



**Committee of Senior Officials of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Barents Regional Committee**

Mandate for the Joint Working Group on Tourism 2013-2017

Introduction

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region has great potential to be even more attractive destination for international tourism. The significance of tourism as a source of livelihood has grown considerably during the past decades. The tourism industry has a significant employment effect especially on youth and women. This is very important especially in sparsely populated areas, tourism is sometimes the only one bringing income.

The attractive but fragile arctic environment, natural phenomena and cultural diversity are the key factors that attract tourists to the Barents region. The tourism business needs to be developed in sustainable way; ecological, economic, social, cultural and political, and therefore maintain these tourism resources. Sustainability is especially important when facing the challenges caused by climate change, which can affect as well promote tourism industry considerably.

Competition in the tourism business is getting tougher. The major improvements needed are related to the availability level of transportation and visa handling procedures between Russia and Nordic countries. Today's and tomorrow's visitors require fast and flexible solutions. Access to fast east-west communications and smooth visa handling are necessary.

The development of tourism in Barents area is still in various stages. Through cooperation, learning and increasing knowhow exchange can we develop together tourism industry in Barents and build a strong tourism region.

Objectives and tasks

The Joint Working Group on Tourism develops multilateral and interdisciplinary cooperation in the field of tourism in the Barents Region. The objectives and tasks of the Working Group will be:

- to influence preconditions for tourism development in the BEAR when improving traffic connection
- to identify and define authentic common values in order to build common identity in tourism development
- to co-operate in the fields of tourism education and research in order to achieve common criteria in quality, safety and sustainability
- to promote proactive development and realization of high quality joint products and thematic product families
- to promote synergies between parallel industries to ensure competitiveness of tourism industry

Composition and chairmanship of the Working Group

The Joint Working Group on Tourism works on both national and region levels. Members and alternate members of the Working Group should be nominated by:

each of the regional entities, which are members of the Barents Regional Council
the competent national (federal) authorities of the countries which are members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council

In addition, regional, national 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 whenever necessary.

In order to enhance active participation between the different actors in the Working Group, a shared chairmanship should be practiced. The chairmanship shall generally follow the rotation of the BEAC and the BRC with a central government representative and a representative of a regional authority or administrative entity working together. The JWGT chairmanship will last two years, but can be prolonged for three years. The same country can hold the chairmanship not longer than two consecutive periods.

Methods of Work

The Working Group should choose the working methods, which are the most appropriate to meet a particular objective or objectives 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 Working Group should meet at least twice a year. If possible, alternative meetings will be connected with some international expert seminars on tourism. The issues, meetings etc. should be prepared also by the e-mail. 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 JWGT shall report its actions to the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) and the Barents Regional Committee (RC) once a year, by the 31st of January. The working Group delivers an annual report. The objectives of the Mandate will be reached by implementing the Action Plan which will be midterm evaluated.