

Report from the Joint Committee-meeting held in Bodø 16-17 September 2010

Participants:

1. Ms. Bente Michaelsen (chair), Ministry of Justice and the Police, Norway
2. Mr. Kjell Johansen, Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre Northern Norway, Norway
3. Mr. Tore Drtina, Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning (DSB), Norway
4. Mr. Jukka Metsu, Ministry of Interior, Finland
5. Mr. Hannu Rantanen, Emergency Services College, Finland
6. Ms. Inna Ponomareva, EMERCOM of Russia, Moscow, The Russian Federation
7. Mr. Victor Minailov, EMERCOM of Russia, Murmansk Region, The Russian Federation
8. Mr. Vladimir Kazakov, EMERCOM of Russia, Murmansk Region, The Russian Federation
9. Mr. Olle Jonsson, Ministry of Defence, Sweden
10. Ms. Julia Fredriksson, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, Sweden
11. Mr. Kent Frederiksen, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, Sweden
12. Ms. Karin Børjesson, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Sweden
13. Mr. Roy Hojem, International Barents Secretariat

The meeting of the Joint Committee was held in the premises of the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Northern Norway, Bodø on 16-17 September 2010 under the chairmanship of Ms. Bente Michaelsen.

1. Opening of the meeting

As an introduction, all the participants gave a brief presentation of themselves. A list of participants with contact information is attached to the report.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

3. Administrative matters

a) Update list of members of the Joint Committee

The list of the members of the Joint Committee was updated. The list will be posted on www.beac.st.

b) Information from the CSO-meeting in Stockholm 1-2 October 2009

The chair informed about the CSO-meeting(Committee of Senior Officials) in Stockholm 1-2 February 2010 where Bente Michaelsen and Olle Jonsson participated. The chairs of the various BEAC Committees and Working Groups are invited to an annual meeting to inform the CSO of their ongoing work and the work plan for the year to come.

The CSO-representatives underlined that the Agreement shows the maturity of the Barents Cooperation and the potential for achievements in other fields. The Agreement is important for improved rescue services but also as an example of a concrete result produced by the Barents Cooperation. The report from the CSO-meeting is attached to this report.

c) Organizational chart of the BEAC cooperation

The chair informed of the changes in the BEAC organogram showing the structure of the Beac-cooperation. The Joint Committee has got a more independent status than the other Working Groups as our cooperation is based on an agreement between States.

The following is from the CSO-report:

The Joint Committee is now a permanent committee as it was an interim committee prior to the Agreement. The establishment of a permanent committee and that it stays within the framework of the Barents Cooperation is important. Since the intergovernmental Agreement established the Joint Committee, it is set up directly by the Barents countries making it different from the BEAC Working Groups. The organigram of the BEAC and BRC has been changed accordingly putting the Joint Committee in the same legal category as the Working Group of Indigenous People (WGIP) as the Joint Committee informs the CSO and BRC and uses the services of the IBS.

d) Terms of reference of the Committee

The chair informed that the Terms of Reference of the Committee, adopted at the last session in Helsinki on 17 December 2009 was to be found on the Beac website at the document page of the Committee.

e) Information/news from the International Barents Secretariat

Mr. Hojem from the International Barents Secretariat informed the Committee of the work of the Secretariat. His presentation included the working bodies of the BEAC-cooperation, the International Barents Secretariat and its main tasks, the Swedish chairmanship's priorities and the BEAC web-site. The presentation is attached to this report.

4. The Barents Agreement

Sweden as the depositary to the Agreement between the Governments in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region on Cooperation within the Field of Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response informed the Committee of the status of ratification. Sweden ratified on 2 February 2009, Norway on 17 March 2009 and the Russian Federation on 12 October 2009.

The ratification process in Finland is pending to be completed during the spring 2011 (after the elections). Mr. Metso informed that the Agreement had to be approved by the Finnish Parliament, but he could not foresee any difficulties related to the ratification process.

The Committee expressed its wish to see the entry into force of the Agreement in the near future and hopefully before the next exercise Barents Rescue, to be held in Sweden in September 2011.

5. Follow-up of exercise Barents Rescue 2009

a. Planning of exercises – recommendation in the Final Exercise Report p.16.

The Chair presented the suggestion in the Final Exercise Report:

- 1 “To make a work group of representatives of the participating countries for development of methodic recommendations on order of planning and carrying out of the international exercises of rescue services of the Barents Euro-Arctic countries – “Barents Rescue”.
- 2 By means of methodic recommendations to determine a structure of the Exercise's direction and a list of obligatory documents and their structure necessary for carrying out of the Exercise.
- 3 To include into the work group specialists who took part in the planning and conducting the Exercises of years 2001, 2005, 2007 and 2009. The structure of the work group should be maximum permanent from the moment of its forming till acceptance of methodic recommendations as instruction. ...”

She informed about the earlier decision of the Joint Committee at its meeting in Helsinki in December 2009 to add the content of this suggestion to the work of the Joint Committee. The reason behind this is to avoid parallel structures within the rescue cooperation in the Barents Region. Questions related to the ongoing cooperation should be discussed in the Joint Committee.

