of working groups.

The Regional Council, represented by the Chair region, will give priority to actively inform about the Barents Cooperation, both internally and externally.

- Internal information and promotion

- To further strengthen the network between the regional administrations and the Regional Council. The Regional Council will initiate a programme of exchange of employees in the respective regional administrations. This will give representatives from different organizations an opportunity to take part in the day-to-day work in other regions.

- External information and promotion

- The web promotion of the Barents Region has not been satisfactory. The IBS will from now on have the overall responsibility for an active and always up to date web site for the Barents Region.
- Each region should be given their own sub section where they will be given the opportunity to promote themselves. The respective regions will be responsible for continuously updating the information on this site. Special attention must be given in increasing the visibility of Barents issues internationally. This will include more attention and dialogue with different European institutions.
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## **5.0 Implementation and responsibilities**

The Regional Committee is responsible for the implementation of the Barents Programme 2009-2013, based on the decisions taken by the Regional Council.

### **5.1 Financing instruments**

The operations arising from the implementation of the Barents Programme will be financed by various sources in regional, national, EU and international level. The main international instruments will be the EU programmes (ENPI's Kolarctic and Karelia, Interreg programmes -Baltic Sea Programme -with ENPI component, Northern Periphery, and Interreg IV C etc.). Other notable sources are the Northern Council of Minister financing, Norwegian Barents Secretariat, etc.

It should be noted that the Interreg IV B Baltic Sea Region now covers the whole of the Barents Region, thus allowing the region's wide development projects.

The main issue is to activate the organisations to project activities and by this way to launch concrete cross-border cooperation (partly through organisations that are involved in the Barents cooperation). Financial possibilities should be taken into account when making programme implementation plans.

The Northern Dimension and its focus on the Barents Region, will also give potential financing possibilities. These are:

- Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing (NDPHS)
- Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP)
- Possible Northern Dimension Logistics and Transport Partnership
- Possible Northern Dimension Cultural Partnership

### **5.2 Implementation of Sector Programmes**

The Barents Region created a strategy as a result of our project called Barents 2010. The strategy is to generate economic growth and social development by a knowledge-driven and sustainable exploitation of the region's natural resources and to make the Barents Region competitive on the world market

The Sector Programmes were designed for the implementation of this strategy. Several sector programmes have been already set up (Tourism, Energy, East-West logistics, Mining and minerals). In the sector

programmes, a specific region takes a leading role and identifies partner regions. The programme has an umbrella character and steps forward have to be taken by projects within each programme.

The Sector Programmes will be used as a tool for the implementation of the Barents Programme. These sector programmes should include relevant regional actors in the multilateral cooperation projects. The sector programmes will complement the concrete cooperation by creating new development projects in their respective fields.

### **5.3 Working Groups**

The Working Groups work as expert groups for the regional cooperation. They should also be seen as a tool for the implementation of the Barents Programme.

The primary idea of the Working Groups is to create a network for their respective field of expertise. These networks should aim on creating ideas, projects and policies for the Barents cooperation, based on the priorities set in the Barents Programme, and on the mandates given from the Regional Committee.

The working groups, acting as an expert group on their given field of activity, will help the regional authorities and other relevant actors in bringing the priorities of this programme into action. The working groups will play an important role in implementing the prioritised tasks in this programme.

### **5.4 Barents 2010+ Project**

The project has been initiated by the Barents Regional Council and is an elaborated follow-up of the previous Interreg project Barents 2010. The overall aim of the project is to strengthen the development within the spheres of environment, human resources and economy in the region and to bring the multilateral cooperation into action. The project is an effort to create a concrete platform for the multilateral work in close cooperation with already existing actors and organisations.

The regions within the Barents region share many similarities, common opportunities and problems. The climate change is also posing a threat to the region due to its Arctic and Sub-Arctic climate that is more vulnerable. Climate change and the impact it has for different types livelihoods e.g. for the indigenous peoples is heavily dependent on nature. The changing climate also poses a threat to other types of businesses in the region. Just to name a few winter tourism and car testing. Climate adaptation is therefore needed to meet the new challenges of the changing climate.

