

Action Plan for tourism development in the Barents Region

Public-Private Partnership in Barents Tourism

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Project results – Activity 2.

Action Plan

- Background mapping of tourism development in the BR
- +
- Survey on existing tourism expertise in BR higher educational institutions
- +
- Study on tourism entrepreneurs needs and expectations regarding tourism knowledge
- ↓
- Action Plan on tourism development in BR

Action Plan target groups

- Educational institutions specializing in tourism
 - Academic staff
 - Students
- Regional planners and governments
- Joint Working Group on Tourism
- Other tourism actors
- **First and foremost → Tourism entrepreneurs from all over Barents region**

Requriments for Action Plan

- Easy to understand and read
- Highlighting opinions/statements from entrepreneurs collected during winter/spring 2012
- Quotes from interviews with entrepreneurs
- Action Plan published as web page

Action Plan structure I

1. Background/Introduction

1. Activity 2.1 Strategic tourism development in the Barents Region – an analysis
2. Activity 2.2 Assessing tourism knowledge pool in Barents Region institutions
3. Activity 2.3 Assessing stakeholder needs and expectations for tourism development in the Barents region – an analysis

Action Plan structure II

2. Action areas/work packages

1. Knowledge

Priority 1.1: Tourism stakeholders need reliable and comparable statistics in order to forecast trends, needs, demands, services.

Priority 1.2: Tourism stakeholders¹ need flexible and interactive training programs

Priority 1.3: Tourism stakeholders need to know how to co-operate in profitable ways, and to get concrete ways of cooperating

Priority 1.4: Tourism stakeholders need to know how to promote product and tourism package information in appealing forms to appropriate targets

2. Accessibility and infrastructure

Priority 2.1: Enhance access to information. Web pages in English (forums, trip advisors etc.).

Priority 2.2: Making it easier to travel between countries: building/improving roads, improve public transportation...

Priority 2.3: Price and efficiency of visa procedure. Cooperation between companies working with visa issues.

Action Plan structure III

3. Cooperation

Priority 3.1: Increasing the Barents knowledge: Barents perspective should be included in existing study programs in all levels

Priority 3.2: Encouraging companies for co-operation – B2B: good examples and best practices should be made visible (sustainability and updating?).

Priority 3.3: Encouraging public management for co-operation: JWGT should intensify its work (tourism associations, universities, authorities, other JWGs)

4. Product Development

Priority 4.1: Facilitate tourism product development

Priority 4.2: Forming holistic understanding of tourism in Barents region from PD perspective

Action Plan structure IV

5. Branding

Priority 5.1: Create common identity for people in the north to promote tourism

Priority 5.2: Raising awareness of possibility of common Barents Region tourism Brand among stakeholders (decision-makers)

Priority 5.3: Make tourism actors aware of added value of Barents region tourism cooperation

3. Recommendations for Implementation

4. Conclusion

Partners' tasks

- Every region worked on each of the priorities according to the results gathered from the tourism entrepreneur survey conducted in winter/spring 2012. All priorities were scheduled to be submitted to the Lead Partner until 04.09.2012. Norwegian priorities are still missing.
- Each action area is supervised by one region. Each region responsible for the work package assembles and edits all received regional priorities under the given subheadings. After listing and editing the regional answers, a short summary of each subheading is written, highlighting common themes or the absence of these in a Barents perspective.
- Resulting from the priorities, each region will give recommendations for implementation for each priority.

Action area work packages

Action area	Partner responsible
Branding the Barents Region	Sweden - LTU
Product development	Finland - MTI
Knowledge	Arkhangelsk/Russia - NARFU
Infrastructure	Murmansk/Russia - MSHU
Cooperation	Norway – Barents Institute

Schedule

Task	Deadline
Regional priorities	04.09.2012
Action area packages - each region compiles action area for which they are responsible from each region's priorities	30.11.2012
Assembly of individual action areas	10.12.2012
Recommendations of implementation (Chapter 3) - each region presents recommendations for implementation based on the action area they are responsible for	28.2.2013
Conclusion (Chapter 4)	15.3.2013
Presentation of Action Plan (final project workshop)	Week 16 2013

Attachments

Regional priorities provided by

- LTU – Sweden
- MSHU – Murmansk/Russia
- NARFU – Arkhangelsk/Russia
- MTI – Finland
- BI/UiT - Norway

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1. Knowledge

1- Tourism stakeholders need reliable and comparable statistics in order to forecast trends, needs, demands, services. (statistics, trends, needs, demand, services, customer knowledge)

In Finland, tourism operators utilize information that helps them forecast trends, future needs and demand that affect their line of business. National and international tourism statistics are quite actively observed. Also, economic indicators, competitors' prices, hotel nights, different company registers and weak signals highly interest Finnish operators. Some even collect different comparable data from their customers and competitors to have a comprehensive understanding of their own position and current state of the business. There is also interest in seeing how different economies affecting tourism have developed side by side. The production of statistics, company registers, price analyses and other comparable and reliable data from tourism industry is important for entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland. Entrepreneurs expect research, educational and development organizations to play a crucial role in the production of this material. The data show that it is important to maintain the production of such reports and research also in the future and make them even more accessible to practitioners.

2- Operators need flexible and interactive training programs. (flexible training, intercultural communication, language & culture, practical knowledge - minimum theory)

Operators in Finnish Lapland need flexible training in several fields. Especially culture knowledge and linguistic competence on Barents countries could contribute to enhanced cross-border cooperation and easier communication between partners. In particular, Russian language is seen as an important asset in customer service as well as in business-to-business cooperation. Furthermore, cultural skills are seen vital for mutual understanding and cooperation. Thus, training in cultural issues could lead to less misunderstandings and misinterpretations between cross-border partners. Also, information technology, e-commerce and tourism marketing are fields in which the operators need further training in order to succeed and excel in the contemporary business environment. As information technology is a field of constant change and evolution, the operators need updating and further training in IT-related issues. Similarly, safety is stated to be an area in which the operators still need training and updating as safety is an imperative in tourism field of Finnish Lapland. In addition, interpreting contracts and legislation are valuable skills in tourism sector as the nature of business gets ever more international and the amount of cross-border partnerships are increasing. In Finnish Lapland, many operators sign big contracts with foreign travel operators whose legislation and business customs are different and unfamiliar to Finnish entrepreneurs. Thus, training in legislation and contractual issues would improve their stand in the contract-making. Lastly, many entrepreneurs need also training in financial management and economics in order to manage their business more efficiently. All in all, the entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland need contemporary training programs as to be innovative and up-to-date in their business operations.

3- Tourism entrepreneurs need to know how to co-operate in profitable ways, and to get concrete ways of cooperating. (HOW? regional - cross-border cooperation, integration of information)

Some tourism operators in Finnish Lapland express that clarifying and improving the interregional cooperation is a challenge to be tackled. Also, networking between the operators is said to be a form of cooperation that should be strengthened. In the data, it was mentioned that the spirit of cooperation on local and global level should be comprehended better. Currently, the cooperation is seen to be too narrow-minded as the operators do not see the mutual benefits of working in cooperation but only perceive other operators in the field as competitors. Disseminating information on how to cooperate in profitable ways and efficiently among different tourism operators could contribute to greater mutual benefits. The data also reveals that creating networks and cooperation partnerships is challenging especially with Russian partners as finding and engaging with them must happen through personal networking activities and visits. This process should be made easier for the practitioners through providing concrete ways of cooperating and networking.

4- Tourism stakeholders need to know how to promote product and tourism package information in appealing forms to appropriate targets. (Market information, who are we targeting? What do they want? How do we satisfy them?)

Tourism entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland feel that it is important to know who they ought to attract in the market and to understand the target customer for whom they design products. Entrepreneurs see also that it is important to know that there is enough demand in the market for a product before starting to produce it. Interest in joint research on the target customers and customer structure is also expressed. Hence, market information is important for the practitioners and they need feasible research data of their markets. More knowledge of product and service marketing is obviously needed among the practitioners in order to enable them to recognize potential target customers and appreciate their needs and interests.

2. Accessibility and infrastructure

1- Enhance access to information. Web pages in English (forums, trip advisors etc.)

