

# Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region

Strategy 2014–2018

Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2014:7





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100 MIGRATORY – an extensive art project initiated by Monica L Edmondson – explores issues such as identity, origin, allegiance and migration. A hundred glass vessels depart on a world-wide return journey, starting in their home in the vast, winter-white mountains of Sápmi.

The forms of glass vessels, in the project used as a metaphor for ourselves, stress the importance of a secure warm nucleus in the life of every individual. At the same time 100 MIGRATORY argues the value of venturing out of original security in order to gain understanding and respect for otherness.

The migrating glass vessels are exhibited together with images and texts – blog and a book – at the Museum of Västerbotten 1 February – 11 May 2014.

Artist: Monica L Edmondson [www.edmondson.se](http://www.edmondson.se)  
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## Abstract

The Strategy of the Barents Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC) outlines the vision, mission and priorities of policy planning and regional cooperation in the sphere of culture in the Barents region. The Strategy is in line with the overall vision of multilateral cooperation formulated in the Barents Programme 2014–2018.

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# 1 Introduction – Two Decades of Barents Cooperation

Cooperation in the field of culture in the Barents region started officially in 1993, when the Ministers of Culture convened for the first time in Kirkenes. The regional Barents cooperation was initiated in 1993 simultaneously with the establishment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) when the Foreign Ministers signed the Kirkenes Declaration on 11 January 1993. The regional representatives signed together with the indigenous peoples' representative a co-operation protocol that brought the Regional Council into existence. A new Kirkenes Declaration was issued on 3 June 2013 at a Prime Minister meeting of the Barents Member States. It reaffirmed the commitment to the principles of the first one, took stock of accomplishments in the Barents cooperation and considered its outlook. Regional cooperation is guided by the Barents Regional Council (BRC) and the Regional Committee (RC) in accordance with their terms of reference adopted on 14 November 2012. The Barents regional cooperation consists of 13 member<sup>1</sup> and 1 partner region as well as two observers.

Up until 2007, cultural cooperation in the Barents region was promoted and enhanced solely by the regions. In 2007, however, the regional working group was transformed into a joint working

group on culture of the BEAC and the BRC. Over the past two decades, the cultural sector has been one of the most prominent and active sectors in Barents cooperation. As stated in the Barents 20th Anniversary Declaration, culture is essential in the development of Barents cooperation and plays an important part in bringing people together. Cultural activities encourage not only cultural diversity, multicultural dialogue and interaction but also regional, social and economic development. According to the Barents Programme 2014–2018, the region has created a unique people-to-people cooperation over the past two decades, and it has become one of Europe's most important regions of natural resources.

The Barents culture cooperation has enabled public authorities at national and regional levels to establish meeting places and common arenas for project development, information exchange and knowledge building. It has also helped to create personal contacts and networks throughout the region. This, in turn, has been instrumental for many projects in the different fields of art and culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Finland: Kainuu, Lapland and Oulu Region

Norway: Finnmark, Nordland and Troms

Russia: Arkhangelsk oblast, Republic of Karelia, Republic of Komi, Murmansk oblast and Nenets Autonomous Okrug

Sweden: Norrbotten and Västerbotten

## 2 General Basis for the JWGC Cultural Strategy

The Strategy is based on the recommendations of the Conferences of the Ministers of Culture (Kirkenes 1993, Arkhangelsk 1998 and Oulu 2002) and the objectives set out in the Mandate of the Joint Working Group on Culture adopted by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council.

The 2008 Conclusions of the International Forum “Culture of the Barents Region” in Arkhangelsk further complements the basis for this document. The Conferences of the Ministers of Culture have stressed the importance of strengthening the common identity in the Barents region and emphasized the need to support the development of regional identity and cultures and the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples. In the framework of Barents cooperation, it is also essential to highlight the importance of strengthening cultural ties between the countries and the regions.

The Strategy has been derived from the experiences gained in the implementation of the previous programmes “Voices in the Barents Region”, “New Winds of the Barents Region” and “New Horizons in the Barents Region.” The Strategy also takes into account the Joint Communiqué issued by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council at its XIV

Session in 2013 and the strategy for the Barents Region (Barents 2013) adopted by the Regional Council.<sup>2</sup>

The Strategy takes into account wide possibilities to enhance cultural policy dialogue and practical cooperation with the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC), the Senior Officials Group on Culture of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as well as with the relevant EU structures such as Creative Europe: the support programme for Europe’s cultural and creative sector from 2014 and the ENI Cross-Border Cooperation programmes. With this approach, the Joint Working Group on Culture wants to strengthen the impact of regional interaction by actively taking part in cooperation between the different processes and actors.

