



Meeting of the Joint Committee on Rescue Cooperation, 10 December 2020, VTC chaired by Sweden

1. Welcome from Sweden

Cecilia Looström, Head of Department at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) welcomed the meeting participants.

2. Opening of the meeting

Chair Cecilia Looström, MSB Sweden, opened the meeting. The participants presented themselves (list of participants is attached).

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

4. Adoption of the minutes from the last meeting

The minutes from the JC meeting the 29 April 2020 were adopted.

5. Information from BEAC CSO meetings – Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Co-operation etc

Julia Fredriksson informed about Swedish participation (as the Chair in JC) in two online meetings: Barents Euro Arctic Council (BEAC) High level meeting 26 October and BEAC Council of Senior Officials (CSO) meeting 9 December 2020.

BEAC High Level meeting was chaired by the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs (NO chair BEAC 2020-2021) and the County Governor of Västerbotten (chair Regional Committee). It was annual high level meeting with representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs from Barents countries but also Denmark, Island and European External Action Service of the EU Commission. Cooperation in civil protection area was mention by the Swedish representative as one of

the successful examples of cooperation, that need to be strengthened in order to address new challenges in the region.

CSO online meeting focused on the proposal on update of the Action Plan for Climate Change in the Barents Region. The Action Plan has been updated twice in 2013 and 2017 and now is the time for next update. This work will be done during 2021 and all WG will be contacted and asked to the comments. JC gave full support to this important work.

Working Groups Chairs also shortly informed about the work during 2020. Cecilia Looström informed about the JC and the governmental agreement that steers work, which differs the JC from the other BEAC Working Groups. JC work under 2020 focused on the implementation of the recommendations from the BR 19 Evaluation report.

JC took the note on information about those two meetings.

All WG need to provide the report to the International Barents Secretariat on the work. Sweden prepared the draft that will be distributed for JC comments/input.

Norway assured to continue work with the Action Plan for Climate Change during the planning of Barents Event Week 2022.

6. Presentation of the changes in the Barents Joint Manual

Based on the decision of the JC in April Sweden prepared a proposal for adjustments in Barents Joint Manual (and Attachment 2) according to recommendations from the evaluation of the BR 19 exercise. During the PEWG Meeting 5 November 2020, the proposal was presented, discussed and finalised by PEWG.

JC discussed the proposed adjustments and decided that revised version of the Manual will be adopted through the silent procedure. JC gave a possibility for the Finnish representative from the Ministry of Interior who was not able to participate at the JC meeting to be a part of the adoption procedure.

Norway (JRCC in Bodö) reminded about the need of other changes in the Manual discussed earlier. JC gave the task to PEWG prepare proposals for the next JC meeting.

7. The Barents Rescue Exercise 2022 in Norway, first summaries from the Concept Development Conference (CDC)

Anders Gundersen, DSB presented the summaries from CDC organised the 9 December 2020 (presentation is attached).

JC welcomed the work done by Norway.

8. Brief information from all countries and from the International Barents Secretariat on recent or planned activities, etc.

Finland informed that Lapland is fully occupied with COVID-19 related issues.

Norway informed that Ministry is fully occupied with COVID-19 related issues and many activities are postponed. White paper focused on the strengthening of Barents cooperation handed over to the Parliament. JRCC informed that all available resources are operational. Some border crossing accidents on the Swedish boarder were handled and all have been working well.

Russian Federation informed that the country is fully occupied with the pandemic issues as well. EMERCOM has a special role as the EMERCOM field hospital operated for the first time in Murmansk region working with testing etc. Hospital was in operation under two months and received a lot of valuable experience used by scientists. At the same time the flooding season in Murmansk region was very intensive with levels seen last time more than 80 years ago. The main railway bridge has been destroyed and 90% of traffic was stopped. All have been restored in very short time. After the flooding came the mushrooms period and lead to 70% more search and rescue operations. Moscow informed that they organised two Barents communication tests in July and in October 2020. All worked well and all countries answered according to procedures.

Sweden informed about new rescue services legislation. After the major forest fires in 2014 and 2018, several investigations have been made in order to see what could be better. Perhaps the most important conclusion was that the management of the rescue services need to be better. The ability to lead large operations in connection with forest fires needs special strengthening.

During the autumn, the Swedish Parliament/Riksdag changed the legislation that regulates the rescue services.

The changes include

- The management of the rescue services is organized in large rescue regions
- State control over the municipal rescue services is tightened
- There will be obligatory for rescue services to report accident investigations
- The supervision of and support for the municipalities' work must be strengthened

The amendments to the law will come into force on 1 January 2022.

Sweden also informed about two international video roundtables organised during spring/beginning of summer 2020 (19 May and 11 June) by MSB. The roundtables aimed to increase the understanding of the long-term consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on preparedness and resilience. Leading experts from several different countries participated and discussed the lessons learned and experiences gained so far during the pandemic. Reports from both roundtables are available at MSB English website.

Sweden informed that they organised the Barents communication test the 1 December 2020 and all worked well.

IBS purchased ZOOM licence and can support BEAC working groups in organising meetings and encouraged JC to use this support. IBS informed about ongoing work with funding for small Barents projects aimed to bring added-value to macro-regional cooperation. The rules and regulations are now being prepared by a separate task force, and the financial mechanism is expected to be in place from 2022. New Head of IBS Markus Karlsen will start in January 2021 in Kirkenes. Markus has for many years held the position as the Head of International Department at Finnmark Fylkeskommune and was recently acting as a Chair of the Regional Committee of the BEAC.

9. Next meeting of the Joint Committee – information from Finland, Chair of the Barents JC in 2021

Finland informed that no official decisions regarding priorities have been made yet and the issue has to be discussed thoroughly but preliminary ideas for the topics of Finland's JC-chairmanship could be:

- Security, risk management and crisis resilience (Covid-19 / tourism)
- Cross-border co-operation especially during exceptional conditions

-Adapting to climate change from the point of view of the Barents co-operation

Finland is also chairs of Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2021-2023 and the priorities there are People-to-people contacts, Sustainability and Transport & Connectivity. Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the responsibility for the BEAC Chairmanship but possible synergies within the topics and themes might be useful to investigate.

Finland will come back regarding the dates for the next JC meeting.

10. Other business

The meeting ended with a small digital ceremony where Sweden handed over the Chair gavel to Finland.