In Finland, it has been noted that there are only few channels that provide information of the Barents region operators in the Internet. The investments for maintaining and enhancing those channels have been poor. Entrepreneurs also feel that Finnish resorts are not enough promoted, for example, in Russia and that issue should be tackled. One solution to the problem could be enhancing the access to information, e.g. creating more easily accessible and reachable distribution channels such as functional Internet pages. Consequently, more resources should be allocated for the creation and maintenance of such information channels.

2- Making it easier to travel between countries: building/improving roads, improve public transportation...(Infrastructure, transportation)

According to the collected data, difficult accessibility, long distances and remoteness are seen as obstacles and challenges for tourism in the Barents region. Infrastructure and the condition of roads are claimed to be rather good in Finland. However, the west-east road connections are inadequate in Finnish Lapland, south-northward roads being predominant. The Finnish interviewees note that in the other Barents countries infrastructure and roads are in unsatisfactory condition. Especially

travelling to east is seen as a challenge due to poor condition of roads, infrastructure and the border crossing. Furthermore, it seems that there are currently too few flight connections within the Barents region, especially in Finnish Lapland. It is also experienced that there are too small a number of different flight operators, and it causes problems by elevating flight ticket prices. In Finland and within the Barents region in general, travel connections are poor, and reaching tourism destinations and resorts in Finnish Lapland is difficult due to poor transportation linkages. It is also stated that other Barents countries do not have enough accommodation capacity whereas Finnish Lapland has too much. All these issues are to be addressed on a national and international level in order to attain considerable results that have positive impact on Barents tourism.

**3- Price and efficiency of visa procedure. Cooperation between companies working with visa issues.
(Visa issues, crossing the border)**

Russian visa is seen as a challenge and an obstacle among tourism entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland, especially among operators located in Eastern Lapland near the Russian border. It is said that travelling to Russia is more difficult due to the visa procedures, and that it may also be an obstacle for the development of international tourism and cooperation. Moreover, it seems to cause more arranging for travel organizers and tourism providers which has led to less work effort toward the eastern tourism. The importance of the Russian visa seems to be rather high in terms of the development of Barents tourism and cooperation. Hence, travelling to Russia ought to be improved through minimizing the formalities and bureaucracy that is currently involved in the procedures.

3. Co-operation

1- Increasing the Barents knowledge: Barents perspective should be included in existing study programs in all levels (Seminars, training, Barents perspective in education programs)

Finnish entrepreneurs are not familiar with the accurate definition of Barents region nor do they perceive the region in a similar way. Hence, there is a lot of room for improvement in the Barents knowledge of the practitioners. In order to establish partnerships and cooperation between the Barents region operators, it is crucial for the stakeholders to comprehend the region in a similar way. Also, general knowledge of the region in geographical, political as well as legal terms would create more solid basis for joint tourism activities between the region's practitioners. Subsequently, more specialized training on the Barents region as a distinctive tourism area and in terms of its strengths and opportunities would enable the tourism operators to better exploit and utilize the full potential of the area in cooperation with each other.

2- Encouraging companies for co-operation – B2B: good examples and best practices should be made visible (Business to business co-operation - partner search)

In Finnish Lapland, networking between different tourism operators is seen very crucial and advantageous. The tourism practitioners are highly interested in interregional business-to-business cooperation and networking. They are eager to find suitable business partners from Sweden, Norway and Russia. However, so far it has been difficult to find partners for co-operation, especially from

abroad. The entrepreneurs state that they do not have adequate information on whom to contact nor what kind of possibilities and interest for cooperation there exists. Creation of a register or database for companies interested in cooperation was suggested. The database could supply contact information and short description of the companies in order to provide an intermediary channel for finding cooperation partners. Also, joint Barents travel fair or forum was suggested for making personal contacts and finding potential business partners from within the Barents region. Many Finnish operators are interested in cooperation especially with travel organizers and agencies. All in all, the entrepreneurs feel that it is beneficial to co-operate as each practitioner can hence specialize into more specific operations – yet, they need more support for finding the cooperation opportunities.

3- Encouraging public management for co-operation: JWGT should intensify its work (tourism associations, universities, authorities, other JWGs) (Public intermediation, more authority involvement)

Regional organizations seem to have a big role in assisting and advancing networking and cooperation in Finnish Lapland. The public authorities are said to have a significant intermediary power in assembling tourism operators together. Especially regional marketing organizations are experienced to be beneficial for their stakeholders. Also, different projects and cooperation with educational institutions have been positive experiences for the entrepreneurs but, at the same time, more pragmatic and concrete results are expected from the cooperation. As the entrepreneurs' resources for finding suitable projects and actors for student cooperation are limited, the entrepreneurs expect more active stand from their counterparties in the initiation of the cooperation. What is more, the practitioners feel that the challenges can be overcome by developing tourism industry in tandem with the region's public and private sector. However, it is suggested that the regional organizations and authorities should only have a managing role as the actual cooperation should be of business-to-business nature. The current activity of the public sector is claimed to be too bureaucratic and preventing tourism businesses from succeeding in their business operations due to, for instance, complex legislation and taxation. The involvement of regional organizations and public authorities is important also in the future. Yet, their work should be intensified, clarified and the results made more pragmatic in order to serve the practitioners' on a daily level.

4. Product development

1- Facilitate tourism product development (Product development standard, safety & quality)

Safety and quality of tourism products and services are perceived to be of a fairly good standard in Finland, but at the same time they should be continuously developed further. The entrepreneurs feel that MICE tourism holds the potential for filling the tremendous seasonal gaps between winter and summer tourism in Finnish Lapland. In order to succeed, MICE sector should be developed further to serve the markets on a new level. As the Barents area has good prospects for organizing congresses, for instance, the existing facilities should be utilized better to fill this purpose. In addition, there is an urge among the Finnish tourism practitioners to develop summer tourism as well as work-related tourism in cooperation with other Barents region operators. Moreover, creation of common tourism product packages and products interests Finnish tourism operators. For example, interregional round

tours that would take the travellers around the Barents region are suggested by many Finnish operators to be developed in cooperation with the region's stakeholders. What is more, the practitioners note that productizing and creation of product packages should lead to even more easily salable and feasible solutions in order to serve both the seller's goals and the buyer's needs.

2- Forming holistic understanding of tourism in Barents region from PD perspective (Making tourism products together, others' products to be known, legal- financial - informational knowledge)

As was uncovered in the previous priority, practitioners in Finnish Lapland are interested in collective product development activities. The interest is particularly reflected towards concrete tourism products and packages that are readily salable and combine different features and areas of the Barents region into one attractive entity. However, the entrepreneurs reveal a need for better understanding of their potential and present markets. In order to proficiently develop tourism products for certain markets, the practitioners must obtain more market knowledge. The entrepreneurs also express interest towards benchmarking and match-making activities as to see what is being done and how in the other areas. Furthermore, forming of comprehensive understanding of the current tourism offering in the region could work as a good basis for successful creation of joint tourism products and help preventing unnecessary duplication of the offering. As being a prerequisite for any development actions, the nature of the operating environment must also be taken into consideration. In Finnish Lapland, the business environment has been experienced as narrow-minded and competitive in a negative tone. What is more, the operating environment is seen difficult and restricting for entrepreneurs in terms of legislation, competition and innovativeness. The position of tourism entrepreneurs should be appreciated in a national level and equally considered in the wider balance of business fields in order to enable the sector to thrive and overcome its current obstacles.

5. Branding

1- Create common identity for people in the north to promote tourism (Cross-border tourism products, adapt products to different culture)

Tourism operators in Finnish Lapland see that the different areas in Barents have their own distinctive characteristics, Russia in particular. Thus, common identity for the Barents region could be rather hard to form naturally. The practitioners see that joint cross-border products and joint marketing efforts could be one opportunity for promoting tourism. Indigenous peoples, traditional livelihoods and exciting cultures of the Barents region could be emphasized as the original and distinguishable assets. Hunting, fishing and reindeer husbandry are also mentioned by the entrepreneurs as an appealing selling point for the region.

2- Raising awareness of possibility of common Barents Region tourism Brand among stakeholders (decision-makers)

As there is a lack of accurate Barents knowledge among Finnish respondents, suggesting creation of a common brand name for the whole Barents region generates confusion. The Finnish operators perceive themselves easily as belonging to the Scandinavia and Lapland brand. Many respondents

are interested in interregional marketing and the creation of a common brand name on a theoretical level. However, there are opinions both for and against and the operators are mutually puzzled on how to execute the idea in practice. To conclude, for the time being, it may be too complex an agenda for the region to take up such an engaging and laborious plan of creating a common Barents brand.

