

Mandate for the Working Group on Tourism (DRAFT)

Introduction

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region is an attractive destination for international tourism. The significance of the tourism as a source of livelihood has grown considerably during the past decades. Tourism business employs a lot of people thus providing income and welfare. This is very important especially in sparsely populated areas, where tourism is sometimes the only developing source of livelihood.

The attractive but fragile arctic nature, natural phenomena and cultural diversity are the key factors that attract tourists to Barents region. The tourism business needs to be developed in a way that is ecologically, socially and culturally sustainable and therefore maintains these resources of tourism. Sustainability is especially important when we are facing the challenges caused by the climate change, which can affect tourism industry considerably.

The competition in the tourism business is getting tougher, partly because of the difficult global recession. In order to maintain the competitiveness in the world market it is beneficial for the Barents region to co-operate in tourism development. Possibilities for multilateral co-operation can be found e.g. from the fields of international marketing, product development or education and research.

The initiative to establish a Joint Working Group on Tourism (JWGT) for Barents region made by the Russian Ministry of Tourism was officially approved by the Committee of Senior Officials at its meeting 18 - 19 February 2009. The Barents Regional Committee supported the initiative in Kirkenes meeting 23. – 24.9.2008 and the JWGT was established. The Russian Ministry of Tourism was appointed as the chairman of the working group and Finnish Lapland as the regional co-chair.

The Joint Working Group on Tourism works on both national and region levels. The national level will provide information on the current state policy in this sphere, plans, programs, national legislation and amendments. The regional level is implementing the co-operation in practice.

Objectives and tasks

The Joint Working Group on Tourism shall develop multilateral and interdisciplinary cooperation in the field of tourism in the Barents Region.

The objectives and tasks of the Working Group will be:

- to increase the international interest in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) and thus promote incoming tourism to the area
- to increase tourism revenue to the BEAR and thus promote the entrepreneurship and employment in the field of tourism
- to promote development and realization of cross-border tourist projects
- to improve preconditions for tourism development in the BEAR e.g. by improving accessibility (flight and railway traffic) and developing border crossing formalities

- to maintain the unique tourism attractions of the BEAR by promoting the sustainable tourism development and by adapting to the challenges caused by the climate change
- to build joint products based to the rich culture of the Barents region, e.g. indigenous peoples
- to co-operate in fields of tourism education and research in order to recognise and spread good practices

Composition and chairmanship of the Working Group

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

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- 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
- the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples

In addition [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 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.

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. The issues, meetings etc. are 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 mandate of the Joint Working Group of Tourism will be assessed after three years of its duration. On the basis of this assessment the mandate can be amended, prolonged or re-evaluated.