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2 [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Barents\\_Cooperation\\_information\\_English\\_October\\_2013.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Barents_Cooperation_information_English_October_2013.pdf)

## 3 Challenges and Opportunities

The Joint Working Group on Culture agrees with the challenges and possibilities described in the Barents Programme 2014–2018. The members of the Barents regions share a significant number of similarities, most notably the Arctic climate, sparse population, long distances, vast natural resources and a high exposure to the consequences of ongoing climate change. In addition, acknowledging a demographic change that suggests the increasing elderly population within the region. We may consider factors like how to attract especially young people to stay in or move to the Barents region. These characteristics bring both challenges and possibilities for our mutual cooperation.

We are now facing new decades ahead of us as well as new challenges. When planning a future mission and vision for the activities in the Barents cultural sector, we should acknowledge what is stated in the Kirkenes Declaration 2013: “Today, 20 years after the signing of the Kirkenes Declaration, the Barents region is undergoing major economic, environmental and social changes. The increase in the global demand for natural resources and the consequences of global warming have given rise to both challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed through regional cooperation. The challenge is to reap the full benefit of the positive changes while minimizing the negative impact on human well-being, traditional lifestyles and the environment.”

Europe is experiencing significant growth of consumption for cultural products, events and entertainment. There is a global competition for attracting creative workforce to different regions. To compete successfully, one has to create innovative ways to produce art and culture of high quality to increase its attractiveness. The potential of culture-based business has to be recognized and developed from a long-term perspective. Barents cultural cooperation is strongly founded on bilateral cooperation. However, there is still work to be done in interdisciplinary multilateral cooperation, capacity building and in people-to-people cultural exchange. In the future, the number and range of cultural micro-organizations and NGOs will change the environment of cooperation, giving rise to new challenges and possibilities for financial consolidation.

## 4 Overall Vision for the Barents Region

The Barents Regional Council has formulated an overall vision for the regional Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation, which is published in The Barents Programme 2014-2018. The Barents Programme proposes solutions to common challenges and offers a general framework for regional cooperation. Based on this common vision, the Barents working groups present their own detailed plans of action, which then complete the picture.

The overall Barents vision strives to improve peoples' living conditions, to encourage sustainable social and economic development, and to create peaceful and sustainable development in the northernmost part of Europe. The programme also observes that only by continuity in multidimensional efforts in various areas of cooperation can this vision be reached. The vision is based on a number of principles, and the Joint Working Group on Culture wishes to highlight and base its own contribution on the following principles:

- The well-being of people who live in the Barents region is at the centre of all the activities carried out within the framework of Barents regional cooperation.
- An enhanced people-to-people cooperation, at all levels, is the main achievement and the main strength of the cooperation.
- All actors protect the culture, customs and traditional lifestyle of the indigenous peoples of the region. Strong ties and exchanges between indigenous peoples in the region are facilitated.

- National and regional authorities take all appropriate measures to ensure sustainable economic, social and environmental development in their respective parts and of the Barents Euro-Arctic region as a whole.
- Barents cooperation remains a successful model for peaceful international and interregional cooperation, and can be replicated in other parts of the world.

### 4.1 Contribution of the Barents Culture to the Overall Vision

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) is characterized by rich cultural diversity. The development of cultural life serves the social and economic development in the Region. Due to the fact that the Barents region is a geographically large and sparsely populated area, there are special needs to strengthen cultural cooperation and to create meeting places where cultural practitioners can convene to develop joint cooperation projects.

The contribution of the cultural field to the vision can be reached through continuous, interdisciplinary efforts in the Barents region to extend culture as an integral element of society, cultural diversity and the environment as well as social and economic development.

## 5 Mission

Twenty years of implementing cultural cooperation has helped the networks in the region to grow stronger in competence and knowledge. Yet the environment is changing ever faster, so we should focus more on future trends. Capacity building, empowerment and mobility of artists as well as the cultural and creative industry will be the key elements of the Barents culture strategy and cooperation in the coming years too.

People in the Barents region have always been aware of their rich cultural heritage and diverse cultural life, which are fairly widely recognized also in Europe and beyond. In order to help the cultural and creative sectors in adapting to the digital age and globalization, special attention should be paid to the empowerment of artists and cultural professionals in the region. Interregional and international mobility and work in art residences help to create important professional networks and to reach new audiences in the future. It will create new international opportunities and strengthen the competitiveness of the cultural operators in the Barents region.