3- Make tourism actors aware of added value of Barents region tourism cooperation

Despite the differences in cultures and nature of business-making, many Finnish respondents see potential in the cross-border cooperation. However, some state that the challenge is to fit all the interests and views together. It is also mentioned that the practitioners do not possess adequate resources for maintaining interregional operations. Some respondents are more skeptical about the added value of interregional cooperation, yet many see that the area is very interesting entity that has a potential to sell as a unified tourism destination. In case branding is to be taken further by the ongoing project, it could be beneficial to further investigate the opinions of the practitioners on the issue as there were no direct questions related to branding in the conducted interview.

BART – Public-Private Partnership in Barents Tourism

Task 2.4. Creating Action Plan

Module “KNOWLEDGE”

Priority Task 1: Tourism stakeholders need reliable and comparable statistics in order to forecast trends, needs, demands, services

The tourism stakeholders operating in Arkhangelsk Region are oriented towards obtaining the statistics describing the incoming and outgoing tourist flows, the price-formation, infrastructural and economic factors, the target customers' preferences and competitors' performance. To forecast own development, the companies should be able to trace inter-regional, Russian and international statistics, to keep their customers and business partners registers. Among other data in demand is the special knowledge of allowable recreational payloads, of scientific research outcomes, of situational analysis and of the opportunities available at regional and international tourist markets.

The growing need in precise and comparable data requires further improvement of statistical data collection systems utilized both in Russia and its regions. It is presently difficult to obtain data from the region's travel companies.

Given the changes on the tourism market, there grows the need in studying statistical indices necessary for comprehensive monitoring of the tourism sector. It is thus relevant and logical that additional data be obtained pertaining to geography and structure of incoming tourism and purposes of visits; duration of stay; quality, types and capacity of infrastructural facilities – accommodation, catering, car parking, stations, MICE venues; number of travel companies and other tourism-related businesses; the number of the personnel employed in tourism; scope of services rendered by tourism-related businesses; volume of investments in tourism; tourists' spending; consumer price indices for such internal tourism services as accommodation, catering, excursion, transportation; extent of maximum allowable recreational load on environment in summer and winter seasons; regional and municipal budget revenues from tourism-related businesses.

To satisfy the need in reliable and exhaustive statistics, it is necessary that a number of measures be implemented. Namely, to develop harmonized methods for information collection at the regional and federal levels that can be comparable to international methods (for instance, through Barents Region's Annual Informational and Analytical Review, or through tailored web-portal); to develop the advanced methods and software enabling timely corrections and introduction of new factors; to develop a uniform procedure and a format for statistical data collection; to introduce new factors into the statistical analysis; to have legal provisions for compulsory communication by the region's travel agencies of statistical data to public bodies; and to make the information available to the stakeholders. It appears promising for the purposes of forecasting trends and demand in knowledge, to apply the model methods used by tourist companies operating in various activity lines and thus obtain the average statistics.

Priority Task 2: Operators need flexible and interactive training programmes.

Tourism sector in Arkhangelsk Region requires the enhancement of existing and introduction of new curricula and educational and advanced training/re-training programs. The research has proved that the regional tour operators need flexible and interactive programs meeting the

employers' and the students' needs. Such programs should take into consideration geographical distance from educational centers; limited availability of funding for training the officials in remoter municipalities; trainees' inability to attend full-time courses; need in practical skills. The development of educational products should rely on current monitoring results; forecast trends in travel companies' demand in personnel; PPP principles and partnerships with tourism stakeholders targeting Arkhangelsk tourism sector's need in personnel advanced training and re-training; more dynamic involvement of the travel companies managers and regional authorities into program and course elaboration process. Among the most in-demand and viable are the short-term advanced training courses in hospitality and hotel business that target better service quality. The programs should be practically-oriented and provide for on-site training at tourism companies. Such programs should also rely on problem-based learning methods. Promising in this regard are distance learning formats and module approach. The employees of travel companies highlight the growing need in learning foreign languages (English and Scandinavian languages), enhanced cross-cultural and multimedia competencies, project management and fund-raising skills. Universities are keenly interested in developing the joint tourism-related educational programs and courses in partnership with foreign high schools. It is necessary to further support professional mobility and arrange traineeships for travel companies' managers and employees in Arkhangelsk Region and abroad, for instance within the framework of Erasmus Mundus EU Program.

Priority Task 3: Tourism entrepreneurs need to know how to co-operate in profitable ways, and to get concrete ways of cooperating

Travel companies in Arkhangelsk Region are maintaining and interested in expanding their partnership relations with foreign companies. Among key barriers in the international tourism cooperation are shortage of information about potential partners; Arkhangelsk Region's weak status in the international market; poor knowledge of foreign languages and cross-cultural aspects of interaction; poor knowledge of project management; competition; underdeveloped image of the region's tourist products; logistical challenges (unavailability of direct flight connection, for instance). Potentially, the international cooperation could be activated through the newly established web portal offering the details of the companies and tourism-related international events calendar; more active support by the authorities; representation of Arkhangelsk travel companies' interests in relevant international associations; arrangement and coordination of relations and experience exchange between stakeholders in Arkhangelsk Region and respective state- and region-level bodies, partnerships and associations, foreign companies; active participation in the development and implementation of international projects coordinated by such organizations as UNO, UNESCO, UNWTO, EU, NCM and relevant offices in foreign countries.

Priority Task 4: Tourism stakeholders need to know how to promote product and tourism package information in appealing forms to appropriate targets

As noted by the travel agencies operating in Arkhangelsk Region, the local tourism sector suffers from the lack of knowledge and insufficient marketing research enabling to forecast market trends, risks and target audience's preferences, to timely respond to the market changes and to identify and areas most promising tourism-wise. The agencies further noted the high cost of marketing services and the necessity to involve science and education in marketing research.

In this respect, of growing value is the study of Russia's and other countries' best practices and innovative techniques for tourism products marketing and promotion through traineeships, international topical round tables, conferences, trainings and study trips. It appears relevant, when it comes to obtaining knowledge of tourist product sales techniques, to review companies' case studies of customer attraction, to analyze travel companies' sales flowcharts, to do the

benchmarking, to identify the weaknesses and logistics' strengths and downsides, to identify and circulate typical case studies and best practices (for instance, IT marketing techniques, etc.).

Action Point 2: Accessibility and Infrastructure

Priority 2.1. Enhance access to information. Web pages in English (forums, trip advisors, etc.).

The study has shown that in everyday work the Arkhangelsk Region travel agents actively use the following information channels: web resources, tour operators' mail-outs (70%), they participate in exhibitions (30%), arrange business meetings and press tours, involve mass media.

In order to meet the regional needs in accessible information it is necessary to take the following measures aimed at extending the network and optimization of local TIC work: to modernize the region's official travel portal, to introduce an interactive tourist map presenting information in a visual manner, to attract state and private funds for financing placing promotional materials, advertisements, for featuring the Arkhangelsk Region tourist destinations in Russian and overseas mass media. It is essential to focus on installing public information terminals, disseminating brochures and booklets in public places, mounting information boards, road direction-signs for tourist destinations, universal travel signs, names of museums and other tourist attractions in Russian and English. There has been a recent tendency for tourists to search for tours independently without booking with agents. Therefore, demand for accessible information services and self-service facilities to select a tour using the Internet resources is increasing. Special information programmes in the Internet should comply with the following requirements: high-quality, technical compatibility with various computer types, visual content, interactivity, language availability (versions in Russian, English, Scandinavian languages), easy for navigation and easy for users of all levels.

At present, the Arkhangelsk Region operators, interested in international cooperation with partners from the Barents Region and promoting tours, need information about potential overseas partners and their services. One solution to the problem could be the launch of the Barents Region joint travel web portal. It could be supported by tourism associations of the partner countries, chambers of commerce, BEAR Joint Working Group on tourism, authorities responsible for tourism development in regions. Tour operators consider international events (working meetings, seminars, forums, exhibitions) as another effective information channel. As mastering a foreign language is essential to getting information at the international level, the issue of language training for the tourism industry personnel and tourists remains highly relevant.

