



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

Mandate for the Joint Working Group on Education and Research

Introduction

Nowadays, in the world of fast-paced educational and research development it is vitally important for the Barents Euro-Arctic Region to strengthen cooperation in this sphere for the benefits of all the participating countries, sustainable social and economic development of the Region in globalization conditions. The activities in this sphere will contribute to integration of European and Russian education; joint educational and research projects; to improvement of quality of professional training, educational management in all directions; academic exchange; introduction of modern technologies and the availability of modern knowledge to the populace of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. The achievement gained in Barents educational and research cooperation is not only felt in the Region but also spreading all over Europe.

The first Regional Working Group on Education and Research (BEAR WGER) was established in 2001 after the Barents Council had approved an Exchange Programme for Higher Education and Research in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region with a Programme Board consisting of representatives from relevant authorities in order to facilitate exchanges in higher education and research. After having finished its task the Programme Board was closed and the activities then were passed to the WGER. In 2004 by the decision of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) it was transformed into a new Joint Working Group on Education and Research (JWGER). Unfortunately, JWGER didn't manage to show its sufficient activity at that moment. However, several international forums and other events on education has been held on the basis of different Barents Region universities, that proves there is successful collaboration among the Barents universities, but this work needs a structure, which will collect all the necessary information, summarize it, put forward the proposals, coordinate further activities and etc.

By the resolution of the International Conference of the Member States of the BEAC and the EU on Higher Education Cooperation in November, 2008 (Petrozavodsk State University, Karelia, the Russian Federation), the participants pointed out the need to resume the work of the Joint Working Group on Education and Research (JWGER) as it is able to become an important instrument of educational and research institutions cooperation development in the region in its priority areas: ecology, biology, geology, ICT, innovation, medicine, tourism, culture, indigenous peoples protection, etc.

Objectives and Tasks

The Joint Working Group on Education and Research will take over the tasks of the previous Joint Working Group and further develop multilateral / bilateral interdisciplinary cooperation in the Barents Region.

The objectives of the Joint Working Group on Education and Research are:

- to intensify cooperation in academic and research spheres and exchange of international cooperation experience among the higher educational and research institutions of the BEAR;
- to support establishing of consortiums and networks of educational and research institutions aiming the joint activities in integration of European and Russian education, implementation of joint projects of professional training, research and academic exchange within the framework of the Bologna Process;
- to encourage close cooperation with the other sectors of the Barents cooperation;
- to develop further cooperation in education and research 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 European Commission;
- to contribute to organizing of the BEAR forums on education and research on the basics of the BEAR educational institutions;
- to promote education and research as tools for regional and economic development;
- to increase cooperation in fundamental and applied research in the Region;
- to broaden the list of joint educational programs with the purpose to prepare highly qualified specialists capable to work in globalization conditions;
- to support the development of the Barents Virtual University;
- to use distance learning (e-Learning) as an effective instrument in the interaction among the BEAR universities and introduction of joint and national educational degree and non-degree programs;
- to provide the BEAR educational institutions with up-to-date information on working donor programs and funds;
- to promote and use actively international financial instruments such as: the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - Cross-Border Cooperation (ENPI CBC), particularly the program of cross-border cooperation – ENPI Baltic Sea Region, the 7th Framework Program of the EU (FP7), various programs of Norwegian-Russian cooperation, the programs of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and other instruments for development of higher education and research;
- to support the BEAR universities in applying for projects under Joint Projects (JP) and Structural Measures (SC) within the EU Tempus IV Programme;
- to support the academic mobility programmes provided by Erasmus Mundus (EU), CIMO, FIRST (Finland) and bilateral universities' agreements.

Composition and chairman of the Joint Working Group

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

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

In addition, the European Commission and the Nordic Council of Ministers or other 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 different actors in the Working Group, a shared chairmanship should be practised. The chairmanship should rotate within intervals of 2 years with a central government representative and a representative of a regional authority or administrative entity working together. The Barents Regional Committee may take a different decision based on the request from the Working Group. In addition, a smaller executive group (one person from each participating country) may be formed for the Group work management between its meetings.

Methods of Work

The Working Group will 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 using external experts, organizing conferences or seminars and involving educational and scientific institutions, cultural and non-governmental organizations in agreed activities, etc. The Working Group should 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 Joint Working Group on Education and Research should coordinate its own activity and cooperate with the other similar joint working groups (such as on economic cooperation, indigenous peoples, etc.) and with relevant subgroups of other regional bodies. The Working Group should submit to the decisions, follow the directions and answer the inquiries of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council through the Committee of Senior Officials and the Barents Regional Committee. Annual progress reports should be submitted by the 1st of February each year.

The mandate of the Working Group on Education and Research will be assessed after three years of its duration. On the basis of this assessment the mandate can be amended, prolonged or re-evaluated.

Adopted by the Barents Regional Committee on 12 May 2009

Adopted by the BEAC/CSO on 28 May 2009