



Minutes of The Barents Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC) Meeting

Date: 24-25 April 2019

Venue: Finnmark County Authority, Vadsø, and Vardø Hotel, Vardø

Agenda of the JWGC meeting

1. *Opening of the meeting*
2. *Round of presentations*
3. *Adoption of the agenda*
4. *Minutes from the Kiruna meeting in November 2018*
5. *The International Barents Secretariat*
6. *Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation, presentation of nominees and deciding on scholarship recipients*
7. *Planning of scholarship award ceremony*
8. *Presentation by the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples in Barents*
9. *Presentation by the Joint Working Group on Youth*
10. *Youth Recommendations*
11. *Discussion on digitalisation*
12. *Information from the members*
13. *Planning of the next meeting*
14. *Any other business*
15. *Closing the meeting*

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair, Kirsti Riesto, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to Varanger.

2. Round of presentations

The JWGC Members and guests introduced themselves.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as is.

4. Minutes from the Kiruna meeting in November 2018

The minutes of the Kiruna meeting of 6 November 2018 were approved.

5. The International Barents Secretariat

Roman Gokkoev of the IBS presented the work of the IBS, highlighting the visibility of the Barents Cooperation, which is a priority of the Swedish Chairmanship. The IBS is gathering Barents success stories, where the JWGC contribution so far is the scholarship. On 10 April, during the Arctic Forum in Saint Petersburg, these success stories were presented to a high-ranking audience. There is a Discover Barents Photo Contest on the topic of Youth, open for contributions until 30 April. For five years, it is possible to, free of charge, use the photos of the contest. The point was made by the JWGC that also the administrative support the IBS can offer the Working Groups is important and it was clarified that the IBS can offer some assistance in the form of, for example, registration assistance.

6. Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation, presentation of nominees and deciding on scholarship recipients

The JWGC was presented with the regional scholarship nominees and took a decision further described in the separate minutes for this agenda item.

7. Planning of scholarship award ceremony

The official award ceremony for the four scholarships recipients will take place in the context of the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the BEAC on 3 October 2019. It is foreseen that the Ministers themselves will lead the ceremony.

The Chairmanship proposed that, in addition to the ceremony, the new recipients will also meet the current scholarship holders in some form of moderated exchange of experience and aspirations and that the recipients will also meet with the JWGC to present themselves. Therefore, it is advisable, that both the current scholarship holders and the new recipients plan a trip to Umeå (expenses covered by their home regions that themselves may decide for how many people – if from a group or association – the expenses can be covered) from around lunch time on 3 October to around lunch time on 4 October, but more information will follow.

The events are mainly planned by the Chairmanship and Västerbotten together with the Västerbotten county administrative board, but the input by the JWGC members was welcomed. It was suggested, that JWGC members, if they wish, can meet in Rovaniemi during the Arctic Arts Summit to further plan the events. The Chairmanship will soon send out a proposal for an ad hoc meeting in Rovaniemi to the JWGC.

The Chairmanship also asked for early input from the JWGC members on how to plan the events and the suggestion was made to arrange a more public event.

The possibility for this will be looked into, keeping in mind the limited resources available.

8. Presentation by the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples in Barents

Aleksandra Fomina, Nenets, member of the WGIP, presented her work to strengthen the Nenets culture, with a particular focus on children and youth. Also, **Tatiana Egorova**, secretary for the WGIP, presented the work of the Working Group, which has six members. The Barents indigenous peoples' congress is held every four years since 2008, with indigenous delegates from all levels that adopt an action plan and resolution for the upcoming years. The first Barents indigenous summit was held in Moscow 2017, during the Russian BEAC chairmanship, where indigenous politicians can meet with politicians on several different levels. On 27-28 May, the next summit will be held in Lycksele and one of the topics to be discussed are truth and reconciliation processes. A new action plan for the WGIP will be ready in summer.

The incoming Norwegian Chairmanship expressed the ambition to continue inviting and cooperating with the WGIP.

It was noted that there has not been a Nenets member in the JWGC for a long time and the Chairmanship will be in contact with the Swedish MFA regarding the possibility to approach the Nenets authorities on this.

9. Presentation by the Joint Working Group on Youth

Hanne Sofie Roaldsen, on behalf of the JWGY, presented the work of the Working Group. The JWGY would like to work closer with the BRYC and connect their work to the new strategy for youth in the EU. Appreciation was expressed for the Luleå conference on youth perspectives for the future and the JWGY wants to take the conclusions from this conference further. They would be interested in creating "Culture Games" for the Barents region, like the Barents Games. There is a recommendation from the JWGY that there could be one BRYC member invited to every Working Group meeting.

The JWGC agreed that, if the expenses for BRYC participation during the JWGC meeting can be covered by the BRYC, it would be welcome to, from now on, invite one BRYC member to each JWGC meeting.