Priority 2.2: Making it easier to travel between countries: building / improving roads, improving public transport

Tourism infrastructure is the key factor of tourism development and tourists' attraction to the Arkhangelsk Region. Tourism as an industry of the Region's economy faces such obstacles as poor infrastructure (especially roads), low investments into the economy in Soviet and post-Soviet times, worn-out technical facilities, shortage of comfortable automobile transport (tourist buses), rail transport and sea passenger vessels, high rates for accommodation and transport services. A special challenge is presented by the Region's vast area as it includes 25 municipalities and unique tourist destinations are scattered around the region travel destinations. In general, lack of comfortable hotels and congress centres is stated, there is no equipped venue for fairs or exhibitions. A prerequisite for the development of prioritized sea cruises is procurement of passenger ships, quay construction, on-shore infrastructure development, dredging works, the port area expansion. To improve the rail infrastructure it is recommended to equip stations with modern equipment. It is essential to develop existing flight connections with Norway and to start new regular direct flight connections with Finland and Sweden. This is one of the key factors of international cooperation development in BEAR and of inbound tourist flow.

At present there is a need in significant measures to develop tourism infrastructure aimed at making the Region more attractive to tourists and more competitive at the domestic and overseas markets. These measures include long-term targeted federal, regional and municipal programs of financing, infrastructure investment projects involving inward and foreign investors, participation in

international and inter-regional projects and grant programmes, attraction of business and organizations investments. It seems urgent to expand and modernize infrastructure through: attraction of private investments in constructing car parks and stopping points, budget accommodation and food stops, venues for conferences, etc. in towns and municipalities, protected areas and other nature objects; state and private investments in enhancing hotels capacity; investments of state and private funds in bus and car routes information and engineering equipment.

Priority 2.3: Price and efficiency of visa procedure. Cooperation between companies working with visa issues.

In the Arkhangelsk Region visa issues are claimed to be a serious administrative obstacle to tourism and international cooperation development. A Schengen visa presents certain difficulties: long processing time, sending documents by courier to Moscow or St. Petersburg, rather high fee compared with average salary rate, difficulty with filling in an application form in English. As a rule, a visa is issued for one entry. A positive example is a simplified procedure for the Pomor visa to Norway issued by the Norwegian Honorary Consulate in Arkhangelsk. Due to high demand for Schengen visas there is a future need in a simplified visa application procedure for visiting the Barents Region countries. For example, a possibility of issuing visas for a weekend or business visas for 72 hours is considered necessary. To facilitate visa issues it seems important to open in Arkhangelsk diplomatic offices and the Barents Region international tourist organizations offices.

Additional: Priority 2.4: Establishing a comfortable accessible tourist environment for the disabled

Tourism development includes a comfortable environment for the disabled. Unlike European countries, the needs of the disabled tourists in Russia and in the Arkhangelsk Region, in particular, are practically not met. In Arkhangelsk the disabled can easily access only 13% of social infrastructure. Providing an accessible environment for the disabled is a very important social and economic issue which involves the rights and needs of thousands of the Region residents. Travelling round the Region for the disabled tourists is characterised by unsuitable transport, difficult physical access to places of interest, few restaurants, cafes, comfortable hotels, not enough tours on offer, excursions, events adapted for the disabled tourists needs. It is necessary to work out discounts on travel services for the disabled and special programmes, strategic documents to establish a barrier-free environment in the tourism industry. Specific characteristics of services should be taken into consideration or conditions for the disabled and the elderly to visit places of interest should be provided.

Regional priorities – Arkhangelsk Region

Action Point 3: Cooperation

Priority 3.1 Increasing the Barents knowledge: Barents prospects should be included in existing study programs at all levels.

As the study in the Arkhangelsk Region shows, half of the surveyed companies are familiar with the Barents Region idea. They understand geographical location of the Barents cooperating countries but not counties or districts. The companies have experience of joint international and inter-regional tourism projects and some interest in cooperation and in more contacts to exchange information, tourists to make vacations in the Russian North more popular. Acquiring more knowledge about the Barents Region will lead to higher motivation for partnership in tourism. Successful twenty-year Barents cooperation experience in different spheres can be well positioned in joint seminars, conferences, exhibitions, forums. Tourism associations, regional authorities and BEAR Joint Working Group on tourism can become the key stakeholders in disseminating information and knowledge about Barents cooperation in tourism.

It is advisable to include the following subjects in the study programmes of tourism training: external economic activities of tourism operators; strategy for the Barents countries to enter the national and international tourism market; tourist services market of the Barents countries; economic potential and development factors of tourism business in the Barents countries; intercultural aspects of tourism development in the Barents Region; methods of preparing international routes; project management, work with grants and business planning in tourism; state-private partnership in tourism.

Priority 3.2. Encouraging companies for cooperation - B2B: good examples and best practices should be visible (sustainability and updating?).

The Arkhangelsk Region operators express their interest in partnership and cooperation with counterparts in Norway, Finland and Sweden. Cooperation can be focused on joint projects aimed at finding the needs of the European North tourism market, promising kinds of tourism, marketing research, establishing the joint brand of the Barents Region, exchange of experience and practices of tourism product developing and marketing, area infrastructure development, planning and offering the joint travel itineraries. Launch of a joint travel portal of the Barents Region with a database of its tourism companies could become an effective tool of finding partners and promoting project ideas. An annual international tourism forum of the Barents Region can become a good channel for sharing the best practices, exchanging experience, searching for partners, offering new projects.

Priority 3.3 Encouraging public management for cooperation: JWGT should intensify its work (tourism associations, universities, authorities, other public tourism organisations).

Regional authorities coordinate tourism development in the Arkhangelsk Region, its promotion at the national and international tourism markets. In order to facilitate international cooperation in tourism the responsible departments should advance the following activities: consulting and information assisting of companies willing to enter the international market, administrative support, material incentives as co-financing from the national and regional target programmes, covering some expenses of international exhibitions and forums participants, promoting investment projects, searching for sponsors, information and advertising support, holding international seminars, conferences, forums, providing joint and overseas enterprises with favourable business conditions including tax breaks and business incubators.

It is advisable for the authorities to pay attention to forming the regional demand for tourism personnel training, that is, meeting the employers' needs in highly qualified personnel. The public HR policy should be based on social partnership of the state, the society, business and educational establishments in training personnel for tourism.

In order to provide complex solution to the existing challenges and problems in tourism Joint Working Group on Tourism in the Barents Region (JWGT) should cooperate effectively with BEAR Working Groups on economic cooperation, investment, transport and education. Activities of

JWGT as the inter-government and inter-regional coordinating body in the Barents Region should be more pragmatic and aimed at attaining the following results: initiating, planning, finding financial support and coordinating a joint travel portal of the Barents Region; holding an international tourism forum of the Barents Region at least once in two years (rotating the place and the responsible organization depending on the chairing country in JWGT), supporting promising international projects, supporting networking and financing tools identification, arranging international training seminars and training courses for the business.

Action Point 4: Elaboration of the tourist product

Priority 4.1: Promotion of the tourist product

The creation of an attractive tourism product that will meet the preferences of target consumers is the key instrument for the implementation of the marketing strategy of tourism companies. Currently there are about 300 tours being implemented in the region but not all of them are in demand. The reason for that is various consumer properties (such as special features of a route, nomenclature and service quality) and the tour cost. The most popular types of tourism are cultural and educational, eventful and active. An average duration of a tour across the Arkhangelsk Region is 6 days/5 nights; an average cost of such tour is about 17.000 rubles per person. To form keen demand for the tourism product in the Arkhangelsk Region is possible either by making it cheaper or especially unique regardless of the season. Carrying out of monitoring, integrated studies of the tourist flow and the quality of the provided services is of current interest today. In order to manage the service quality and customers' expectations as well as increasing of working efficiency, it is recommended to use standards on the following directions: forms of service, types of tourism, classes of service, service package.

The majority of companies are interested in the development of MICE tourism. Nowadays this kind of tourism in the Arkhangelsk Region is not developed enough because of the underdeveloped corresponding infrastructure, technique and the system of professional training in the current specialization, low standards of service, and shortage of number of organizations dealing with the development of MICE tourism. Opportunities for the development of MICE tourism in the Arkhangelsk Region are events connected with the Arctic, peculiarities of the North, culture of the local and indigenous people; annual traditional business-events; renovation of the international sector of the airport "Arkhangelsk". There is a demand for snowmobile and ATV tours. If certain conditions are fulfilled and the issue of infrastructural support is solved, perspective types of tourism will be Arctic, ethnic, industrial, business, river and sea cruise tourism.

