



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT

Name of the Working Group: Working Group on Economic Cooperation

The Chair and the Chairmanship period: Rafael USUBOV, 2015-2017

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

BEAC general priorities were to have an effective continuity of the Council activities and further strengthening of multilateral economic cooperation for the benefit of the Barents Region. The main objective of the Russian Chairmanship was to promote sustainable development of the European North, create better live conditions for the people in the Region, build modern infrastructure, enhance the Region competitiveness and improve investment climate by rationally using its scientific innovative and resource potential. The focus has been on 1) Environment and Climate, 2) Transport and Logistics, 3) Culture and Tourism.

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

A meeting was held on April 26, 2017 in Moscow where a discussion was held on the prospects and opportunities of enhancing multilateral economic cooperation in the BEAC Region. The WGEC concluded that there was a need of making the full use of the existing potential of interaction between business entities from the Russian Northwest regions and their partners from the other Member States. Closer cooperation with the Regional Working Groups and the potential of economic aspects of the other working groups (tourism, transport etc.) were highlighted. The Barents Business Advisory Group should be more active in both contributing new ideas to the work of the WGEC and inviting representatives from different scale companies thus ensuring closer cooperation between the relevant institutions and companies of the BEAC countries.

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

Several Barents Forest Sector Network Meetings took place during the Russian Chairmanship in the BEAC: on June 2, 2016 in St.Petersburg on the margins of the 5th Scientific practical conference “Innovations and Technology in Forestry 2016”, on June 2, 2017 in Pushkino city, Moscow Region and on September 21-22, 2017 in Arkhangelsk on the margins of the BEAC Forest Forum. The events provided with a good opportunity to discuss the possibilities and specific proposals of enhancing international cooperation in the field of forestry with the relevant officials and scientific researchers in the BEAC region.

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

There was a Russian initiative of creating a new format of cooperation in the BEAC – convening the largescale Intergovernmental Forum (“Barents Davos”) on a permanent basis with participation of high level officials of the BEAC Member States, bringing together the Regional and National level participants, representatives from the executive authorities, business communities, academic and research circles and the media.

The Event should be focused on the issues of social and economic development of the Barents Region. It is proposed to hold the first Forum in 2018.

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

There is a need to increase the effectiveness of WGEC meetings through participation of experts with the experience most relevant to the agenda, as well as through strengthening the quorum. Thus activities of the Working Group and the dynamics of cooperation might intensify.

The practice of interaction between the WGEC and the regional level Working Groups including the Regional Working Group on Investments and Economic Cooperation should be established. The regional experts – the experts “on the ground” – working in the framework of the other relevant BEAC bodies should be invited to WGEC meetings to share their views and proposals with regard to the possibilities of strengthening cooperation in this field.