Cultural and creative industries help boost economic development by bringing jobs and the production of culture-based goods and services. They can also contribute to innovation within traditional industries, such as tourism, by means of cultural competences and creativity. They can also improve local and regional growth and development in different ways and increase the attractiveness of places for residents, visitors and businesses that invest or establish activities such places.

However, the main aim should be to build interdisciplinary creative businesses. This goal can be achieved through long-term capacity building. By supporting creative persons with an entrepreneurial attitude, we can create prerequisites for new ideas, methods, techniques and meeting places for people to interact and cooperate. Young people as a target group must be given special attention, especially through various methods of capacity building, which in return will result in new innovative multidisciplinary business establishments.

## 6 Objectives of the JWGC for 2014–2018

The aim of the Strategy is to meet the special needs of cultural cooperation in the Barents region.

The overall objective is to further strengthen cultural cooperation and thus increase the impact of culture in the Barents Region. The target is to strengthen cooperation with and between other working groups of the Barents Region.

Taking into account this general basis, the objectives for the cooperation are as follows:

- facilitating and promoting visibility - especially networking between professional arts and cultural institutions (including festivals) and between these institutions and regional NGO's
- cultural diversity and multicultural dialogue, thus increasing tolerance and interaction
- capacity building and advocating activities (training programmes)
- culture as a tool for regional, social and economic development – focusing on the strong relationship between culture and cultural and creative industries as well as other relevant sectors
- cooperation and exchange in the fields of arts and culture, thus encouraging artistic and cultural development
- developing information exchange both internally and externally by utilizing new technology

- creating different kinds of new cultural meeting places where people, particularly adolescents, can interact. All activities should be open to all and contain participants irrespective of gender
- developing contacts and synergies with other relevant structures, such as the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture (NDPC), and between the regional councils in order to avoid overlapping work and to highlight the overall core objectives
- exploring financing possibilities through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)

All these activities should be open to all, irrespective of social, economic and cultural background.

## 7 Thematic Objectives for 2014–2018

### 7.1. Culture as a Tool for Regional, Social and Economic Development

The cultural and creative sectors contribute substantially to regional, social and economic development in the Barents region. It is important to explore and promote the role of culture in supporting and fostering creativity and innovation in the region.

An essential aspect of cooperation is to increase contacts and develop creative partnerships between the cultural sector and other sectors, such as business and industry, research and education. For instance the film and tourism industries present great potential in the cultural sector. With the tourism industry constantly growing, culture and cultural heritage are ever more important attractions for tourists seeking authenticity and experiences. It is therefore important to develop cultural tourism in ways that ensure that the indigenous and other local cultures are respected.

### 7.2. Cultural Diversity and Multicultural Dialogue

The Barents region is a unique area in terms of both its history and its culture. It is a region with numerous cultures and languages. The wealth of the region is in its cultural diversity, and cultural cooperation increases mutual understanding and respect. To both boost the visibility of the culture and cultural heritage of the Barents region and to

recognize the contribution of all cultures present in the region, it is important to foster cultural diversity in a context of openness and cultural exchange, especially promoting intercultural dialogue and competence, including the promotion of the traditional cultures of the indigenous peoples in the region.

### 7.3. Capacity Building

When defining capacity building in the Barents region, it is useful, first, to differentiate between related terms. These terms are often a part of, but not synonymous with, the concept of capacity building. These are given below:

1. Training: Organized activity aimed at imparting information and instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill.
2. Training cycle: Series of steps or stages that constitute a complete training programme
3. Skill development: An effort to enhance the ability to perform and add value to the life of the person and community; a learnt behaviour that is able to produce in a unique manner a different tangible or intangible product, which has an economic or social value. In other words, a productive tool acquired under guidance by the person.
4. Accompaniment: A process by which a person is supported by another as a method to enable the person to learn a new way of doing things.

Capacity building is a conceptual approach to development that focuses on understanding

the obstacles that inhibit people, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations from realizing their developmental goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results.<sup>3</sup>

Capacity building is one of the key factors as a whole within Barents cooperation. In the Barents cultural cooperation, the focus on capacity building should be on training and skills development, especially for young people. The emphasis in training should be focused on entrepreneurial skills, producer/managerial skills, both in developing a skillset and in the context of international cooperation. Capacity building contributes to promoting professionalism, knowhow, attitudes and competency within the Barents region.

#### **7.4. New Cultural Meeting Places**

People-to-people interaction is an important part of Barents cooperation. Education, culture, sports, child and youth work and volunteer activities are some of its key components. Opportunities for people to come together in joint activities will foster mutual understanding and trust, which in turn will foster stability and development in the Barents region. Cultural contacts promote mutual understanding and communication.