Mr. Drtina presented some interesting ideas and views on how to plan and perform exercises. He also questioned the follow-up of evaluation processes after exercises and suggested the development of an exercise calendar. Some thoughts on how to exercise, including the question “do we get the added value of how we exercise today?” were also highlighted. Finally he suggested updating the BEAC Exercise Planning Guide. Mr. Drtin's presentation is attached to this report.

Mr. Jonsson gave some general comments on the presentation. He agreed that the “next generation of exercises” should be discussed. He agreed to create a working group (WG) on exercises to be a part of the Joint Committee or at least to report to the Committee. In his view, the Joint Committee should act as a steering group for a WG. The work in the WG should be carried out by exercise experts. The political importance of exercises was also underlined. He suggested tasking a WG to continue the work related to exercises.

Mr. Rantanen was of the opinion that it was necessary to look at the whole rescue process, not only exercises. We should use exercises to develop the cooperation and we needed to agree on what to develop.

Mr. Minailov commented the excellent presentation by Mr. Drtina, highlighting improved cooperation, common risks and practical actions. He underlined the usefulness of having a common risk picture and the possibility to use this in the planning process of exercises. He also mentioned that the different countries had different expertise and the possibility to draw on this expertise in exercise planning. He suggested having more tabletop exercises (TTX). The BEAC Exercise Planning Guide should be the basis for the work related to exercises.

Mr. Jonsson was of the opinion that the Joint Committee should have a view on all aspects related to cross-border cooperation within our field and not only exercises. However, he underlined the importance of a starting point – such as f. ex. exercises.

Mr. Metso mentioned that the role of exercises was increasing and seen as too important. He was of the opinion that exercises should be realistic and should always include some new elements. He questioned the aim of the exercise Barents Rescue 2011 and underlined the need to cover wishes and aims of the other participating countries.

Mr. Johansen was of the opinion that there should be a standard on handling co-ordination of rescue co-operation. This was important to exercise.

Mr. Fredrikssen posed a question on the development of operational standards.

Mr. Metso mentioned f. ex. host nation support (HNS) as an example where it should be the same operational standard.

Mr. Rantanen was missing a risk based approach in the development of the cross-border cooperation.

Mrs. Fredriksson was of the opinion that the cooperation between countries should be developed based on a common risk picture. There are also other areas that need to be developed, other than exercises.

Mrs. Börjesson mentioned that the Committee should look into the training aspects of our cooperation.

To conclude the Committee agreed to the following mandate for a working group on exercise planning:

- Develop a strategic plan for the exercises Barents Rescue, hereunder:
 - Identify the risks in the Barents Region.
 - Identify incidents where international assistance might be required.
 - Identify possible scenarios for exercises in the region.
 - Suggest forms of exercises (TTX, CPX, FTX etc)
 - Regional aspect should be taken into account.
 - Take into consideration the discussion in the Joint Committee.
- The working group reports to the Joint Committee on Rescue Cooperation within the BEAC framework.
- A report shall be submitted to the Joint Committee by the next meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed that the countries should nominate a representative to the working group by the end of September 2011. The nomination shall be done to the chair of the Joint Committee.

b. Revising the Exercise Planning Guide.

The need to revise the BEAC Exercise Planning Guide has been discussed. Mr. Drtina informed the Committee that the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) was looking into the matter as a part of the planning process of the exercise Barents Rescue 2011.

The Committee agreed to postpone this item until later.

c. Procedures for notification and request of assistance – regularly communication exercises between the points of contact in the Barents Region. Finland, Russian Federation and Norway to report result of tests carried out in 2010.

The Committee has earlier decided to carry out regularly communication exercises between the points of contact in the Barents Region. The aim of the communication exercises is to ensure that the communication lines are working and to familiarize the rescue controllers with the point of contact, as well as the documentation related to notification and request for assistance. In 2010 three communication exercises have been carried out.

Finland was scheduled to perform a communication test on 1 January 2010. Finland had nothing to inform at the Committee-meeting. The test was carried out, but no details were known.

Norway was scheduled to perform a communication test on 1 April 2010. The test was carried out a few days later than planned. The test was carried out satisfactorily.

The Russian Federation (North West Regional Centre St. Petersburg) was scheduled to perform a communication test on 1 July 2010. The participants present at the Joint Committee meeting had no information concerning such a test.

The Committee agreed to continue the testing of the communication channels as put forward in the document “Barents Communication Test”.

d. Practical test of communication channels.

The Joint Rescue Coordination Centre in Bodø (JRCC) performed a communication test while the Joint Committee was present.

The JRCC was able to get in contact with all of the other points of contact within a reasonable short time. All the point of contact called back to the JRCC on the receipt of the notification-fax.

The Barents Communication Test – sheet indicating all the contact points were updated regarding the Russian (Murmansk) contact point. An updated sheet is attached to this report.

e. Testing of VTC-systems between the Points of Contact in the Barents Region. Status?

