



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT, 2021

Name of the Working Group: (Joint) Working Group on Culture

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: Norway/Västerbotten, 2019-2021

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

The Norwegian Chairmanship focuses on the areas of health, people-to-people contact and knowledge, with a view to building a stronger and more resilient Barents region.

The horizontal priorities for the Västerbotten regional Chairmanship are environment and climate, youth, gender equality, indigenous people, and visibility.

2. Meetings (meetings held, main topics and outcomes of the meetings)

Even in 2021 it was not possible to hold meetings in person due to the pandemic. The working group had extensive contacts digitally.

In connection with the award ceremony of the Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation in Tromsø in October, the (J)WGC arranged an informal panel discussion, "Barents Scholarship talks". Recipients of the scholarships 2019 and 2021 were invited, sharing their thoughts and ideas on the Barents region and cross border cooperation in the region.

For those members who did not have the possibility to participate on site, the panel discussion could be viewed online.

3. Other activities (projects, events, programmes etc.)

Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation

The Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation, established in 2016, was initially a trial arrangement for four years and should continue through silent procedure unless decided otherwise within the 2018 – 2019 chairmanship period. Following a silent procedure, the Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation was made permanent during the chairmanship period 2019-2021. The scholarship guidelines were amended accordingly.

During 2021, the scholarship was awarded for the third time. Following each country's regional processes, the (J)WGC have appointed the following recipients of the scholarships for 2021:

Russia: State Opera and Ballet Theater of the Republic of Komi

Finland: The Artists' Association of Lapland

Sweden: Photographer, editor and writer Kenneth Mikko

Norway: Stellaris Dansteater

The scholarship was awarded by the member states' foreign ministers / national representatives at the BEAC ministerial meeting in Tromsø on 25-27 October.

4. Results of the year (decisions, new initiatives, improvements)

The chairs of the (J)WGC have during the year initiated and financially ensured the implementation of a study examining the effects and impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the cultural sector and on cross-border cultural cooperation in the Barents region.

The study is planned to be conducted in 2022 and will be able to provide a basis for follow-up in a broader investigation later. The study will include indigenous peoples' perspectives.

5. Youth involvement (how has the working group included young people or worked with youth issues during the year)

Representatives from the (J)WGC participated at the BEAC Youth Summit in Tromsø on October 26.

6. Evaluation of the work (What went well, what needs improvement)

The pandemic situation has continued to affect the conditions for meeting and networking in the working group. Travel restrictions and closed borders have reduced the opportunities for cooperation and the establishment of new contacts.

Despite this, the work with the Barents Scholarship has mainly been carried out according to plan. We are grateful that the scholarships could be awarded solemnly at the ministerial meeting this year as well, and that it was possible to carry out a small event for current and previous recipients of the scholarships on site in Tromsø, in connection with the ceremony.