Strengthening of the tourism attraction can be carried out by means of effective activities organized in the region, such as exhibit activities; development, coordination and promotion of tourist routes; further training of the staff of travel agencies and specialists in municipal districts tourism; development of cooperation with authorities and tourism enterprises in other regions; positioning of strategic mega-events which are in demand on the regional level and in other regions of the Barents Region; attracting of additional volumes of marketing resources; the use of the trademark of the regional brand for its promotion; the increase of funding for the development of new tours and advertising company. Measures to improve tourism products could become the updates of the list of tourism services and promotion of the product, combined with the creation and promotion of a common regional brand. For further development tourism companies will need some particular know-hows and resources such as market assessment and forecast, development of new tourism products, increased use of information technology and innovations, update of service, and development of tourist infrastructure.

Priority 4.2: The formation of a holistic understanding of tourism in the Barents Region from the point of view of the opportunity of tourist product development

Tourist companies of the Arkhangelsk Region are interested in the development of joint tourist products. It is indicated by the study participants that the development of tourism products at the level of the Barents Region should be based on already existing tours. In this case, it is necessary to select the most relevant and popular routes (up to 10) at the level of each region and actively promote them with the support of the regional government authorities, interregional organizations, tourism associations and the private sector at the level of the Barents Region and the global market. It also seems appropriate to use the results of previous international projects such as the promotion of event tourism in the Barents Region.

Creation and promotion of brand new tourism products should be based on such components as the route and set of services. In this regard the following risks and barriers should be considered:

transport and temporary access (considering that the Arkhangelsk Region is not a border area); solving of visas issue; the time required for customs procedures; financial affordability; ensuring of a high level service regardless of the area; staff training; linguistic and socio-cultural barriers; economic benefits of a route for all partners; seasonality, etc.

In general, the establishment of joint tourism products has a strong brand image component and is an important factor in branding and promotion of the Barents Region as a single tourist destination.

Regional priorities – Arkhangelsk Region

Action Point 5: Branding

Priority 5.1: Creation of a common brand for people living in the North to broaden opportunities for tourist promotion

The northern areas are becoming more and more attractive and popular among tourists who had enough of hot climate of the southern countries and are eager to explore the sights of the North. The world's attention to the northern territories and close to the Arctic territories creates favorable conditions for effective positioning of the Barents Region and for increasing the tourist flow to the North. Positive political image of the Barents Region in a global context, its 20-year history of success, and the best examples of good neighborliness also provide the foundations for sustainable development in all areas of cooperation and have a positive impact on the development of tourism in the region. Taking into consideration that in the near future the interest to the North will grow steadily, geographic and political concept of the "Barents Region" could become an efficient and relevant umbrella brand for the promotion of regional tourist destinations. In this context it is reasonable to study in detail foreign countries experience in establishing inter-regional brands (for example, the countries of the Balkan region.)

Priority 5.2: Realization by interested individuals (decision-makers) of the opportunity of a creation of new common brand for the Barents Region

The idea itself of creating a single brand in the Barents Region is interesting and promising. However, the stage of creating such brand must be preceded by implementation of a whole set of measures for collection of information and analysis of the current situation in the field of tourism in the Barents Region; awareness-raising campaigns; study of geographical, ethnic and cultural identity in the context of tourism development; identification of potential areas for development; implementation market research and finding funds for the realization of the concept (see also *Action Point Cooperation*).

Priority 5.3: Make tourism actors aware of added value of Barents region tourism cooperation

The Arkhangelsk Region respondents state that the Barents Region is attractive due to its nature potential, virgin forests, ecological safety, close proximity to the Arctic, possibilities of developing sports and extreme tourism. They state that in the near future the interest in the Region will grow sustainably. There is a need in fostering cultural, pilgrim and scientific tours. The Arkhangelsk Region cooperation should be developed with the neighbouring regions (for example, Republic of Karelia, Komi Republic, Murmansk and Vologda Regions, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Leningrad Region) and with the strategic countries of Europe and Barents Region. However, key challenges of tourism development in the Barents Region are to be taken into consideration, among them: relatively high tour prices (an average Russian tourist from the Barents Region is more likely to travel to Turkey or Egypt. Tours to Scandinavian countries are for wealthy people, tours to the Arctic are for exceptionally rich), need for overseas tourists to seek permission for entering the border zones (for the Arctic tourism), lack of knowledge about offering services at the international level.

Priorities for Action Plan
BART – Public-private Partnership in Barents Tourism

1. Knowledge

1. It is necessary to have common information space which would cover tourism in the Barents region (common web-site, for example).

Some respondents mentioned that *“if it would be possible to arrange exchange of information in the Barents region, which opportunities they have, needs, which services they would like to get”*. They also mentioned that *“In order to orient in this field, they should have information about those types of tourism which are present in each region”*.

As the research revealed, during the process of realizing tourism services different types of information are used – historical resources, mass media, partner resources, the Internet, personal communication, advertisements and others. In general, the information is obtained independently. At the same time, lack of information is considered one of the most essential problems of tour operators. According to the respondents’ opinion, there is much information, but it is scattered, there is no common information space on the Kola Peninsula.

For development of tourism organizations it is necessary to have information about educational services, peculiarities of tourism services provisions in other countries, statistical data reflecting development of MICE tourism.

2. Tour operators need a system of training programs with focus on the regional demands.

Representatives of tourism companies mentioned that *“what education can suggest us is advanced training in English, trainings on how to serve clients, forecast the clients’ demands, make correct prognoses so that they justified themselves”*.

The range of needs, listed by the participants, is rather wide:

- Lack of the English language competence (regardless the specifics of professional activities: guides, museum staff, top managers of tourism companies, hotel managers, restaurant managers and others;
- Basics of marketing activities (lack of accessible information about the population’s needs in the concrete tourism services) creates the need in independent calculations and prognoses of the services in need.
- Basics of communication psychology and development of intercultural communication skills

3. It is necessary to carry out sociological monitoring, aimed at the tourism industry.

The respondents mentioned that *“It is necessary to study our needs in the development...”*

The respondents mentioned the following conditions of tourism development: sociological research, aimed not only at revealing the needs of population in

recreation, preferences in this sphere, but also needs and problems of arranging the tourism sector. In this case the object of monitoring can be:

- The level of available information among heads and employees of tourism organizations about the state of tourism sphere;
- Need in contacts with international partners;
- Necessity in advanced training studies.

4. It is necessary to have systematized information about the region's demand in MICE-services.

The respondents mentioned that *"They would like to have more information about MICE and would like to get all the information"*.

According to the respondents' opinion, the development of MICE-tourism is significant for both the region and the company from the economical and social points of view. Interest in developing MICE tourism among tour operators is based on the readiness of organizations to create new additional forms of work. An important factor is available necessary preliminary information about business meetings, held in the region, events, conferences (terms, venue, number of participants and so on). Besides, the organizations, realizing services of MICE-tourism, need competently organized information (advertisement) about its activities.

Priorities for Action Plan
BART – Public-private Partnership in Barents Tourism

2. Accessibility and infrastructure

1. It is necessary to have sustainable cooperation of business organizations and companies, realizing services within MICE-tourism.

The respondents mentioned that *cooperation should be built on the objective and up-to-date information about the relevant business activities and demand in the corresponding services: catering, leisure activities, transportation and so on. On the other hand, business organizations should have an idea about MICE services which the region can suggest.*

2. It is necessary to have a higher level of development of road and transportation infrastructure (system of comfortable and cost effective hotels, camping, parking places, petrol stations, shops, etc.)

The respondents mentioned such obstacles as *practically no infrastructure... "Small aircrafts are absolutely underdeveloped, there are no good roads, hotels, campings..."*

While the tourism infrastructure of Murmansk and other big towns is a rather developed net of objects of accommodation (hotels), trade enterprises and public catering, the road and transportation infrastructure of the border territory do not meet the needs not only of foreign tourists but also Russian citizens. Lack of number of motels and campings, car parking places, petrol stations and trading companies, low quality of provided services and high level of prices are a serious obstacle for developing incoming tourism.

