



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT

Name of the Working Group: **Regional Working group on Environment/ RWGE**

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: **Finnmark, 2018-2019**

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship:

The environmental work of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) is far reaching and diverse, including themes and areas of e.g. climate change, environmental pollution issues, nature protection, water management, environmental policy work, youth work and environmental education etc. It is important that the environmental issues in this regional network are considered both at the national and international levels.

2. Meetings (meetings held, main topics and outcomes of the meetings):

Two meetings tentatively planned. Back-to-back meeting with BEAC WGE in Storassjöfallet in March and in Umeå in September. Both meetings were postponed/ not implemented due to only one or no Russian regions present.

How to get Russian regions to take part in the working group work is a recurrent issue at every meeting. This has been the situation for several years.

3. Other activities (projects, events, programmes etc.):

This year RWGE chair was invited to a meeting in the Regional Council. The meeting was in Tromsø in April. The Chair gave a short review of the Regional cooperation on Environment from the very beginning in 1993. The challenges in the RWGE cooperation during several years was highlighted; as the lack of participation from the Russian regions and the lack of connection to the Regional Council was mentioned.

4. Results of the year (decisions, new initiatives, improvements)

Many Environmental Projects are going on in the Region. Environmental Authorities in the Region are participating, and they are lead partners for the projects. Funding by Kolarctic ENI CBC Programme is crucial for the project activity in the Barentsregion.

5. Youth involvement (how has the working group included young people or worked with youth issues during the year)

Youth are participating in some of the ongoing projects, as bird ringing and Environmental School Activities

6. Evaluation of the work (What went well, what needs improvement)

Even though it has been difficult to arrange meeting in the RWGE. Environmental Officials from the region meet, and they also form the Subgroup Water and Nature under the Working Group on Environment. The activity in this group is mostly of a regional nature

The Regional Council ought to strengthen the RWGE cooperation by ensuring that members from the Regions can meet in the RWGE, and they should give a mandate to the Group.

7. Other

The RWGE wishes to be a part of the Regional Community as it was from the beginning of the Barents Cooperation. We hope The Regional Council also can see the added value of a close collaboration.