



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Name of the Working Group: Working Group on Economic Cooperation

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period: Tomas Dahlman, 2017-2019

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

The priorities of the Swedish Chairmanship of the BEAC is Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Based on this framework the WGEC. Honoring that framework, the WGEC is focusing on highlighting bio economy as a basis for cooperation in the Barents region. A strengthened bio economy sector contributes to several of the SDG's (7, 9 13 and 15 among others). The Swedish chairmanship has also prioritized discussions on the mandate and working methods of the group with the aim of adopting such a mandate within the chairmanship period.

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

The first meeting of the Swedish chairmanship was held in Stockholm on the 20th of February. During the meeting Ms Elinor Blomberg from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs introduced the Swedish chairmanship of the BEAC and Mr Tomas Dahlman, chair of the WGEC introduced his thoughts on the work of the WGEC. Ms Eva Johansson from the Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences (SLU) introduced the topic of bio economy and highlighted some of the work done at SLU. Ms Marija Milivojevic from the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation presented an overview of bio economy initiatives that could be relevant for the work in the Barents region. The meeting concluded with a discussion on a concept paper regarding the way forward for the Group.

The second meeting held during 2018 was in Haparanda on the 26th of June. The meeting focused on the value of bio economy and a sustainable economic approach in the Barents. This was the particular focus of Mr Tomi Lindroos from the WTT Technical Research Center of Finland who gave an overview of the study Barents 2050. Ms Eva Blixt from Jernkontoret also presented their work on sustainable production of steel. A national approach on bio economy was given by the Russian delegation through Mr Vladimir Masloboev from the Kola Science Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences who presented some of the

work of the center based on the positive interplay between environment and economy and its potential for growth. Mr Vladimir Dimitriev proceeded by explaining the work within the framework of the Boreal collaboration in defining bio-economy and its connection to the SDG:s. The meeting in Haparanda also made room for contacts with the supporting groups of the WGEC. For instance, Mr Staffan Norin reported the results of the meeting of the BFSN that was held on the 13th -14th of June. One of the preliminary inputs from the BFSN to the WGEC is to focus on work in the field of wood construction. The newly appointed chair of the Regional Working Group on Investment and Economic Cooperation (RWGIEC) was invited and participated in the meeting.

Finally, the WGEC discussed the draft mandate of the group and decided on the following:

- To work more closely with the Regional Working Group on Investment and Economic Cooperation. This includes back to back or joint meetings as well as agreeing on a common mandate.
- To arrange the meetings of the group in conjunction with other events.
- That the chairs of the national and regional WGEC:s would work together on a draft mandate.
- Highlighted the benefits of applying a longterm approach, choosing a unifying topic, and developing a roadmap as a way forward. The role of the WGEC as a facilitator for the work of other groups was also underlined.

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

Mr. Tomas Dahlman, the Chair of the WGEC, attended the meeting of the RWGIEC in Murmansk on 15 November 2018. Mr. Dahlman and the members of the RWIEGC discussed how to further strengthen the co-operation between the two groups. The draft mandate of the WGEC also served as a basis for a discussion on the RWIEGC mandate.

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

The work of the WGEC during 2018 has resulted in a draft mandate to be further discussed and adopted during 2019. This will serve as a good basis for the future work of the WGEC.

The startup of the RWGIEC and the decision to align the mandates and hold meetings back to back provides a good starting point for concrete action in the region.

The understanding of the value and role of bio economy and a sustainable economic approach in the Barents has been heightened through discussions and concrete examples.

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

The first year of the Swedish Chairmanship in the WGEC has been characterized by the need to establish the role of the WGEC and define the scope of the WGEC activities. It has been a good starting point but needs more time to mature. The time allowed for the participants to discuss this aspect of collaboration and consolidate their views must be expanded in future meetings.