The question on the use of VTC between points of contact was briefly discussed. Mr. Minailov explained the need of testing VTC from Murmansk to the other points of contact. During the forest fires last summer, Murmansk had to go through Moscow.

Mr. Rantanen questioned the role of VTC. In his opinion, the VTC is not a means of communication/alarming the other Barents countries in the event of an incident/accident.

Mr. Metso informed that Helsinki uses VTC during exercises. Helsinki is not the proper point of contact within the Barents-cooperation.

The Committee agreed that it was important to use the correct communication channels to inform/notify the other contact points, e.g. fax and not VTC. However, as a compromise, it was up to each country to test VTC if they had a special need to do so. Mr. Minailov indicated that the Russian Federation intended to test the VTC-communication.

f. Border crossing procedures for response teams are to be as simplified as possible in accordance with the Agreement art. 8. Proposal to look into the national procedures of all the Parties to the Agreement to ensure that procedures are efficient or if changes should be made.

It was agreed that this was a complicated matter. All of the countries are dealing with different agreements and procedures related to border crossings depending on whether the neighboring country is an EU-member or not. There are also different procedures depending on the type of resources that are about to cross the border, e.g. state vessels or other resources.

There seemed to be a general consensus that the issue of border crossing needed to be exercised, and it was suggested that a “test-drive” could be useful. It was also highlighted that the article in question in the Agreement needed to be communicated to the border crossing stations in question to ensure that they are made aware of the obligations that exists.

Representatives of the Committee underlined that this was a national responsibility to ensure that the border crossings are as simplified as possible. The border crossing of rescue resources should be as quick as possible taking into account that the time factor often is of essential importance.

It was agreed to keep this item on the agenda for the meetings to come and follow how this develops in the future.

- g. With regard to suspension and exemption of customs duties, other duties and taxes for rescue resources, it is stated in the Agreement art. 9 that national legislation and international obligations applies. Proposal to look into the matter to ensure that this is as simplified as possible for all Parties.*

Regarding this agenda item it was also agreed that this was a national responsibility to ensure the fulfillment of this obligation in the Agreement. It was agreed to keep this item on the agenda for the meetings to come and follow how this develops in the future.

6. Exercise Barents Rescue 2011

Mr. Jonsson made a presentation of the planning of the exercise Barents Rescue 2011. His presentation contained the exercise aims, objectives, participation, suggested timeline, scenarios and events. The main planning conference (MPC) will be held in Luleå 19-22 October 2010. The presentation is attached to this report.

Mrs. Börjesson informed the Committee that there would be a regional exercise within the main exercise Barents Rescue 2011.

Mrs. Fredriksson informed the Committee that all four countries had registered for the MPC. She also informed that there were many participants from the local and regional level in Sweden.

7. Barents Joint Manual

- a. Update needs? (contact information etc)*

The Joint Manual was updated as regards contact information for the Russian Federation (Murmansk).

- b. Publication*

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police will ensure that the Manual is printed and made available in a folder. In addition to the Manual, the publication will consist of the fax sheet, the Agreement and a CD with the documents in word-format.

- c. Costs*

The Ministry of Justice and the Police (Norway) will take the costs related to the printing of the Manual.

It was agreed to publish the Joint Manual on the web-site, without the contact information included.

8. Involvement in the possible project “Cold protection/hypothermia”.

The Joint Committee has been taking part in the plans of a project on cold protection management in emergency situations. It is initiated by Finland as a result from the Barents

Rescue 2007 with a focus on resources and equipment. An application was planned to be submitted to Kolarctic in spring 2010.

Mr. Metso informed that the activities were ongoing, but had no details regarding the project. He was of the opinion that it is open how to proceed with the project and that the application was pending.

Mrs. Fredriksson questioned the intention to go forward with the project.

Mr. Metso will inform the Committee of the status of the project at a later stage.

Mrs. Fredriksson informed the Committee that MSB had analyzed art. 4 of the Agreement and made a suggestion that the Committee should look into the possibility to go further with joint training and exchange of experts.

Mr. Rantanen had earlier headed the Task Force on training and they had had plans for joint training in the Barents Region. However, to realize any plans, funding is needed.

Mr. Jonsson suggested that alternatives and costs should be elaborated.

Mrs. Fredriksson informed that training was included into the Cold protection project. Sandö was interested to be a part of this.

Mr. Rantanen volunteered to look into this matter and provide information to the next meeting. He would also take contact with Sandö.

9. Web-update (www.beac.st)

It was agreed that the web-page needed an update as follows:

- Contact information for the members of the Joint Committee.
- Picture of the members of the Joint Committee.
- Link to the various ministries/agencies that we represent.
- Link to the Barents Rescue exercises – final reports.
- Link to the forthcoming exercise Barents Rescue 2011.
- Joint Manual, without contact information.

10. Next meeting

It was a wish in the Committee to have a meeting early spring 2011, as well as a meeting in the autumn 2011.

11. Next chair

The Russian Federation will chair the Committee in 2011.

12. Any other business

Nothing was discussed under this agenda item.