In connection with the above-mentioned, it is necessary:

- To study the tourists' need in these services;
- To create the system of comfortable and price-efficient hotels, campings and car parking places, realizing a range of accompanying services (sale of goods, products, providing good-quality catering, presence of sanitary-hygienic rooms and others)

One of the conditions for it is building the roads with use of high-quality expensive toppings which do not need regular reconstructions.

3. Visa procedures need to be simplified.

The majority of the respondents mentioned that *'It is difficult for a tourist to cross the border because of visa regime'*

Increase in incoming tourism in the Murmansk region, widening business contacts with organizations from Finland, Norway, Sweden, needs easier visa procedures for citizens of the Murmansk region. Special difficulties occurred in connection with getting multi-visa (for 2-3 years). It makes sense to introduce visa-free regime for representatives of organizations which have long-term cooperation agreements with partners from these countries.

4. It is necessary to provide access to the unique tourism objects in Closed Administrative-Territorial Entities.

Some respondents mentioned that *“that the status of the region as the residence of fighting forces is a big obstacle... The system of Closed Administrative-Territorial Entities has completely gone out of date...”*

In the Murmansk region there are unique cultural, historical and natural objects, accessibility of which is limited by closed administrative territories. They include, for example, the Museum of Aviation, submarine-museum K-21 (Severomorsk), exhibition of military equipment (Alexandrovsk), the northernmost birchwood in the world. Thus it is necessary to provide the accessibility to these objects among foreign and Russian tourists.

Priorities for Action Plan
BART – Public-private Partnership in Barents Tourism

3. Cooperation

1. It is necessary to have sustainable cooperation between state structures, business, public organizations and the system of professional education (secondary and higher).

During the interview informants were asked about the role of regional authorities and regional organizations in the tourism development in the Barents region, on the whole, and in the Murmansk region, in particular. The following opinions were received:

“The main task (of governmental authorities) is not to hinder entrepreneurs, to support them with methodical materials, ... unite all the stakeholders.”

“Regional organizations should become mediators between entrepreneurs and authorities...”

“It is necessary to combine efforts of all organizations. Someone carries out research, someone establishes partnerships, someone forms, organizes tourism products, . together this can give positive results”

While analyzing the interviews it was revealed that there is no sustainable partnership among regional authorities and tourism-related enterprises and organizations; public organizations and the system of secondary and higher vocational educational education. This resulted in:

1. the low level of information among business and authorities representative about establishments and directions of vocational training of tourism and hotel business staff ;
2. Representatives of public managing structures don't have any ideas about specialists and their need in the labour market.
3. There is no dialogue among educational establishments and employers. Interaction with business is realized through organization of student practices and single invitations of tourism companies' representatives as lecturers.
4. There are no regular connections between educational establishments. Interaction has accidental individual character. Cooperation with the Ministry of education is realized, to a bigger extent, by collecting statistical data about employment of graduates.

Thus it is necessary to create the common organizational body, including representatives of above-mentioned organizations.

2. It is necessary to spread information about the best practices of cooperation in the sphere of tourism.

“Our entrepreneurs lack knowledge, skills and marketing, they can not present themselves”

“We need help not in arranging activities, but in propaganda of our opportunities”

“We would like to learn details. We learn from mistakes. We would like to get information about how to do it better.”

Because of absence of system of sustainable interaction among all tourism stakeholders and taking into consideration the needs of tourism organizations in developing tourism products, it is necessary to increase access to vocational information through translation of the best practices of cooperation in the sphere of cooperation.

For this purpose, it is better

1. to use the best practices as objects of analytical research while training specialists in the system of secondary and higher vocational education;
2. To arrange annual scientific and practice seminars and conferences and attract tourism practitioner;
3. To develop the system of short-time courses, training, master-classes in the Barents region.

Priorities for Action Plan
BART – Public-private Partnership in Barents Tourism

4. Product development

1. Formation of the holistic concept “Barents region tourism”.

During the interview we found out that respondents do not have clear idea of the Barents region as a common tourism space and they limit their arguments with the framework of own organization's activities.

In connection with this, it makes sense

1) to create the common information portal “Barents tourism portal”, including information about participants of the region, territories, their natural, social and economic peculiarities, tourism objects, social and cultural events.

Special attention can be given to authentic statistical data, reflecting all sides of tourism activities in the Barents region; tourism flows, tourism infrastructure, educational programs.

2) to consider the opportunity to introduce courses in Regional Studies to the programs of higher educational programs.

2. Formation of scientific base for developing tourism product (sociological and marketing research).

Respondents mentioned that *for successful development of tourism activities it is necessary to carry out monitors of the population's needs in tourism services in the region.*

Keeping competitiveness is nowadays one of the most important problems of the majority of tourism organizations in the Murmansk region. Heads of tourism-related companies connect sustainability of their activities with the development of new tourism activities, the development of tourism products. This needs good awareness of the situation in the regional tourism market, taking in consideration various requirements in recreation and entertainment. The actual issue is the study of potential (cultural, ethnic, historical, natural, ecological) of the region, knowledge about available services (transport, objects of public catering). In connection with this, sociological and marketing researches become popular. And it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that the majority of tourism companies are small enterprises with limited funding. It makes sense to consider ways of financing these researches from other resources.

3. Creation of new tourism products.

The respondents mentioned that *they should not sit still. “Need in the company's self-preservation dictates the necessity to develop new tourism products. This increases stability and competitiveness of the organization”.*

Creation of the new tourism product is considered by the informants one of the directions of widening their business activities. The perspective directions of tourism development in the Murmansk region are ecotourism, active leisure

(slalom, extreme tourism), historical and cultural tourism, fishing, diving; MICE-tourism and different forms of individual and family tourism.

Among the internal factors, hindering creation the new tourism product, the following ones were mentioned: the low level of the linguistic competence, absence of self-presentation skills, the low level of advertising its products. The external factors are the insufficient level of tourism infrastructure development, legislative base of the tourism industry, lack of objective information base, reflecting the changes in the tourism sphere, little attention to the problems of small business in the sphere of tourism.

4. Creation of the map of tourism objects in the Barents region.

One of the problems, mentioned by the respondents, is lack of information about such tourism services, provided by the tourism organizations in Finland, Norway, Sweden.

Interaction of tourism-related companies in the Barents-region countries is developed, mainly, in popular routes. There is little information about less popular tourism objects which could also attract attention of tourists and increase the tourist flow.

Creation of the common map of tourism objects in the Barents region will widen the information field and will allow to create in the future the actual tourism products on the territory of each country, develop joint projects on creating the common tourism product, covering the territory of several counties of the Barents region, develop cross-border tourism.

Priorities for Action Plan
BART – Public-private Partnership in Barents Tourism

5. Branding

1. Formation of the Barents identity among all the tourism stakeholders.

The respondents do not have common understanding of the Barents region and vision of a concrete organization's place in the space of the Barents region. All this needs the development of the Action Plan on Barents ideas among all tourism stakeholders. Exchange of experience, trainings, creation of a common web-site can promote this.

2. Development of the common brand of the Barents region brand.

The development of a common brand of the Barents region should base on the peculiarities of the region (places of interest, natural and climatic peculiarities) and should take into consideration not only the available tourism product but also perspectives of its development. "Only the brand of the Arctic means so much!!!"

