

**The Barents Regional
Youth Program
2011-2014**

Background

At its meeting on September 5th 2001, the Barents Regional Council decided to draw up a youth programme for the Barents Region. The Barents Regional Council adopted the first Barents Regional Youth Program in 2002. The same year the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Family Affairs decided to allocate funds for multilateral youth projects in the Barents region as an element in the implementation of the Youth programme. At first the allocation were given for a period of three years, but have due to its success been prolonged and are still active. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat has administered the funds after the priorities of the Barents Regional Youth Program.



About the region

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region has a population of more than 5,5 million and consists of the northern areas of Finland (Lapland, Kainuu, Oulu), Sweden (Norrbotten, Västerbotten) and Norway (Nordland, Troms, Finnmark) and north-western Russia (Nenets, Komi, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Karelia). The natural resources of the Barents Region are extremely rich and varied; the most significant are the forest, fish, ore and petroleum resources. These natural resources are partly unexploited. With its surface area of 1.6 million km², the region is larger than France, Spain and Portugal put together.

The Barents Region is in the Arctic and is characterized by a harsh climate, sparsely populated areas and long distances. The people of the various regions involved have maintained contact with each other for thousands of years through

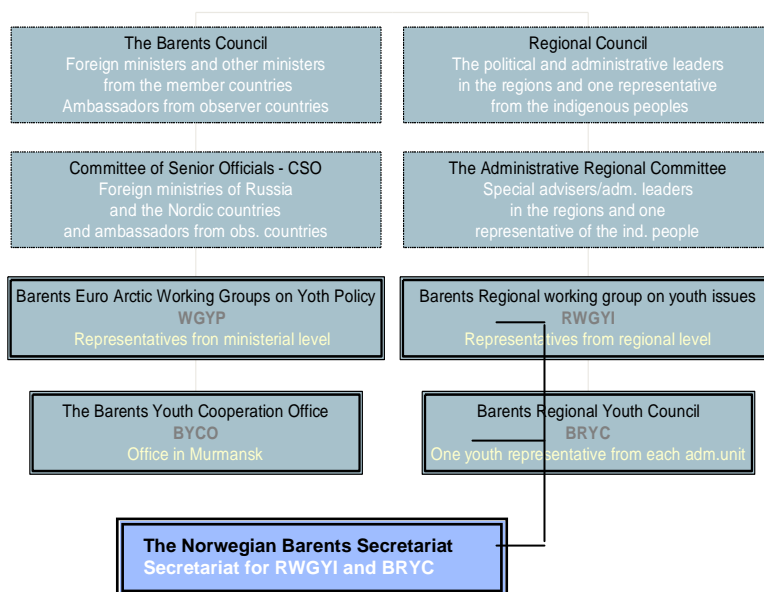
trade and cultural contact. In spite of differences in social and economic conditions, the participating regions face many common challenges, for example the fact that they are situated far away from both the capitals of their countries and the large markets, and that the business sector in the region is not very diversified, being mainly based on raw materials.

The Barents cooperation

The Barents Cooperation was established in 1993, when the foreign ministers of the participating countries and the European Commission signed the Kirkenes Declaration. The Cooperation is based on two pillars, the national, represented by the central government authorities in Moscow, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo, and the regional, represented by the county authorities. At the national level is the Barents Council, which consists of ministers, while at the regional level there is the Regional Council, where the members are the political and administrative leaders of the participating counties.

Organisation chart

YOUTH COOPERATION STRUCTURES IN THE BARENTS REGION



Important Structures for youth cooperation in The Barents Region

The Working Group on Youth Policy (WGYP) under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council was established in May 1999 upon a finish initiative and does important work on youth policy in the Barents Cooperation.

During the Barents Youth Conference in Tromsø 2002, WGYP decided to establish an office in Murmansk to support and facilitate all cross border cooperation related to youth issues on regional level. **The Barents Youth Cooperation office (BYCO)** was established and has an important role in the implementation of the

Youth Programme. The office is co financed by the governments of Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

In April 2003 a **Regional Working Group On youth Issues** (RWGYI) was established. The group have been working actively with the implementation of the youth programme and have had a close cooperation with WGYP.

To make sure that young people had an arena that facilitated active participation and realisation of youth initiatives, **the Barents Regional Youth Council** (BRYC) was established in January 2004. The BRYC consist of one youth representative from each of the administrative units in the Barents area and one youth representative for indigenous people. The BRYC is the closest collaborator for RWGYI.

