



BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL
WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT
Russian Chairmanship 2014-2015

Priorities of the Russian Chairmanship 2014-15

The 20th anniversary of environmental co-operation within the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) coincides with the Russian Chairmanship of the BEAC Working group on Environment (WGE) in 2014-2015.

During the period of twenty years, many projects aimed at tackling environmental challenges in Barents region have been implemented. Still, a lot has to be considered and done to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development of the sensitive Barents region.

Acknowledging that climate change, pressure on natural resources, increased environmental risks, pollution of the environment and loss of biodiversity are the major environmental challenges in the Barents region, the WGE will continue its efforts under its thematic Subgroup on Nature Protection, Subgroup on Hot Spots Exclusion, Subgroup on Water Issues and Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption. Special attention will be paid to climate issues and implementation of the BEAC Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Region (endorsed at the BEAC 14th Session, October 2013, Norway and adopted at the BEAC Meeting of Environment Ministers, December 2013, Finland).

Close cooperation between the WGE and the Regional Working Group on Environment and other working groups under BEAC is planned to be furthered.

Taking into account the fact that the Barents environmental cooperation aims at meeting regional environmental challenges and connecting the global environmental agenda in regional level, WGE will continue to enhance cooperation and coordination with the regional organizations in the North (Arctic Council, Council of Baltic Sea States, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - HELCOM, Nordic Council of Ministers), as well as the relevant connections to global environmental processes.

The WGE will focus on giving a new momentum to the current activities under BEAC by implementing practical measures and enhancing regional engagement.

The WGE is addressing five core thematic areas:

1. Barents environmental hot spots

- Further exclusion of the hot spots from Barents list, defined in 2003 (today the list includes 36 hot spots);
- Revising/updating the existing hot spot list in order to focus abatement measures towards solving the most acute environmental problems;
- Implementation of relevant environmental investment projects.

2. Nature protection

- Implementation of thematic projects (BPAN);
- Organization of the 8th Habitat Contact Forum in Russia in 2015.

3. Water issues and regional work

- Water protection and management activities;
- Follow-up on the regional projects.

4. Cleaner production and environmentally sound consumption

- Linkage to hot spots process in terms of cleaner production measures;
- Dissemination of best environmental practices.

5. Climate issues

- Implementation of the Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation by:
 - facilitating the development of regional climate strategies in the Barents region and
 - initiating other actions in line with the Action plan and in co-operation with relevant working groups under BEAC and sister organizations.



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