



Seminar report

”Tackling the Raw Materials Challenge Why the Barents Region is Key to Europe’s Economic Future”

At the European Parliament on 15 March

EU-parliamentarians, European Commission staff, industry representatives and others gathered on 15 March 2011 for a Seminar on the Barents Region and its potential to help tackle Europe’s strategic raw materials challenge. The event was hosted by Sweden, as current Chair of the Barents Euro Arctic Council, and by Mr herbert Reul and Ms Lena Ek, chairman and member respectively, of the European Parliament Committee for industry research and energy. The speakers were:

Herbert Reul

MEP, Chair of the Committee for Industry Research and Energy

Carl Bildt

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, chair of the Barents Euro Arctic Council

Maud Olofsson

Minister for Enterprise and Energy of Sweden

Antonio Tajani

Commissioner for Industry and entrepreneurship
Vice President of the European Commission

Elias Ekdahl

Director General of the Geological Survey of Finland

Lars-Erik Aaro

President and Group CEO, LKAB

Lena Ek

MEP, ALDE-coordinator in the Committee for Industry Research and Energy

Jari Heiniluoma

State Secretary at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy of Finland

Erik Lahnstein

State Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Vladimir Chizhov,

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the EU

The following is a summary of the seminar discussions and themes:

Benefits of the Barents Region

The speakers acknowledged the great benefits of the Barents region, regarding raw materials extraction and refinement. Today EU stands for 20 percent of the global mineral consumption but only 4 percent of the production. As the world's raw materials demand is growing, more attention should be given to the resources available on the European continent itself. Practically all of the 14 minerals listed by the European



Commission as critical to the EU can be found in the Barents Region, among them the so-called rare earth minerals. The region is already a world leader in paper and pulp production. Other substantial benefits of the Barents region are its well-renowned human capital, research and technology development. Today 80 percent of the mining technology of the world comes from the Nordic countries. Mining in the Barents Region is also safer and greener than in other parts of the world. As Professor Elias Ekdahl put it: "The Fenno-

Scandian shield is a treasure-chest for Europe. We have merely scratched the surface of its great potential."

Infrastructure needs

Several speakers touched upon the investment requirements in the Barents region, in particular the need to develop the rail network and other infrastructure for transport. In order to secure a sustainable supply chain to consumers and fully benefit from the raw material potential, the transport systems of the Barents Region need to be reinforced and extended in capacity. Other areas where investments are needed are technological research, innovations and cross-border geological surveys.

EU-cooperation

The four Barents countries share a strong common interest in a sustainable economic development in the region. The EU is an important partner in this development, as acknowledged not least by the representatives of both non-EU Barents Council members Norway and Russia. Most speakers welcomed the EU Raw Materials Initiative and the recent



communication from the European Commission. Ambassador Chizhov pointed out the Partnership for Modernization as an appropriate platform for cooperation between the EU and Russia in the raw materials sector. Other relevant structures for cooperation, mentioned at the seminar were the Northern Dimension and the ENPI Cross Border Cooperation programs in the region. Commissioner Tajani called for further exploration of the conditions for cooperation between the European Commission and the Barents Euro Arctic Council.

European Innovation Partnerships

Commissioner Tajani mentioned the five European Innovation Partnerships (EIP), planned by the European Commission as a strategy to speed up innovations in Europe. As stated in the Commission's latest communication on raw materials and encouraged by Competitiveness Council conclusions on 11 March, one of the five partnerships is suggested to support research in raw materials exploration, processing, recovery and recycling. At the seminar Commissioner Tajani expressed that he hoped to see national engagement in this Raw Material Innovation Partnership, from the countries in the Barents Region. The partnership was also welcomed by many other speakers.



If you have questions regarding the seminar or Sweden's chairmanship in the Barents Euro Arctic Council, please do not hesitate to contact Gustaf Winstrand at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs: gustaf.winstrand@foreign.ministry.se