

Minutes. Working Group on Barents Forest Sector. February 11th, 2021.

Agenda:

Opening and approval of the agenda.

1. Introduction of the new chair of the working group, Ms Anne Gjerlaugsen Delphin, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Norway
2. Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region (including report from the meeting with chairs of working groups of the Barents cooperation.). First round on possible input from WGBFS
3. Information on the report “The Forest in the Emerging Bioeconomy in Northern Europe” – to be published soon. Lead Author/coordinator Camilla Widmark, SLU – co-authors from LUKE and NIBIO
4. Initial reactions and discussion on the report: «Pilot study of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves within the Barents Region and the possibilities for collaboration”. First input on possible follow-up.
5. Preparations for Barents Forest Forum 2021
6. AOB

Participants:

Sweden:

Lars Andersson

Camilla Widmark

Maria Rosario Garcia

Kristina Nilson

Jonas Rönnerberg

Finland

Pasi Poikonen

Russian Federation

Maria Sokolenko

Natalia Demidova

Maria Kucherkova

Norway

Anne Delphin

Terje Hoel

Knut Øistad

Opening

Terje Hoel opened the meeting and introduced Anne Delphin as the new chair of the working group. Anne has a comprehensive experience from public and private sector in the field of forestry and natural resources, including from Ministry of Environment, consulting activities and forest owner organisation (board chair). Anne is currently senior adviser in Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Norway.

Maria Sokolenko introduced Maria Kucherkova, consultant at the Department for Science and International cooperation, Federal Forestry Agency of Russia, as a new participant from Russian Federation to the WGBFS. Participants welcomed Maria Kucherkova to the team.

Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region

The working group received a reported from a kick-off meeting on the plans for the revision of Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region. The timeline is as explained in minutes from the WGBFS December meeting. Deadline for first preliminary input from the working groups is 26th February 2021. A seminar is scheduled for 27th April and time for the revised input in late May. The Action Plan is due in the second half of 2021.

During the discussion it was suggested to provide the following heading and wording for the first, preliminary input to the new action plan:

Title: Increased knowledge of policies on climate change mitigation and adaptation for the forest sector

Overall objective/activity: Exchange of experiences between the Barents countries on policies and action plans for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the forest sector;

Actions: To be concretized later, but WGBFS will consider the following while identifying actions.:

- Building on work within each country and regions e.g. national and regional work in progress for climate adaptation of forests and forestry.
- Building on climate aspect within the regional forest programmes, or similar, in member countries, as examples
- Barents Forest Forum outcome: Include recommendations and joint message from the Forest Forum.

Climate Smart Barents Region Webinar. The suggested experts representing WGBFS needs an answer on participation from the organisers. WGBFS chair will contact the organiser aiming for information and confirmation of suggested presenters.

Question was raised about the uniqueness of the Action Plan and relations to other activities in the Barents region, both regional and national. The group emphasised the need to avoid

duplication with activities already ongoing in the region, but make use of this and create synergies.

Information on the report "[The Forest in the Northern Europe's Emerging Bioeconomy](#)".

Lead Author/coordinator Camilla Widmark, SLU – co-authors from LUKE and NIBIO

Camilla Widmark introduced the report. The initiative of the report springs from the [Working Group on Barents Forest Sector \(WGBFS\)](#). The report has been financed by the Swedish Government via the [Swedish National Forest Programme](#). The [Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences \(SLU\)](#) and the EFI Forest Bioeconomy Network lead the development of the report.

A working group consisting of experts from Finland, Norway and Sweden has developed the report. The views expressed in the publication are those of the authors.

The report will form a basis for preparation on the bioeconomy part of the upcoming Barents Forest Forum. WGBFS Secretariat will plan this in cooperation with Camilla Widmark.

[Pilot study of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves within the Barents Region and the possibilities for collaboration. First input on possible follow-up.](#)

WGBFS has initiated a pilot study on UNESCO Biosphere Reserves within the Barents Region.

The pilot study was initiated in order to analyze the possibilities to use the Barents Cooperation as a potential platform to establish collaboration between Biosphere Reserve areas within the Barents region. UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are model areas for sustainable development, where new methods are tested and developed. Furthermore, we were interested in investigating how to use Biosphere Reserves as platforms to implement Barents Cooperation's activities, strengthen cooperation between the different Barents Cooperation working groups and highlight forest and forestry in the natural resource sector.

The pilot project received support from the Swedish Forest Agency. The pilot project was conducted by Anders Esselin, Man & Nature, and Johanna MacTaggart, national coordinator for the Swedish MAB program.

Kristina Nilsson, Lars Andersson and Knut Øistad formed a steering group for the pilot study. The meeting mandated the same group to prepare suggestions for follow-up of the pilot project to the full working group.

[Preparations for Barents Forest Forum](#)

Barents Forest Forum was initially planned as a joint seminar together with stakeholders in Northern Norway during their Forest in the North (Skog i Nord) scheduled for 31.8-2.9.2021.

It is not possible to plan for physical meetings under current uncertainties due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Uncertainties connected to cross-border travel will most likely maintain for the time to come. For this reason, we are aiming for a fully virtual Barents Forest Forum.

The working group advised to spread out the program on two or more days. Virtual meetings should not be too lengthy. Furthermore, the group asked to consider arranging the Barents Forest Forum later in 2021, more in line with previous practice for this event, i.e during October or November 2021. Barents Forest Forum is normally the event ending current chairmanship and transfer to the upcoming chair of the working group.

The following topics are planned for the Barents Forest Forum:

Forest circular bioeconomy in the Barents region (building on e.g. the report: [The Forest in Northern Europe's Emerging Bioeconomy](#))

Climate change (adaptation) and forests in the Barents region.

Suggestion was made to add Resilience (after COVID-19) as an additional topic.

The Secretariat had a meeting with the organisers of the Norwegian event, Skog i Nord, on the 16th February and explained that the changes described above will require a separate Barents Forest Forum later in the fall. The changes were understood and fully accepted by the Norwegian stakeholders.

The follow-up of the recommendations from the working group and the meeting with the Norwegian stakeholders will be:

Decide on dates for Barents Forest Forum during second half of October or first half of November 2021.

Completing the work with the programme based on the overarching topics agreed.

Members of the working group are encouraged to indicate dates available and provide the Secretariat with information on other national and international events in order to avoid conflicting timing of Barents Forest Forum.

AOB

No topics under AOB