The Norwegian Barents Secretariat is a secretariat for the regional working group (RWGYI) and the youth council (BRYC) and is administrating the Norwegian funds for multilateral youth cooperation in the Barents region.

Aims and perspectives

It is an overall aim of the programme to make the Barents Region more attractive for young people so that they stay in the region or return after completing their education. The Programme offers young people opportunities for mobility, realization of own project ideas, active participation in the Barents cooperation and the development of the Barents Region. The program aims to highlight the qualities of life and the wish to live in the high north with focus on diversity and multiculturalism. It aims to contribute to the achievement of increased cross border youth cooperation within all areas in addition to development of skills and competencies, which promote active citizenship.

The programme has the following objectives:

- To increase youth participation in the Barents Regional cooperation's networks by giving young people increased influence and possibilities for cross border activities.
- To contribute to a good reputation for the regions in addition to the inhabitants pride toward the region and awareness of the qualities of life in the high north.
- To strengthen young people's sense of identity as members of the Barents Region by establishing contact across cultural and geographical borders
- To encourage young people to play an active role in strengthening civil society and democracy in the Barents Region

- To encourage young people to give free expression and support the fight against racism and xenophobia.
- To strengthen the position and rights for indigenous youth and minorities through increased multilateral and multicultural cooperation

Focus areas

- ♥ **Culture and sport**
Including Tolerance and anti racism
- ♥ **Competence and Entrepreneurship**
- ♥ **Human Rights and Democracy**
- ♥ **Environmental issues**
- ♥ **Community development**
Including promotion of active citizenship

Yearly priorities

Within the framework of the aforementioned general objectives and priorities, the Barents Regional Committee draws up specific priorities each year.

In 2011 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:

- *Human Rights*
- *Diversity and quality of life- the good life in the high north*

In 2012 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:

- *Culture*
- *Gender equality*

In 2013 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:

- *Innovation, entrepreneurship and international business development in the Barents region.*

In 2014 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:

- *Environmental issues with focus on climate change*
- *Promotion of active citizenship and empowerment of young people in the Barents region.*

Target group

The Barents Regional youth programme primarily addresses young people aged between 15 and 30 who are legally resident in one of the administrative units being considered a part in the Barents regional cooperation (see previously information about the region).

The following groups can participate in the Programme:

- ♥ Groups of young people who want to organise a multilateral youth project
- ♥ Youth organisations
- ♥ Youth leaders
- ♥ Youth workers
- ♥ Project managers or organisers in the field of youth and non-formal education
- ♥ Other non-profit-making organisations, associations or structures working with or for young people



Important measures

- ♣ Facilitation of border crossing procedures
- ♣ Free-of-charge visas for international youth projects
- ♣ Possibilities for grants for multilateral projects and exchange programmes
- ♣ Support and strengthening of BRYC as a representative body for youth in the region
- ♣ The BYCO office continue to facilitate youth projects
- ♣ Provide updated information on the Internet on "www. Barentsyouth.org"

Guidelines for realization of the programme

Cooperation between structures

To make a good fundament for the implementation of the programme it is crucial that all the Barents structures working with youth issues are involved in the development of the programme as well as in the implementation. The Regional and intergovernmental working groups on youth matters and BYCO must continue to develop their cooperation and also include the Barents Regional Youth Council in their joint initiatives. In addition, the regional working group for youth issues should cooperate with the other working groups where appropriate.

Youth Participation

An important step towards the active involvement of young people in the Barents Regional Youth programme and the Barents cooperation have been the establishment of the Barents regional youth council (BRYC). BRYC has had an important role and has initiated and implemented many multilateral youth projects since their establishment.

To involve BRYC in the development of and the implementation of this programme is of high importance to secure the participation of the youth in the region and the legitimacy of the programme.

That all regions find the possibility to support their representative in the BRYC is crucial for the future of this youth forum.

Funding

In order to ensure that the programme is properly implemented, economical support for youth projects should be given from the member regions.

All Nordic countries contribute 10000 Euros to finance BRYC and their multilateral youth events . Russian regions will cover participation costs for their representatives.

Other possible sources of funding are:

- The Barents Regional Youth Programme
- Interreg
- Kolarctic
- The Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013
(The Youth programme of the European Commission)
- European Youth Foundation
(youth programme of the Council of Europe)
- Nordic Council of Ministers
- National funding
- Regional funding

Information

To spread the information about events and grant programmes its important to use, develop and update the website for youth cooperation in Barents

www.barentsyouth.org.