



Mandate for the Working Group on Environment

Final version after CSO-meeting

1. Introduction

Climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution are serious challenges to the environment, the societies and the communities of the Barents region. The responsibility of the Working Group on Environment (WGE) is to promote environmental cooperation in the region to deal with these environmental challenges.

2. Priority areas of cooperation

The purpose of the Working Group on Environment is to promote environmental cooperation in the Barents region. Important framework agreements for the cooperation are the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its sustainable development goals, the Paris Agreement and other global environmental conventions and acts. Priority areas for cooperation are climate change, environmental hot spots, nature protection, water issues and regional level cooperation. The work of the group is guided by a ministerial declaration and the priorities set out by each chair in a work programme.

3. Method of work

A meeting of environment ministers is held at the end of each chairmanship. A ministerial declaration is adopted and this declaration forms the basis for the working group on the environment for the next period. The declaration is supported by priorities set out by each chair in a work programme. The chairmanship is responsible for arranging two WGE meetings each year. The WGE is responsible for preparing the meeting of environment ministers. There are two formal subgroups under the Working Group on Environment; the Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion (SHE) and the Subgroup on Nature and Water (SNW). Their mandates are annexed to this WGE mandate. WGE can also decide to establish new formal or temporary subgroups. The WGE is responsible for governing and coordinating the subgroups' activities.

The chair of the working group is responsible for cooperation and coordination with the chair of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and other working groups under BEAC as well as with the Regional Group on Environment (RWGE). Members of RWGE are always invited to the WGE meetings. The group strives to enhance synergies and cooperation with other relevant regional forums.

4. Decision making

Decisions are taken in consensus within the Working Group on Environment and its subgroups.

5. Language

The working language of the group is English. Translation to Russian during meetings and of documents is done when appropriate.

6. Membership

Russia, Norway, Sweden and Finland are members of the working group on environment. The relevant national authority of each country appoints one member. The group is open for membership from all BEAC member states. The working group of Indigenous Peoples has the right to nominate a representative to the working group. Members are expected to participate actively in the work of the group. The meetings are open to observers from subgroups, regions and relevant institutions.

7. Chairmanship

The chairmanship rotates between Finland, Russia, Sweden and Norway on a biennial basis except for the transitional period of 2018-2025 (see annex II).

8. Financing

The Chair country is responsible for the arrangements of WGE meetings and associated costs. Each member and observer pay for their own costs for travel and accommodation.

9. Communication

The Working Group on Environment communicates on their activities, with assistance of the IBS, on a regular basis. The Chair of the working group submits an annual report to the IBS. The chair also reports at the BEAC CSO meetings when asked to do so.

10. Reporting

The working group reports in accordance with the Operating Guidelines for the Barents Working Groups.

11. Duration

This mandate is valid until the WGE decides to amend it.

12. Amendment and review

The mandate of the working group and its subgroups are reviewed at least once every five years and amended if needed, in accordance with the Operating Guidelines.

13. Other

The mandates of the subgroups are enclosed in Annex 1.

This mandate has been approved and accepted by The Working Group on Environment on the 14th of November 2018.

Annex 1: Subgroup Mandates

Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion (SHE)

The WGE Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion (SHE) is responsible for the administration, management and promotion of all issues related to the Barents Environmental “hot spots”, as defined by the List of Hot Spots. It has the mandate to:

- Promote and co-ordinate the administration of the Barents Environmental “hot spots” exclusion work, in accordance with the established hot spot exclusion procedure and to ensure that the List of Hot Spots is duly updated and accessible at all times.
- Review and propose modification and up-grades to the hot spot exclusion procedure, *inter alia* in congruence with the new Russian federal legislation on permit granting, FZ-219;
- Promote action projects aimed at enhanced environmental performance at the environmental hot spots guided by the priorities of and in co-ordination with the Hot Spot Exclusion Groups (HEGs) of the Russian Barents regions;
- Raise awareness about the hot spots and their respective action projects and/or progress in environmental performance through relevant communication channels such as website, events and social media;
- Promote and make active use of the Barents “hot spot” information system (HSIS) on the Barents Euro Arctic Council's web site to share information and experience on progress towards the exclusion of “hot spots”;
- Elaborate and initiate climate, environment and sustainability projects and initiatives, incl. on reduction of greenhouse gases emissions, cleaner production, energy efficiency and sustainable consumption, and prevention and reduction of environmental pollution by dangerous and harmful substances (incl. waste);
- Initiate and co-ordinate planning, funding and implementation of Supporting Activities (SA) aimed at promoting progress in accordance with the hot spot exclusion procedure;
- Promote and support the introduction of Best Available Techniques (BAT) as the principle for permit granting in the Russian Federation and as a driver for continuously enhanced environmental requirements and performance;
- Co-ordinate the hot spots work and activities with appropriate organs of the Arctic Council and other international institutions, conventions and initiatives.

Subgroup on Nature & Water (SNW)

The WGE Subgroup on Nature and Water (SNW) has the mandate to work on the following areas:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Ecosystem approach
- Protected areas
- Sustainable forestry management and forests protection
- Sustainable management of water resources and water use
- Transboundary water bodies
- Mitigation and adaptation to climate change
- Arrange Habitat Contact Forum every second year, rotating among the Barents region
- Cooperation with other Working Groups, especially the Regional Working Group on Environment and the Working Group of Indigenous People

Annex 2: Chairmanship during transitional period 2018-2025

Sweden: 11/2017 – 1-2/2020

Finland: 1-2/2020 – 3/2023

Russia: 3/2023-11/2025

The order of rotation thereafter is Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia on a biennial basis.