10. Youth Recommendations

The Chairmanship informed that the deadline to send in one or more youth recommendations as JWGC commitments to the Swedish Chairmanship is in May and that the JWGC can choose between three proposals earlier made:

- 1. Involve the youth more into the Barents Scholarship, for example by facilitating a workshop with art students or other young people led by one or several scholarship recipients.*

2. *Promote participation by and inclusion of the youth in the cultural life of the Barents region with a focus on digitalisation, which is a means for the youth to consume but also produce culture and participate actively in cultural life. Concretely, a first step to take might be to involve young experts in our planned joint venture to explore the possibilities of digitalisation within the JWGC's field of interest.*
3. *Promote the participation by and inclusion of the youth in future Arctic Arts Summit programmes.*

Including the youth into the Barents scholarship event was seen as very constructive and concrete, but should be seen on a longer term than just Umeå, which should be communicated. The point on including youth experts in digitalisation events was seen to be more feasible on short term (more information under the agenda item on digitalisation). The point on the Arctic Arts Summit was seen as more difficult to implement. It was conveyed that the definition of “youth” is up to 25 years old.

11. Discussion on digitalisation

Norrbotten introduced the topic by reminding the JWGC that in Kiruna, the JWGC discussed literature, libraries, museums, cultural heritage and cultural mapping as possible field for joint ventures – in these areas digitalisation could help to reach out to bigger audiences. Norrbotten and Västerbotten have had a meeting since then to discuss how the process could be taken further and have concluded that the JWGC needs to facilitate for experts in this field to meet. An expert workshop back-to-back with the ministerial meeting in Umeå in October would be one suggestion, but it is not certain that there is time enough to arrange this.

The JWGC stressed the importance of taking the initiative further and expressed the hopes of something being done in Umeå in October. Connected to the youth recommendation (agenda item 10) the JWGC will present, it could be a way to include young experts in the planning of joint ventures – either with other experts or (as a first step) only with the JWGC in Umeå. Hopefully, such an exchange can be facilitated in Umeå in October.

Further, the importance of working with youth houses, such as in Troms, and with libraries, was highlighted. Also, the possibility to work more operational with joint performances via video technology or making joint Barents promotion videos was mentioned, but it was also noted that such ventures require more resources.

A suggestion made to earmark the next scholarships for youth and digitalisation projects is not in line with the current scholarship guidelines, but the Chairmanship mentioned the possibility of a general review of the guidelines during next regular JWGC meeting, in Umeå in October.

The hopes were also expressed that the Norway-Västerbotten Chairmanship could take this initiative of focusing on digitalisation issues further during their Chairmanship period.

12. Information from the members

From the Russian side, there was information about the Murmansk Barents Bird international cultural festival, where several other regions will also be present, several festivals taking place in Arkhangelsk and anniversary celebrations in the Komi Republic.

From the Finnish side, a new initiative called Creating Practices of Sustainability was presented that includes the Northern Dimension area, with a budget about 200 000 euros, mainly funded by the Finnish MFA. Also, the Finnish Ministry of Culture informed that the 20th Finnish-Russian cultural forum will be held in Tula in September.

From the Swedish side, Norrbotten mentioned that there will be a cultural conference in Norrbotten on the topic of national minorities and indigenous people and they are searching for good examples of cooperation in this field. Västerbotten mentioned their upcoming regional cultural plan, where arts and culture should play a greater role in other political areas, such as education, industry and health. Also, there was information on a joint initiative by the Nordic ministers for education and culture on culture and education for language revitalisation, to be launched during the UN indigenous language year 2019 – more information will be sent out on this.

From the Norwegian side, there was information on the Russian-Norwegian Forum in Nordland 2019 and that there will be a white paper to the parliament on High North policy by the MFA, but where also the Ministry of Culture is involved. A new regional structure will be implemented in 2020, merging Troms and Finnmark counties. There is a cultural agreement since 1991 between the Northern regions of Norway and it was renewed last year. The northern regions now also aim to establish a joint film commission. It was suggested to consider starting a Barents network for festivals. Also, it was mentioned that Bodø has sent in an application to the European Capital of Culture 2024 that was pre-qualified and the application will be elaborated until 23 August. Nordland looks forward to cooperation with the entire Barents region in this. Finally, there was information on the Varanger festival 7-10 August with artists from the Barents area, as well as the Sámi art festival taking place in Alta in November

13. Planning of the next meeting

Next regular JWGC meeting will take place in Umeå, back-to-back with the BEAC Ministerial Meeting events and the members were advised to plan a stay in Umeå from lunch time 3 October to lunch time 4 October. A save-the-date will be sent out well in time before October.

14. Any other business

There was nothing added to this agenda item.

15. Closing the meeting

The Chair declared the meeting closed and the JWGC thanked Finnmark for a good meeting and an ambitious and interesting meeting programme.

Other programme activities

During the stay in Varanger, the JWGC visited the Ruija kvenmuseum in Vadsø, the Pomormuseet in Vardø. The JWGC also met with the team behind Vardø Komafest – they presented their work including community-based art and how they involve the locals in cultural ventures in Vardø and in Russia.

www.komafest.com. The JWGC also met with Biotope, that designs hides and other material for birding in Varanger, using local resources. www.biotope.no

David Ek wrote the minutes.

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