



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT

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

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: Finnmark-Sweden 2017–2019

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

The priorities of the Chairmanship during 2018 have been guided by the JWGC Strategy *Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region 2014–2018*:

- Culture as a Tool for Regional, Social and Economic Development,
- Cultural Diversity and Multicultural Dialogue,
- Capacity Building and
- New Cultural Meeting Places.

The more concrete Chairmanship action plan points that have been relevant during 2018 have been:

- Draft and adopt steering documents for the JWGC,
- Evaluate scholarship process for 2017, launch and finish scholarship process for 2019, initiating evaluation of the whole trial period and the guidelines for the scholarship,
- Promote information-sharing and cooperation initiatives between the JWGC members and
- Explore the feasibility of a joint digitalisation project.

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

There have been two JWGC meetings – the first in Kirkenes in February, within the framework of the Barents Spektakel, and the second in Kiruna in November.

In Kirkenes, the JWGC evaluated the process for awarding the first Barents Scholarships for Cultural Cooperation and agreed on the road map for awarding the next round of Scholarships in

October 2019. The draft Barents Program 2019–2023 was discussed and the discussion on the steering documents of the JWGC from 2019 and onwards was initiated. The JWGC also met with the Scholarship holder Samovarteateret in Kirkenes.

In Kiruna, the discussions on the Scholarship continued and the road map was confirmed. The countries also confirmed the financing of the Scholarships for 2019 and the regions were encouraged to start their nomination procedures for a JWGC decision in April 2019. The Strategy and Mandate from 2019 and onwards were thoroughly discussed and agreed upon.

During both these meetings, much time was also put on information sharing between the regions as for current initiatives and calls for cooperation.

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

In Kiruna in November, Norrbotten and Västerbotten led an explorative workshop on the possibilities of digitalisation for cultural cooperation in the Barents region. There was big interest among the regions to continue with a joint project within this area.

The process for awarding the Barents Scholarships for Cultural Cooperation 2019 was initiated in November and the regions asked to start their nomination procedures.

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

The JWGC decided on a new strategy 2019–2023 and a new Mandate 2019–2022. Also, changes to the Scholarship process were decided and a road map set for the process for awarding the Barents Scholarships for Cultural Cooperation 2019. The feasibility of a joint digitalisation project was explored and the topic will be taken further in 2019.

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

The cooperation within the JWGC is very constructive. The regions have a genuine interest in exchange across the borders and there is a strong will to find new areas of cooperation. The effects of the Scholarships were made clear for example through the fact that the Swedish recipient was invited to Norwegian regions by the Norwegian JWGC members for a successful tour.

During the meetings, there have been study visits included which have shown the strength of cultural life in the Barents region.

The cooperation and communication between the Co-Chairs has been close and very constructive.

The turnout to the meetings has been quite good, although there was in the end only one representative from Russia in the second meeting. We hope to be able to change this during 2019.

The lack of sufficient funding for joint ventures makes concretisation of the plans difficult.

6. Other