The region has significant economic possibilities owing to its natural resources and tourism potential. Women and youth are leaving the Barents Region and almost all parts of the region experience population decrease. The most alarming fact is that women and youth are leaving the region creating a demographic

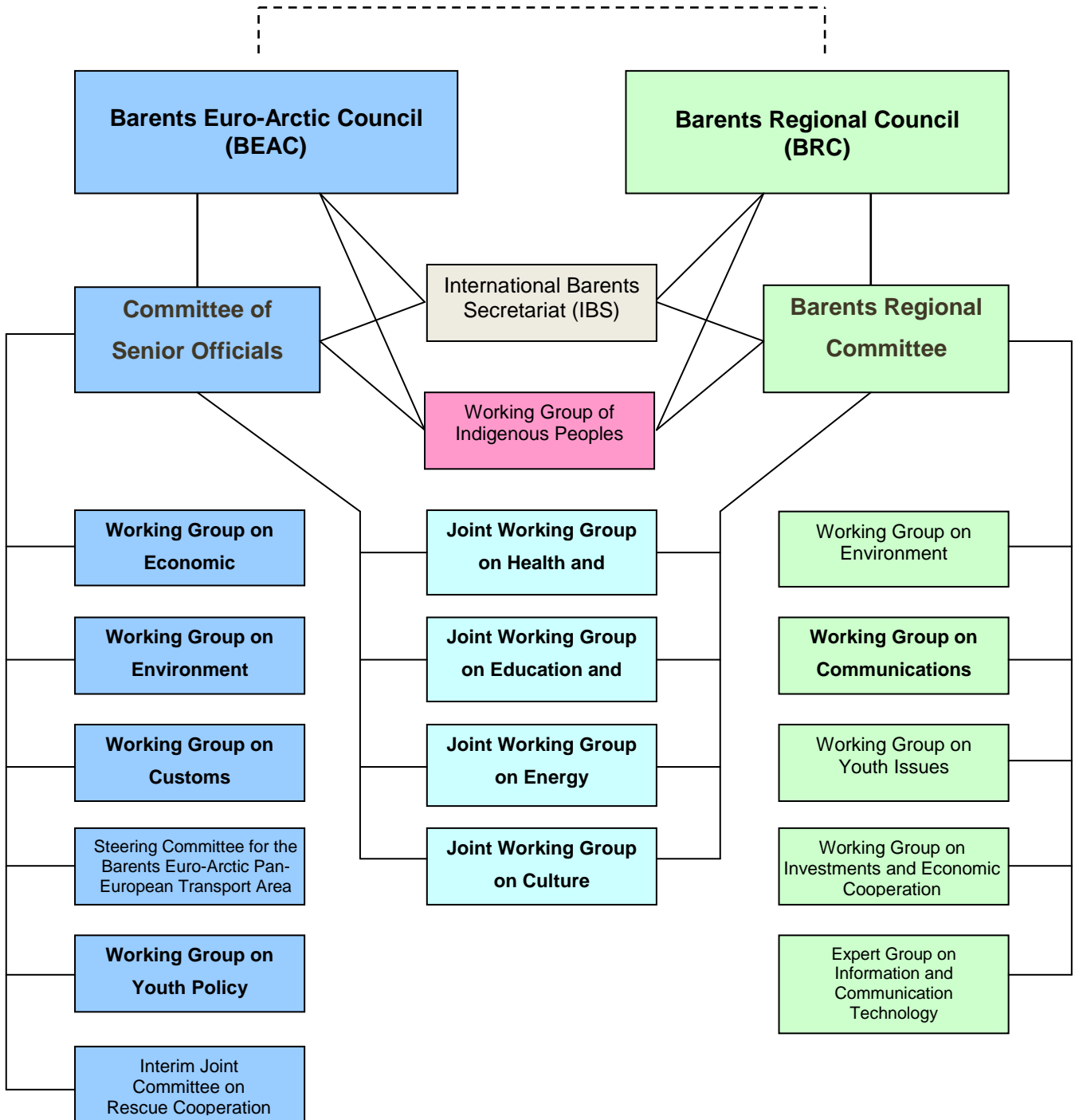
imbalance and a shortage of labour. The need for competence and labour in our regions is growing due to the heavy investments that are on the way in many of the regions.

The project aims to address the growing need for competence and the demographic situation and especially concerning women and youth who are leaving the region. Raw materials such as ore, woods, oil and gas are a big part of the region's economies and synergy effects can be added through cooperation with regions possessing similar preconditions. There are also differences in culture, legal frameworks etc. that create problems and are hampering a fruitful cooperation.

To make use of the Barents region's full potential and strengthen the cooperation the project will be coordinated and used as one of the important tools to implement the Barents Programme.

# Annex 1: Organisation chart of the Barents Cooperation

## Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation



October 2008