

**Joint Committee on Cooperation within the Field of Emergency Prevention,
Preparedness and Response in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region**

The Joint Committee is established according to article 4 of the Agreement between the Governments in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region on Cooperation within the field of emergency prevention, preparedness and response (“The BEAR-Agreement”)

Annual Report 2014

Norway took over the chairmanship of the Joint Committee for the year 2014 from Finland. There have been two meetings in the Joint Committee during 2014. The first meeting was held in Kirkenes 22 May, and the second meeting was carried out in Bodø 27 – 28 November.

All four Contracting Parties were represented in both meetings.

There has been no Barents Rescue Exercise during 2014. The next exercise will be in Finland October 2015.

Items presented/discussed at the Joint Committee meeting in Kirkenes in May:

- Information and reports from the Contracting Parties on recent national events, activities and accidents.
- Updating of the Joint Manual. Input and changes where suggested during the meeting and Norway updated the version.
- Evaluation of the Barents Rescue Exercise 2013. Norway presented the final evaluation report of the Barents Rescue 2013. The evaluation report was thoroughly discussed in the Committee.
- The Exercise Working Group (a working group within the Joint Committee consisting of one representative from each of the Contracting Parties) was revitalised. It was decided that the Exercise Working Group should prepare a short paper to the next meeting in the Joint Committee with suggestions on strategic directions on future exercises; including policy development, information and knowledge exchange, training and networking, for enhancing cooperation in the area of preparedness.
- Finland presented the planning process and a tentative scenario for the next Barents Rescue in 2015 (flooding and a mine accident in north of Finland). The Initial Planning Conference (IPC) is to be held in mid-September 2014, and the Joint Committee were invited to participate in the planning conferences.

Many of the Joint Committee representatives participated in the IPC in Rovaniemi, Finland, 16 – 18 September 2014.

Items presented/discussed at the Joint Committee meeting in Bodø in November:

- Information and reports from the Contracting Parties on recent national events, activities and accidents.
- The Exercise Working Group presented their paper as decided in the last Joint Committee meeting in Kirkenes. The overall feedback was that the working group had done a very good job and that the document outlines the broader picture of possible activities well based on “The BEAR-Agreement”.
- The paper presents more specific emergency preparedness activities, which is focusing on various types of activities and not only large scale exercises. Types of activities includes the following: policy development dealing with risks in the north, information and knowledge exchange (through lectures, presentation, etc.), training (class room, field training, sharing of best practices, etc.), networking (more a result from the other activities mentioned), and exercises (more table top, less large scale exercises).
- After the discussion in the Joint Committee Norway updated the document and send it out to all the Contracting Parties with a deadline for inputs by 1 February 2015. No amendments have been proposed by this date, and the text is now considered adopted by all participants of the Joint Committee.
- It was agreed that the final text should be incorporated into the Joint Manual.

Russia, as the next country in alphabetic order, is taking over the chairmanship for 2015.

The next meeting will be organized by the Russian chairmanship during the autumn of 2015.