



Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finland/Nina Vesterinen 9.2.2015

Joint Working Group on Tourism - Annual Report for 2014

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

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

Actions in 2014

Ms Nina Vesterinen, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finland and Ms Kairi Pääsuke, Administrative Board of Norrbotten, Sweden acted as chairs during the reporting year. Due to the long leaves of absence of both chairmen, there were only few activities during the reporting year.

The Mandate 2013-2017

The objectives and tasks of the mandate are

- 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
- 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

Meetings

The Working Group met twice in 2014; in Helsinki and in Stockholm. Subjects covered in the meetings were as follows: exchange of information related to the current status of strategic development of tourism in each country/region, communication of the importance of tourism and creation of infographics to illustrate it, accessibility especially the Oulu-Luleå-Tromsö flight route, BEAC questionnaire about the funding needs of the WGs, as well preparations of future funding instruments such ENI CBC and Interreg programs. Ms Maija Lummeperu from the Joint Working Group on Culture gave a presentation about their work and Ms Tuuli Ojala about the adaptation of the climate change, in March meeting. The meetings have been well attended. In addition to the meetings members of the group have commented documents and exchanged ideas via email.

Program Work Preparations

The JWGT members have put their opinions forward related to the content of the forthcoming program guidelines (ENI and Interreg) so that the programs would better support the promotion and execution of the mandate and especially the Action Plan.



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Traffic Connections

The JWGT has followed and supported the preparations of opening the new Oulu-Luleå-Tromsø flight route.

Importance of Tourism

In order to raise the status and better communicate the significance of tourism industry in the Barents region, collection of data for Barents tourism fact sheet “infographics” was conducted.

Participation in Barents Meetings

Regional Chairman Kairi Pääsuke has participated in the CSO meeting and in the Barents Regional Committee. National Chairman Nina Vesterinen has participated in Finnish Barents co-ordination meetings.

Other actions

Based on and a result of the Barents Interregional Tourism Action Plan companies in northern Sweden (Swedish Lapland Visitors Board), northern Norway (Visit Northern Norway) and northern Finland (Lapin Matkailuelinkeinon Liitto ry) are preparing a Interreg North V application. The main focus areas are cooperation in marketing, influencing traffic conditions internationally and inside the region, promoting the use of seasons and natural conditions in tourism. The working name is “Visit Arctic Europe”.

The working group also took part in the European commission consultation on Arctic issues (forthcoming strategy).

23.-25.10.2014 a conference called Tourist Barents Summit PROArctic was arranged by Arkhangelsk partners where cross-border co-operation possibilities were highlighted.

No specific actions have been done regarding the implementation of the Action Plan on Climate Change.