

Mandate for the Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC) 2011-2013

Introduction

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) is characterized by a rich cultural diversity. The development of cultural life serves the social and economic development in the Region. The achievements gained in the Barents cultural cooperation are not only felt in the Region but also spreading all over Europe, increasing interest in the Region.

A formal cultural cooperation in the BEAR started in 1993 when the Ministers responsible for Culture convened for the first time in Kirkenes. The Barents Culture Committee was then appointed to be responsible for the activities. In 2001, the Culture Committee was converted into a permanent Regional Working Group on Culture. Based on the recommendations of the Ministerial Conferences (Kirkenes Declaration 1993, Archangelsk Communiqué 1998, Oulu Communiqué 2002, and the conclusions of the International Forum "Culture of the Barents Region" in Arkhangelsk 2008) the Group has defined objectives for cultural cooperation.

The need to focus on Cultural cooperation as a key issue in developing mutual understanding and pave the ground for a welfare society in the whole Region is still most valid. In addition to considering the role of culture as a stimulating factor for the development of the Barents Region and in order to further develop the cultural cooperation and networks, the Regional Working Group of Culture was transformed into a joint working group within the structure of BEAC and within the structure of the Barents Regional Council (BRC) with the following mandate:

Objectives and tasks

The Joint Working Group on Culture took over the tasks previously performed by the Regional Working Group on Culture to further develop multilateral/bilateral interdisciplinary cooperation in BEAR.

The objectives and tasks of the Working Group are:

- to strengthen cultural identities in BEAR and ties between the regional entities, with due respect to its historical traditions
- to further develop cultural cooperation in BEAR as part of the implementation of the Northern Dimension Policy
- to further develop cultural cooperation in the BEAR in interaction with other international structures, in particular the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Council of Europe
- to promote culture as a tool for regional and economic development
- to promote and develop cultural diversity and cross-border cultural cooperation between local and regional stakeholders: cultural institutions and organizations, indigenous peoples, individual artists, cultural experts and authorities
- to encourage new networks in order to develop better skills and knowledge in the field of arts and culture
- to contribute to organizing of meetings of Ministers of Culture, when/if appropriate
- to encourage close cooperation with the other sectors of the Barents Cooperation

Composition and chairmanship of the Working Group

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

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

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

The Members of the Working Group may invite specialists to assist them during meetings or other activities whenever necessary. In order to enhance an active participation between the actors in the Working Group, the Chairmanship should be jointly shared between national and regional levels. The chairmanship shall follow the rotation of BEAC and BRC, unless decided otherwise, with a central government representative and a representative of a regional authority or administrative entity working together.

Methods of Work

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

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

The mandate of the Working Group of Culture has been approved by the Regional Committee on the 26th January and the BEAC/CSO on February 2, 2011.