

Mandate for the Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC) 2014-2018

Introduction

A formal cultural cooperation in the BEAR started in 1993 when the Ministers responsible for Culture convened for the first time in Kirkenes. The Barents Culture Committee was then appointed to be responsible for the activities. In 2001, the Culture Committee was converted into a permanent Regional Working Group on Culture, and in 2007, the Regional Working Group of Culture was transformed into a joint working group within the structure of BEAC and within the structure of the Barents Regional Council (BRC).

The main objective of the working group from the beginning has been to bring Barents region and its cultural policy in from the margins as integral part of European cultural policy. In order to tackle this challenge the working group has promoted cultural policy dialogue with decision makers and established prerequisites for practical cultural cooperation by creating people-to-people meeting places and encouraging multicultural dialogue as well as enhancing networking in the region and beyond.

The working group shall continue its work to increase awareness of the significance and potential that the human, natural and cultural resources of the Barents region represent and to show the attractiveness of the Barents region to citizens in the region as well as internationally.

Based on the recommendations of the Ministerial Conferences¹ the Group has defined objectives for cultural cooperation with the following mandate:

Objectives and tasks

The Joint Working Group on Culture contributes to multilateral/bilateral interdisciplinary cooperation in BEAR.

The objectives and tasks of the Working Group are:

1. to strengthen cultural identities, multicultural dialogue and interaction in BEAR and ties between the regional entities
2. to promote and develop cultural diversity and cross-border cultural cooperation between local and regional stakeholders: cultural institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples, individual artists, cultural experts and authorities
3. to promote culture as a tool for regional, social and economic development by involving various stakeholders from other parts of society in order to add to the work for complementary resources e.g. funding programs and other tools to contribute to the development of BEAR
4. to encourage new networks in order to develop better skills and knowledge in the field of arts and culture and people-to-people cooperation
5. to further develop cultural cooperation in BEAR as part of the implementation of the Northern Dimension Policy
6. to further develop cultural cooperation in the BEAR in interaction with other international structures, in particular the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic

¹ Kirkenes Declaration 1993, Archangelsk Communiqué 1998, Oulu Communiqué 2002, the conclusions of the International Forum “Culture of the Barents Region” in Arkhangelsk 2008, and the Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of the Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation in Kirkenes 2013

Council of Ministers, the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture and the Council of Europe

7. to encourage close cooperation and interaction with relevant entities engaged in cultural cooperation in Northern Europe
8. to contribute to organizing of meetings of Ministers of Culture, when needed.

Composition and chairmanship of the Joint Working Group on Culture

Members and alternate members of the Joint Working Group on Culture should be nominated by:

- each of the regional entities, which are members of BRC
- the competent national authorities of the countries which are members of BEAC
- the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples

In addition, regional or international organizations may be represented in the Working Group upon invitation.

The Members of the Working Group may invite specialists to assist them during meetings or other activities.

In order to enhance an active participation between the actors in the Joint Working Group on Culture, the Chairmanship should be jointly shared between national and regional levels. The chairmanship shall follow the rotation of BEAC and BRC, unless decided otherwise, with a national government representative and a representative of a regional authority or administrative entity working together.

Methods of Work

The Joint Working Group on Culture shall choose the working methods, which are the most appropriate in order to meet a particular objective and which are in line with financing possibilities. This may include a number of different actions such as appointing consultative experts groups/task forces, using experts, organizing conferences or seminars and involving educational and scientific institutions, cultural and non-governmental organizations etc.

The Joint Working Group on Culture shall meet at least once a year. If desired, sub-groups or task forces may be formed in order to manage tasks between meetings of the Working Group or perform special activities. The mandate of the Joint Working Group on Culture will be assessed after three years of its duration. On the basis of this assessment the mandate can be amended, prolonged or re-evaluated.

The mandate of the Joint Working Group on Culture has been approved by the Regional Committee and the BEAC/CSO.

The chairs of the Joint Working Group on Culture sets up the necessary secretariat functions, in order to secure solid and efficient working methods at the meetings.