

Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC)
Joint Chair: Russia (Natalia Dikova) and Troms (Ellen Østgård)
Annual Report 2008

The group - JWGC - held one meeting during 2008: June 16. in Arkhangelsk, connecting to the International Forum "Culture of the Barents Region" (Arkhangelsk, Russia 16-18 June 2008).

In 2008 the Barents Cultural Cooperation was presented by Ellen Østgård at the meeting of Regional Committee in February in Kaajani, Finland and by Natalia Dikova at the meeting of CSO in April in Moscow, Russia.

In addition to the regional cultural administrations, the JWGC includes the representatives of the Finnish, Norwegian, Russian and Swedish ministries responsible for culture and one member from the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples.

In 2008 the group worked on the implementation of the Program for 2008-2010: *New Winds in the Barents Region*. The overall objective is to strengthen cultural cooperation and thus increase the impact of culture in the Barents Region. The aim is to promote cultural diversity and multicultural dialogue and culture as a tool for regional, social and economic development and to create new cultural meeting places. The challenge is to boost international visibility and to develop the cooperation within the EU Northern Dimension Policy and the EU-Russia

At the meeting in Arkhangelsk, Mr.Pauli Saapunki had a presentation of the Regional Council, and he underlined the importance of young people – they are the future. He also expressed his concern for the indigenous people.

The meeting also got a presentation of the Nenets by Valentina Zganich, from the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples. She underlined the importance of the work on involving of the Nenets culture in all events in Barents Region in order to make the people feel proud of their culture.

The report of the previous program for 2003-2006: *Voices in the Barents Region* was adapted. Mr. Sergey Ershov, Murmansk was responsible for the report. The report is published in four languages, financed by The Norwegian Barents Secretariat.

The International Forum "Culture of the Barents Region" was the essential event of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation within the framework of the Russian Chairmanship of the BEAC. More than 400 (from Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the NCM Secretariat) participated in this Forum. It was initially planned for 120 participants. Two Ministers of Culture (from Russia and Norway), the representatives of many Russian and international institutions and organizations took part in the Forum. The delegations from Finland and Sweden were headed by the Directors of the ministerial Departments.

One of the point in the Conclusion of the International Forum "Culture of the Barents Region" is *“support further development of cultural interaction between the BEAC countries and activities of the Joint Working Group on culture according to the objectives of the new*

Programme of cultural co-operation "New Winds in the Barents Region. 2008-2010". The Conclusion is attached to the Annual report.

During the Conference, the Ministers of Culture, Mr Trond Giske, Norway and Mr. Aleksander Andejev, Russia were agreed to make a kind of Cultural Strategi for cultural cooperation in the North between Norway and Russia. The document was signed in Oslo in January 2009, and during 2009 the Action Plan will be finalized. The regional level will be an important part in this work

During 2008 the Norwegian financing program **BarnetsKult** was established. This program is an important resources for implementation and realizing of culture projects, mostly for bilateral projects between Norway and Russia, but also for multilateral projects, according to *"New Winds in the Barents Region. 2008-2010"*.

Plans for 2009

JWGC met on January 29 at Kirkenes, during the festival Barents Spektakel. At the meeting it was suggested to renew the list of projects (bilateral and multilateral) implementing the program for 2008-2010.

Next meeting will most likely take place in Lapland, Finland. The date is to be determined later.

CONCLUSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM "CULTURE OF THE BARENTS REGION"

**Arkhangelsk,
16-18 June, 2008**

Ministers of Culture and representatives of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) Member States met on 16-18 June 2008 in Arkhangelsk (the Russian Federation), discussed possible directions of fostering regional cultural cooperation in the Barents region and declare the following.

I. While global political and economic integration processes have become deeper, the value of regional cooperation is increasing. The Barents Euro-Arctic region (BEAR) remains one of the dynamical regions with considerable human potential, unique historical heritage and various cultural traditions.

Culture is an essential component of society's capacity to deal with social, economic, cultural and environmental challenges to the benefit of sustainable development of the Barents region. At the same time international cultural cooperation plays an important role in providing the population with access to cultural heritage of other countries, contributes to the active exchange between the Barents region peoples, provides new possibilities for cultural self-expression, preservation and development of traditions.

In this context the BEAC opens favorable opportunities for the development of the interaction in the Barents region. The activity of other northern regional organizations such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Nordic Council of Ministers and Arctic Council is of great importance in promoting of the dialogue among members of the cultural community.

The participants of the Forum express their readiness to contribute to further prosperity of the Barents region, support the efforts aimed at enhancing cultural cooperation, increasing cultural exchanges with a view of strengthening mutual understanding and good-neighbourliness, deeper knowing of the unique social and cultural environment of the Barents region.

II. Ministers of Culture, representatives from the BEAC Member States and organizations of regional co-operation:

- support the decisions of the 11th BEAC Ministerial Session in Pöytäniemi (Finland) and 11th session of the Barents Regional Council (November 14-15, 2007) concerning the continuing validity of the principles and aims of the Barents cooperation, reaffirming the overall objectives of the cooperation in the Barents region to promote stability, security, wellbeing and sustainable development in all its spheres,
- note the need and will strive for enhancing of interaction in the field of culture with the regional organizations of the Northern Europe,
- underline that the work at the local and regional levels is a basic part of successful co-operation between the BEAC states at the national level,
- consider the exchange of views at the Forum as a useful contribution to continuation of the fruitful co-operation among heads of institutions and specialists in the fields of culture and cultural heritage,
- emphasize the importance of the renewed Northern Dimension policy regarding the development of the Barents Region and welcome initiatives and proposals that could become an integral part of this policy,

- believe that the positive experience in the regional cooperation within the framework of the BEAC should be used when preparing the Action Plan in cultural sphere between the European Union and the Russian Federation as well as for its practical implementation,
- support further development of cultural interaction between the BEAR countries and activities of the Joint Working Group on culture according to the objectives of the new Programme of cultural co-operation “New winds in the Barents region. 2008 – 2010”;
- point to the need for closer coordination of all positions of the BEAC Member States when working out and implementing the international treaties on cultural heritage preservation within the framework of the appropriate international forums, as well as recognize the diverse roles of other organizations of importance to the northern region, in order to avoid overlapping work and facilitate beneficial development.

III. Ministers of Culture, representatives of the BEAC Member States, Barents Regional Council, organizations and institutions of regional co-operation express their cordial gratitude to the Administration of the Arkhangelsk Region for its hospitality and for hosting the Forum.