

- Strengthening adaptation measures on climate change, improving flood risk forecasting and flood prevention, in close cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers.

### Nature Protection in the Barents region - Building Resilience for the Future

The Barents region has unique ecosystems, richness in biodiversity and a great cultural heritage. Maintaining biodiversity and avoiding irreversible damage to ecosystems and their functions are of increasing importance to securing social and economic stability as well as to contributing to mitigation of adaptation to climate change. The International Year of Biodiversity 2010 highlights the need for intensified action. Through strengthened regional cooperation the Barents Nature Protection subgroup can contribute to building resilience for the future.

#### The priorities include:

- Supporting the Habitat Contact Forum (Archangelsk, 2010) building networks for nature protection, including on sustainable forest management, and enhancing possibilities for educational projects for children and teachers;
- Supporting the development of a representative and well managed network of protected areas in the Barents region (BPAN), in cooperation with the Arctic Council, also linking it to activities that highlight the need for protected areas to conserve biodiversity threatened by climate change;
- Highlighting the results of the Integrated Ecosystem Management Approach to Conservation of Biodiversity and Minimise Habitat Fragmentation (ECORA) project, seeking cooperation with indigenous peoples;
- Giving attention to the last large boreal forests, protected areas and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Barents region as well as exploring the possibilities of creating of a Treriksråysa trilateral park between Sweden, Finland and Norway.

### Barents geographic features

The area of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is equivalent to the combined land area of France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, with a population of approximately 6 million inhabitants. The Barents region is characterised by harsh climatic conditions and very sensitive flora and fauna. It is very rich in natural resources and has many processing and engineering industries. The Barents region has several urgent areas of concern related to pollution, which have been defined as environmental hot spots.



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## THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC REGION

### Swedish Chairmanship of

## THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL Working Group on Environment 2010–2011



SWEDISH CHAIR OF  
 THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL  
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## Swedish Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Working Group on Environment 2010-2011

Since the 1990s, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Working Group on Environment (WGE) has promoted important co-operation to strengthen capacity to meet regional environmental challenges and facilitate environmental investments. Regional cooperation has an important role to play in meeting global challenges, such as climate change and loss of biodiversity. The Barents cooperation presents an opportunity for linking international and national policy targets to concrete projects on the ground.

Work under the WGE is carried out in subgroups: 1) Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption (CPESC), 2) Nature Protection, and 3) Water Issues. Additionally, a fourth subgroup has been established, 4) Hot Spot Exclusion. Several activities in the subgroups contribute to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

The regional dimension gives the Barents cooperation added value. Results are not possible without close cooperation with the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE). The Barents cooperation, including a broad range of sectors, also presents unique opportunities for cross-sector activities.

### The overall priorities include:

- Playing an active role during the coinciding Swedish Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), which is focusing on: working for a more eco-efficient economy in the Barents region ([www.ud.se/barentsradet](http://www.ud.se/barentsradet)). This includes activities following up on the recommendations from the Vadsø Conference on Climate Change in the Barents Region;
- Further strengthening the cooperation between the WGE and the RWGE, and enhancing activities arranged by the RWGE. Seeking possibilities to increase participation at regional level through thematic activities;
- Seeking opportunities for activities in co-operation with other BEAC groups, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and international forums (Arctic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers), for example on climate change and health challenges and on climate change and water management;
- Strengthening the link between projects under the WGE and global environmental co-operation processes, for example on cleaner production and sustainable consumption;
- Revising and streamlining strategies, action programmes and project

lists of the subgroups, and improving co-ordination with bilateral projects;

- Seeking co-operation with the International Barents Secretariat (IBS), for example on the development of the hot spot information system.



### Towards Exclusion of Environmental Hot Spots

The Barents region has several urgent areas of concern related to pollution. To tackle these concerns the NEFCO/AMAP Barents environmental hot spot list consisting of 42 environmental hot spots was compiled in 2003, with the aim of launching investment projects in all hot spots by 2013. The focus in the coming years will be on the exclusion of hot spots from the list by clarifying ownership, intensifying action and visualising progress. With the new Hot Spot Exclusion subgroup, this work will enter a new phase.

### The priorities include:

- Establishing a well-functioning exclusion procedure, with the aim of moving several hot spots from the red to the yellow phase and by the next ministerial meeting presenting a revision of the hot spot list, excluding hot spots in several regions;
- Developing close cooperation between the Hot Spot Exclusion subgroup and representatives of the regional level, including strengthening the work of existing regional working groups on hot spots and the development of analogous groups in other regions;
- Strengthening hot spot exclusion by close cooperation with the NEFCO Hot Spot Facility, the CPESC subgroup, the Arctic Council, as well as bringing prioritised hot spots to the attention of the BEAC Committee of Senior Officials and the Barents Regional Council. Launching the hot spot information system on [www.beac.st](http://www.beac.st), providing an important tool for the exclusion procedure and raising awareness.

## A Model Region for Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption

The work of the CPESC subgroup can contribute to making the Barents region a model region for cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption, fostering activities that help mitigate climate change and contribute to the global 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

### The priorities include:

- Strengthening the links between the work on cleaner production and energy efficiency, finding synergies with the Joint Working Group on Energy in light of the Barents Ministerial Meeting on raw materials, energy efficiency and renewable energy to be held in 2010, and enhancing Barents Window funding projects;
- Following-up on the Marrakech Task Force Seminars (e.g. green public procurement) contributing to the global 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production;
- Further developing training activities and seeking opportunities for education and awareness based on cleaner production and sustainable consumption, involving universities and other educational institutions.

## Clean Water - Strengthening Capacity and Facilitating Investments

Poor quality drinking water is a significant environmental and health problem in the Barents region. Climate change and increased flooding mean that the challenges are growing bigger. Major investments and strengthened capacity in water management are needed. The Water Issues subgroup, building on the participation and experience of regional cooperation, can contribute to strengthening capacity and facilitating investments. The work can support other forms of international cooperation, such as the UNECE Protocol on Water and Health.

### The priorities include:

- Starting-up and developing a comprehensive water project in the Arhangelsk region, with the possibility of exchanging experience with other parts of the Barents region, and exploring possible cooperation with the Joint Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues;