

Barents Euro-Arctic Council Working Group on Environment Finnish Chairmanship: 2012-2013



Main activities of the Finnish Chairmanship period

The Barents Region is becoming a strategic region for Europe. Its natural resources and new transportation routes will change the global map on resource use and transportation. With good reason, Barents Region is proud of its clean environment, large intact natural areas and unique indigenous culture in Europe. An important challenge, thus, for the prosperity of the region is to promote responsible, sustainable and environmentally sound economic activities.

Barents environmental cooperation has developed a network of cooperation between the capitals and regions. It has also managed to bring environmental issues from the global agenda to the regional level. The United Nations Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development will take place in 2012 and a future task for the Barents cooperation is to follow the Rio+20 decisions on the regional level. In addition, environmental challenges facing the Barents region need to be brought to light, when the 20-year anniversary of the Barents cooperation is celebrated in 2013.

In order to meet the environmental challenges connected to the increasing use of natural resources in the Barents Region, a cross-cutting theme for the work is the focus on a green economy and ecosystem services. An overall task is to increase outreach efforts and awareness of the work of the Working Group on Environment. We will continue enhancing synergies with relevant global and regional environmental processes. With the Arctic Council special emphasis is on the synergies regarding hot spots issues, biodiversity and climate change, and on the Arctic Council's activities, such as Adaptation Actions for a Changing Arctic, Ecosystem-based Management and Arctic Resilience Report. Cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers will be continued through joint projects.

Within the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, special attention will be paid to integrating the environmental and climate issues into the work of the Council and its Working Groups and to enhancing the cooperation with the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples.



ANNA KUHMONEN

The Working Group on Environment is addressing five main themes:

Barents environmental hot spots

- Follow-up of the target to launch environmental measures at all of the environmental “hot spots” by 2013. The AMAP/NEFCO hot spot list from 2003 represents the 42 most serious environmental challenges in North-West Russia
- Further exclusion of the hot spots from the list by implementing the procedures and criteria on hot spot exclusion adopted at the Ministerial meeting in 2010.
- Revising and updating of the AMAP/NEFCO Hot Spot Report describing the state of all 42 original environmental hotspots

Cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption

- Continue cleaner production activities which will promote environmental measures at the hot spots
- Promote the green economy aspect in connection to Barents economic development by enhancing the dissemination of best environmental practices and corporate social and environmental responsibility
- Conference on best environmental practices in the mining sector in the Barents region in April, 2013
- Follow-up the results of the United Nations Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

Nature protection

- Barents Protected Areas Network project, which is aimed at promoting a representative protected areas network in the Barents Region
- Cooperation on the Green Belt of Fennoscandia and development of other cross-border nature protection areas networks
- Organization of the 7th Habitat Contact Forum in Northern Norway in 2012.

Water issues and regional work

- Water protection and management activities in international and national river basins
- Strengthening in the link between water resources and climate change issues.
- Continuation of a comprehensive water project in Arkhangelsk.
- Follow-up of the regional projects on Atlantic salmon in the Barents Region

Climate issues

- Action plan on climate change in the Barents Region under the leadership of the BEAC Committee of Senior Officials
- Cooperation between the Barents Regions on regional climate change strategies

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