BART – Public-Private Partnership in Barents Tourism

Task 2.4. Creating Action Plan

Module “KNOWLEDGE” - Sweden

Priority Task 1: Tourism stakeholders need reliable and comparable statistics in order to forecast trends, needs, demands, services

In Sweden tourism stakeholders get reliable tourism statistics both on a monthly, quaternary and yearly basis. Swedish Lapland provides a monthly report on guest night statistics per destination and accommodation form and market. This makes it easy for stakeholders and entrepreneurs to compare own development with the local and regional destination development and trends over time. In addition the annual TEM-report, Tourist Economical Model (*TuristEkonomiska Modellen*) for Norrbotten (Swedish Lapland) compares development end trends in Swedish Lapland to the overall development and trends in Sweden during the last year and trends over the last 14-15 years. TEM uses statistics from SCB, Statistical Central Bureau (*Statistiska Centralbyrån*) about accommodation and shopping/restaurants/transport, regarding numbers, tax incomes, employments and turnover, as well as a general trend analysis for Swedish tourism. The TEM report is ordered by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, SAERG (*Tillväxtverket*) and data is collected by SCB through reports from all registered accommodations and trade business in Sweden, and analyzed and reported by a specialized company, Resurs AB. In addition, Resurs AB does an annual market analysis where 24 000 Swedes are asked about their traveling habits. The data is collected in the TDB-data base, a Travel and Tourism data base (*Rese- och TuristDataBasen*) that started in 1989 and has over 400 000 documented travels in the data base. Travel statistics is also collected from the Swedish Transport Administration (*Vägverket/ Trafikverket*), the Swedish Transport Agency (*Transportstyrelsen*) LFV Aviation Consulting (*Luftfarsverket*) and Cruise Ferry info. Also TRIP, Tourism Development Centre (*Turismnäringens Utvecklingscenter*) managed by RTS, the Swedish travel and tourism industry Federation (*Rese- och Turistnäringen i Sverige*), publishes a monthly and quaternary report about Swedish tourism development and prognosis, to facilitate for tourism stakeholders to plan development and investments. In addition SAERG (*Tillväxtverket*) gives an annual report “Facts about Swedish Tourism” with facts and statistics, national and international trends and the effects of tourism on Swedish economy. These different reports give tourism stakeholders valuable and actual up to date data and prognosis for tourism development. Thus in Sweden educational institutions have less significance for collecting tourism statistics compared to other countries.

In a Barents perspective it would be interesting to have a similar TEM-report for the Barents area to detect and react on regional and global trends. But such Barents regional statistics need improved data collection in some areas and countries and synchronization in data collection and statistic analysis. Less developed is trends and statistics of target markets and their travel behavior and travel needs, such as the Swedish TDB-data base. An international common TDB-database would be valuable for national, regional and local tourism stakeholders in predicting market and segment trends in travel and tourism activities. Business intelligence and environmental analysis about competitors and potential business partners within the Barents region is desired by entrepreneurs in Swedish Lapland. This lack of business information about the Barents area became obvious in the low knowledge level among Swedish entrepreneurs about competitors

and potential partners in Barents. But today there is no obvious organization to collect and distribute such information.

Priority Task 2: Operators need flexible and interactive training programmes.

Tourist entrepreneurs are in strong need for flexible and interactive training programmes in several areas about the Barents tourism, such as cultural knowledge, business operators, business culture, and language. But also opportunities to meet potential business partners as well as benchmarking competitors. To enhance cross-border business and cooperation, a major obstacle was the lack of a common language as many tourism operators in Finland and Russia are understood to have limited English language skills. But also cultural business skills are needed to facilitate cross-border cooperation. Many entrepreneurs also desire training in technology development of information technology and e-commerce, as well as marketing and management skills. Staff training in service quality, hospitality and hostmanship (*värdskap*) as well as experience production is also expressed. Larger tourism operators usually have internal educational programs, but an overall need of flexible, easily accessible and near practice based is expressed. Here partly universities could contribute, but also other public or private educational organizations. In strong need in Sweden is an overall structure of educational programs and curriculums as there are many educational stakeholders with little coordination and information exchange, and in many cases locally based.

Priority Task 3: Tourism entrepreneurs need to know how to co-operate in profitable ways, and to get concrete ways of cooperating

The interest in expanding their partnership and cooperation in the Barents Region among Swedish tourism entrepreneurs is generally weak. This is in some cases due to specialization in markets and segments, but in most cases due to lack of knowledge about the Barents region, even adjacent countries such as Norway and Finland. In addition, lot of time and effort is put into organizing local and regional destination networks and cooperation, thus the International perspective has less priority until local destination cooperation has taken off.

In many cases they see no business in cooperation, but rather obstacles such as language and time due to long travel distances. Also administrative and bureaucratic obstacles such as travel visas, different taxation and law systems lessen the interest to cooperate. Many operators rather see new markets within the Barents rather than new business partners. This “mental mountain” to climb to become interested in cross-border cooperation need facilitators such as BART and other Barents projects direct aimed at entrepreneurs, their education about Barents and giving opportunities to learn how to overcome the “mental mountain”, as well as giving them effective ways of interact with potential partners. The incentives for international cooperation is thus experiences as low, although most see a potential for cooperation in the Barents. But before starting to develop “Barents products” and marketing the Barents area instead of the Swedish Lapland or local destination brand, they would like to see the benefits of a Barents destination brand, that would not compete with the now used destination brands.

Priority Task 4: Tourism stakeholders need to know how to promote product and tourism package information in appealing forms to appropriate targets

In Swedish Lapland, major tourism operators on the international market have good product and market skills, while many operators not yet established on the international market need to develop their skills in product development, marketing and selling to the international markets. Through Visit Sweden's marketing strategy, also adapted by the regional Swedish Lapland destination and most local destinations, tourism operators and other stakeholders are very clear of the markets and segments the national and regional marketing is focused on. Also the TEM reports and reports from the SAERG (*Tillväxtverket*) give information about where the international markets are and which market segments visit Sweden. Still cultural information on demands, habits, and service expectations for the different markets are in strong need. The major problems for smaller entrepreneurs and not yet internationally established operators, is to find the customers and international tour operators. A lack of incoming tour operators leaves the tourist entrepreneur to find international guests on his own. With limited marketing resources other marketing strategies except webpages are limited. Also opportunities to meet international tour operators are limited, unless destinations invite tour operators or send entrepreneurs on tourism conventions. Other major issues to develop are quality related such as information on different languages, staff language skills, and business logics on an international market.

BART – Public-Private Partnership in Barents Tourism

Task 2.4. Creating Action Plan

Module 2 “Accessibility and infrastructure” - Sweden

Priority Task 1: Enhance access to information. Web pages in English (forums, trip advisors etc.)

Most tourism stakeholders in Sweden are not aware of any web pages on Barents tourism, and thus lack information about the Barents. Such a webpage promoting Barents tourism would be welcomed, but concerns are expressed about the organization and management of such a Barents webpage. As the regional destination organization Swedish Lapland at the current state has little interest in allocate time and resources on such an organization and web management, it's should be financed and organized on a national or international public level, and by compatible information transformation, extract relevant destination information for each sub region in the Barents from regional and local destination webpages and data bases. A significant issue is if such a Barents's destination webpage should have on-line booking or not, as the trend is towards on-line booking on destination webpages. Another issues for such an information centre for Barents tourism, would be if it should also be on other forums such as social media (Facebook etc.), and then the resources and management of such forums. The information gathering about Barents tourism is a critical issue for the success of Barents tourism webpage. If not up-to-date, not covering the tourism offerings to a high degree, and facilitating bookings and traveling within the Barents, such information centre would quickly lose its attraction and interest. This needs the national and regional destination organizations to be involved in updating the information data base. In the best case scenario, an automatic uploading of tourism offerings from regional and local destination organizations' could keep the information site updated. This, however needs some technological harmonization of the local and regional data base systems, which would be a major challenge.

Priority Task 2: Making it easier to travel between countries: building/improving roads, improve public transportation...(Infrastructure, transportation)

Major obstacles for tourism are long distances, remoteness and limited infrastructure for transportations. Although some expressed that this is part of the exotics of the north, it still is a major challenge in attracting international tourists. Also most all infrastructures are developed for north-south traveling, with limited infrastructure for east-west traveling. This is a major obstacle for border-cross cooperation and tour planning within the Barents region. The region is lacking a regional flight operator such as First Air in northern Canada, that operates both remote areas as well as in an east-west direction. Such an airline would not be able to operate on a fully commercial market basis, but would need regional and national support. Road qualities in Swedish Lapland are poor, like in many other areas of the region, and the railway from southern Sweden has to be upgraded, i.e. the Bothnia railway has to be continued all the way to the

Finnish border. Ferries and cruise ships along the coastal lines are other infrastructure developments in need. A non-tangible infrastructure to facilitate border-cross travel is the developing of a Visa-free and easy border crossings.

Priority Task 3: Price and efficiency of visa procedure. Cooperation between companies working with visa issues. (Visa issues, crossing the border)

Russian visa procedures and costs are regarded as a major obstacle for developing tours and cooperation with Russia from Sweden. Very few operators, mostly within fishing tourism, have established activity in Russia. Even larger is this obstacle for the development of cooperation, benchmarking visits and meetings to exchange information and knowledge. For Russia to be able to develop any cooperation with tourism entrepreneurs within the other countries of the Barents region, the visa issue must have the highest priority.