Cultural activities create meeting places and networks, build trust and often lead to cooperation in other areas. Ensuring good living conditions for young people in the Barents region is not just a question of providing employment and health services; equally vital are good cultural services and opportunities to participate in the development of society.

Promoting cultural entrepreneurship among young people and encouraging children and young people to take part in different activities will help strengthening civil society and democracy in the Barents region.

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3 Understanding capacity-building needs, Social Policy Working Paper Series – 3 UNICEF 2012

## 8 Responsibilities and Implementation

### 8.1 Strategic Cultural Planning and Policy Implementation

The Joint Working Group on Culture, whose members represent national and regional cultural authorities, focuses on strategic cultural planning and seeks new ways to cooperate with relevant policymakers and political processes. This is done with the explicit aim to influence the formation of strategies and programmes in the sphere of culture for the development of cross-border people-to-people cooperation in the Barents region.

By concentrating on this strategic and impact work, the Joint Working Group on Culture can create prerequisites for the practical implementation of the cultural policy and gives cultural actors and practitioners political back-up and tools for project fundraising.

The indigenous peoples, with their invaluable traditional knowledge, must continue to play an active role in the development of the region. We support a further strengthening of indigenous peoples' representation in Barents cooperation.

We support efforts to achieve synergies and to strengthen coherence in common areas of activity with other regional councils in the north, including the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and the Nordic Council of Ministers. We

are determined to intensify cooperation with the Northern Dimension and its partnerships. We invite the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council, as well as the Barents Parliamentary Conference and the Barents Indigenous Peoples Congress, to follow up on the visions and priorities presented in this paper.

### 8.2 Cultural Cooperation and Joint Projects

Barents cooperation celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 2013. In the first evaluation report in 2003<sup>4</sup>, over 600 projects had already been implemented in the region. Today, cultural cooperation is more active than ever before. To celebrate its Anniversary, the working group launched an ENPI project “New Horizons 2013-2014” as an example of multilateral and interdisciplinary cooperation in the region. The project encompasses different levels of cultural policy and concrete actions in different spheres of art and culture. The experience gained through cooperation and numerous projects during the past decades provide a solid basis for future development of Barents cultural cooperation.

The aim is to encourage joint projects and other forms of cultural cooperation, to promote contacts between regions, municipalities and cultural

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/2749\\_doc\\_MinisterialReportOulu2002.pdf](http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/2749_doc_MinisterialReportOulu2002.pdf) (page 25)

practitioners and the inclusion of other structures. The importance of involving young people in cultural activities is stressed.

All objectives of international cooperation will be realized through priority-oriented multilateral projects (cultural festivals, forums, conferences, exchange programmes, exhibition and research projects) and bilateral projects in the regional and local areas.

The IBS (International Barents Secretariat) is important for the continuity of the programme and may, depending on resources, provide the JWGC with updates on basic trends and research/new knowledge in the region.

## 9 Follow-up

The JWGG will monitor the Strategy on the basis of its objectives. Progress of the activities will be reported by the regional administrations at JWGC meetings. The JWGC will submit an annual report of its activities both to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council.

## 10 Funding

There are many ways to finance Barents cultural cooperation. The JWGC will keep in contact with and seek to obtain support for projects from existing national, Nordic, EU and international sources of financing.

Special attention should be paid to ENI Cross-Border Cooperation: Kolarctic and Karelia programmes, which offer realistic funding possibilities for actors and projects in the sphere of cultural and creative industries in the Barents region.

The responsibility for raising funds and realizing projects rests with the implementers of the projects. The projects, including the financial resources, will be analyzed in annual progress reports.

## 11 Evaluation of Projects

This Strategy enables all BEAR regions to participate in realizing both bilateral and multilateral projects. New project ideas and proposals from the regions participating in the cultural co-operation within the framework of the Council of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region will be discussed at the annual meetings of the Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC). The projects currently in the process of being realized and the results of accomplished projects will also be discussed in these meetings.

It is recommended that the following information on multilateral and bilateral projects should be included on the webpage of the IBS/JWGC:

*www.beac.st*

Project title

- Partners (participants: countries, organizations, cultural institutions)
- Background information
- Aims and objectives
- Plan of practical implementation
- Location of project realization (country, city, town)
- Time span and schedule of project realization
- A project budget (only a total sum and a list of the financing sources, with the main financial source being listed first).

The initiator of a project, currently in the process of being realized or already accomplished, is responsible for providing all detailed information on the project status (achieved results and any obstacles) at the annual meetings of the Joint Working Group on Culture.

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