BART – Public-Private Partnership in Barents Tourism

Task 2.4. Creating Action Plan

Module 3 “Co-operation” - Sweden

Priority Task 1: Increasing the Barents knowledge: Barents perspective should be included in existing study programs in all levels (Seminars, training, Barents perspective in education programs)

Swedish entrepreneurs have only a vague perception of the Barents region, and associate it mostly with Russia, and do not see themselves as part of it. Therefore specific training programs for Barents tourism awareness are needed for tourism stakeholders and operators. Also curriculums in traditional tourism education on all levels need to address the Barents as a common tourism area with its touristic resources. As there are no national curricula for tourism education at any level, awareness of Barents tourism should be addressed to educators directly on all levels within tourism education programs. This need that public stakeholders in Barents tourism development take active responsibility to increase the awareness of the Barents as a destination among all tourism educators.

Priority Task 2: Encouraging companies for co-operation – B2B: good examples and best practices should be made visible (Business to business co-operation - partner search)

Tourism operators in Swedish Lapland have and are engaged in different networking processes and projects on the local and regional destination level. Many express fear that an additional process on the Barents level would be too much, before local and regional networks and cooperation's have developed and stabilized. But instead of pressing entrepreneurs with additional time consuming processes, new innovative ways to facilitate cooperation has to be developed. Speed-dating, benchmarking trips, etc. are suggested instead of traditional workshops and seminars. To interest tourist operators in cross border cooperation, not only best practice has to be presented, but actual business opportunities, such as actual international customers within MICE. Thus public projects with the aim of promoting cooperation also need to involve matchmaking with actual and potential customers for such cross border ventures.

Priority Task 3: Encouraging public management for co-operation: JWGT should intensify its work (tourism associations, universities, authorities, other JWGs) (Public intermediation, more authority involvement)

As many entrepreneurs do not have any academic education, many are skeptical to the traditional academy for facilitating tourism development. At the same time LTU has initiated new forms of

cooperation with private business through student projects which have been very rewarding for involved tourism operators. Entrepreneurs are also expressing that they are fed-up of projects and project leaders not getting business to take off, but rather producing reports and endless workshops and educations. This skeptic attitude towards “tourism developers” has to be considered carefully when planning development processes and projects addressing tourist entrepreneurs, at least in Sweden.

Authorities could encourage co-operation by specifically canalizing resources and findings to such cooperation processes. But funding should also be less bureaucratic with simpler application forms, more trust in the processes and participants and less paperwork, so that hard working entrepreneurs find it worth to take part in such funding and projects.

BART – Public-Private Partnership in Barents Tourism

Task 2.4. Creating Action Plan

Module 4 “Product development” - Sweden

Priority Task 1: Facilitate tourism product development (Product development standard, safety & quality)

Many Swedish entrepreneurs expressed concerns about different levels of service quality and hostmanship (*värdskap*) within the Barents region, which can be an obstacle when developing cross-border common products of high quality. The same holds for safety as no common Nordic or Barents certifications and regulations exist for different adventures activities such as rafting, mountaineering, kayaking, dogslegding, snowmobiling etc. Also common certifications for ecotourism and sustainability are lacking. There is a certain interest in common product development, but the incitements are not experienced to be large enough to try to overcome all the obstacles. Thus public organizations have to facilitate cooperation by reducing obstacles and provide opportunities for common product development. This can be done by Barents cooperation projects for specific tourism areas such as MICE, Nature based tourism, adventure tourism, fishing tourism etc. As cross border product development will target international guests, it's important that participating partners have quality standards for the export level. Many smaller tourism enterprises in Swedish Lapland do not have these standards and lack business knowledge of international tourism, as well as market and guest knowledge. An important aspect of facilitating cross border product development therefore includes preparing the enterprises and entrepreneurs for an international business and market.

Priority Task 2: Forming holistic understanding of tourism in Barents region from PD perspective (Making tourism products together, others' products to be known, legal- financial - informational knowledge)

As the knowledge level of the Barents area and its tourism is limited, it's essential that this knowledge base has to be increased before common products can be developed. Besides knowledge about Barents tourism business, legal and logistic, and infrastructural knowledge of the region, specific market knowledge and intelligence is needed. Product development must also be based on the specific values of the Barents destination brand to be identified. Such values must be developed in a communication with target markets. Based on the natural tourism resources of the Barents, the destination values, market needs etc., product development should also be encouraged to be based in an innovative approach to avoid copycatting and streamlining products across the Barents, resulting in unnecessary competition between destinations and tourism operators with the same offerings. Innovative product development based on local resources need the cooperation of entrepreneurs, research and education and financial institutions, thus a public-private partnership that today is rare in tourism development.

BART – Public-Private Partnership in Barents Tourism

Task 2.4. Creating Action Plan

Module 5 “Branding” - Sweden

Priority Task 1: Create common identity for people in the north to promote tourism (Cross-border tourism products, adapt products to different culture)

Tourism entrepreneurs in Sweden have difficult to see a common identity in the Barents, due to different cultures and language, although we share many similarities, such as nature and climate, remoteness, sami culture etc. It's important to fill the brand with a common value. They also have difficult to think themselves as part of Barents or its destination brand, as it associates with the high Arctic. It's important that no country claims the name or are strongly associated to the brand (such as Russia). There need substantial public investments to create a common basis for understanding and knowledge of the Barents area, an investment that private entrepreneurs are not interested in or do not have the resources for.

Priority Task 2: Raising awareness of possibility of common Barents Region tourism Brand among stakeholders (decision-makers)

There is a substantial lack of knowledge about the Barents area and its tourism business among the Swedish entrepreneurs. They have therefore today difficult to relate to a Barents tourism brand, as many operators still are working with the local and regional Swedish Lapland brand. Many see the launch of a Barents tourism brand as a political question managed on a level above the regional destination organizations. A new brand can also be perceived as a competition to existing brands and become confusing on an international market. It needs a lot of challenging work to get the brand known both within Barents tourism and internationally.

Priority Task 3: Make tourism actors aware of added value of Barents region tourism cooperation

It is regarded as important that the destination brand is associated with a shared value for tourism actors to act on Barents tourism development. Most Swedish entrepreneurs see a potential for cross-border cooperation, although many interpretate this as obtaining a new market (the Barents) rather than border-cross cooperate on existing markets and products. Although there exists a potential for a cross-border production, these are seen rather as a narrow product such as snowmobiling along a cross-border trail, or cross-border bus tours, which in addition require complicated logistics. The potential for common MICE products are regarded as limited, due to

the facts that conferences and conventions usually are place specific for certain conference facilities, and for cross-border MICE activities and events, the distances are too large. Some see however, marketing advantages if the MICE operators within Barents combine their marketing efforts by showing the common pool of exclusive MICE facilities of the north. But as many MICE operators indeed are competitors, competing for big conferences and events, such marketing cooperation need to be handled by an incoming operator on the Barents level.

How to improve tourism cooperation across the Barents Region?

Tourism already plays a significant role in the economy of the Barents region and it is a sector with a great potential for further growth. Cooperation across borders is, however, a prerequisite for such a growth. How can cooperation be improved? Some recommendations:

- Take advantage of the possibilities that exist within the Barents Region cooperation for establishing and developing professional cross-border networks.
- Establish and develop cross-border partnerships within the field of tourism research in order to identify and spread best practices and provide information for those involved in the tourism sector.
- Establish and develop partnerships between national, regional and local authorities in the region in order to implement a more united policy on tourism.
- Establish and develop partnerships between tour operators and tourist agencies in the region.
- Bridge the gap between tourism researchers, policy-makers, and the tourist industry in the region by involving all stakeholders in common projects. Create new platforms for dialogue (networks, programmes, conferences, et cetera) where tourism stakeholders within the region can learn from each others' best practices.
- Establish and develop cross-border training programs for tourism specialists as well as programs for tourism and hospitality education. Encourage student-exchange programs.
- Make practical tourist cooperation easier by developing cross-border infrastructure and reducing bureaucratic barriers along the national borders of the region.
- Learn from the good and bad experiences of cross-border cooperation in other similar regions.

Attention: These findings are not based on the interview results like requested through instructions provided by the Lead Partner in May 2012. Also, the texts do in no way correspond to the task set (see power point presentation and other partners' work).

Lead Partner, 15.10.2012