



**Protocol of 32<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group of Youth Policy  
of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council  
Stockholm, 7-8 October 2010**

**Participants list**

Ms Sanna Puura, Finland, Ministry of Education  
Ms Seija Kähkönen, Finland, State Provincial Office of Lapland

Mr Björn Jaaberg Hansen, Norway, Ministry of Children and Equality  
Ms Laila Dalhaug, Norway, Norwegian Barents Secretariat

Ms Eva Theisz, Sweden, The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs  
Ms Lotta Jarvenius Rössner, The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs  
Ms Kerstin Rosén, Sweden, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms Maria Östensson, Sweden, RWGYI, Västerbotten County  
Ms Ylva Maria Pavval, Sweden, Barents Regional Youth Council – during BRYC point  
Mr Ola Möller, during BRYC point

Ms Maria Petrova, Barents Youth Cooperation Office  
Mr Lars Miguel Utsi, International Barents Secretariat

**Chair:** Ms Eva Theisz

**Secretary:** Ms Lotta Jarvenius Rössner

**Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**

The chair welcomed the participants and opened the 32<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group of Youth Policy of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The proposed agenda was adopted, with the addition of: - Meeting in Moscow 15-17 October.

Furthermore, as the Russian WGYR representative was not present, certain items on the agenda needed separate consultation with the Russian representatives following this meeting.

**Adoption of the protocol of the previous meeting**

The protocol from the 31<sup>th</sup> (Luleå, 24-25 February 2010) WGYR meeting was adopted without significant changes.

**BYCO Issues**

**Follow up on activities**

Ms Petrova presented the *Calendar* and *BYCO follow up plan of 2010*. A new type of activity for this year has been consultations and cooperation with local NGOs which opens office in Murmansk.

Ms Kähkönen pointed out the need of also improving analysis and to include the changes occurring over the years. Proposal was made that this could then be reflected upon when drafting the new plan of action.



Mr Hansen commented on the Follow up sheet and suggested amendments which would clarify BYCOs involvement and role in different activities, which nationality the participants have and if the activity is bilateral, multilateral, national/international. Furthermore it would be of value to mark whether Ms Petrova participates herself or whether partnership is established.

Ms Petrova indicated that the Calendar more is of a personal travel plan rather than covering youth activities in the Barents at large. Ms Petrova also mentioned that the BYCO website has not been functioning for some months, due to problems with transferring the contract from Intereducation to the new hosting body National Youth Council. Meanwhile the contract for byco.ru has expired and the homepage-domain is blocked. Ms Petrovas plan is to buy it back again.

Mr Hansen noted that this problem could reoccur again. How to find a permanent system, not depending on the hosting body? Could it be linked to IBS or the Norwegian Barents secretariat? This would be a more permanent practical solution. Both Ms Dalhaug and Mr Utsi assured that they can give access to IBS/NBS pages and design a separate page more convenient to BYCO.

The chair presented the idea of gathering all stake holders at a separate meeting to discuss; who does what, how to support and complement each other to optimize efficiency. The chair will invite IBS, NBS, BYCO, BRYC, RWGYI to a meeting this year to get this discussion further. Ms Petrova will together with chair proceed with proposed dates.

### ***Follow up on budget 2010***

As the NYC was no present at the meeting, Ms Petrova had no information about the actual budget for 2010. Payments are still problematic, cash-flow is not working properly, late payments of invoices have also happened which makes the overall financial situation problematic. The person responsible for signing is often away from the office, which makes the situation difficult. Chair wants to mark the dissatisfaction of the situation, by a formal letter to the Russian side of this.

Mr Hansen pointed out that this situation is somewhat new and that the partnership with Intereducation functioned well. The WGYP needs to check alternative solutions if the situation does not improve. It has to be stressed to the Russian colleagues that they have to find a solution or we have to look to other solutions.

Mr Hansen proposed as a first step to have an informal meeting with Russian ministry when gathering for the CoE meeting in Budapest on October 18, with the purpose to find a solution. The chair will inform the Swedish ministry and Ms Puura will inform her colleague. A formal draft agenda needs to be circulated beforehand on what concrete issues should be discussed. Norwegian representatives will ensure that such a meeting will take place if there is a Russian participation. Ms Petrova was urged to continue her discussions with NYC whenever she has the possibility to meet with them.

Furthermore Mr Hansen pointed out that despite non-presence of the NYC, they should have sent a half year financial follow up. Further, as discussed from Luleå meeting, it is still unclear why the taxation has doubled from the previous budget. Ms Petrova was informed that Intereducation did not follow current regulations, as the taxation VAT should have been paid also earlier. As NYC were not present, this issue was difficult to resolve. NYC presence at WGYP meetings is vital for the effective running of BYCO.



### **BYCO agreement 2011-**

A first draft of future BYCO agreement was sent out by the chair beforehand as basis for discussion. The draft was a copy of the current proposal, with the change of year.

Mr Hansen raised the wish to have a 3-year agreement, rather than the current 2-year agreement. He also suggested to revise the terms of reference in the process of developing a new plan of action. The question was raised on whether there should be figures for the financing in the contract, but NO, SE and FI agreed that it should be left out, due to yearly national decisions and currency issues on Rubel/Euros etc.

Ms Kähkönen, seconded the three-year perspective of the agreement, and stated that it would be very valuable. No final decision was made due to the absence of RU. The chair also needed to check with the Swedish ministry about the changed time frame. The suggestion for a three-year agreement needs to be confirmed by Russia and Sweden before a final version of the agreement can be sent out.

The matter of equal contribution was also raised. Currently, financing is on equal basis and Sweden is not supporting a higher amount than the current contribution, while FI and NO would in principle favor higher amounts. Mr Hansen mentioned the idea on voluntary contribution and proposed to add in paragraph - "...in addition it is possible for partners to add voluntary contributions." FI and SE seconded this proposal.

The current agreement ends by 31 December 2010, there is an urgent need to have a new contract in place before that. Deadline on comments is 15 November to the chair. The chair will then send the final agreement to the partner countries for signatures. Each partner has to send five signed copies of the contract to the chair who will compile and distribute to all countries and BYCO.

### **BYCO budget 2011**

Ms Petrova prepared a small survey on salaries level in the Murmansk region and a draft budget for 2011. Suggested changes in the budget for 2011 were; there will be a raise of personal taxes approximately 34% (2010 - 26%) which could affect the budget, as well as the decrease of exchange rate. Staff training was a new budget line proposed, needed develop the coordinators skill for webpage maintenance etc.

Mr Hansen expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by Ms Petrova, but also underlined the difficulty with missing accounts from 2010. The main challenge is that budget proposal is almost 62.000 Euro, normal contribution is 50.000 Euro/year. Unspent budget is usually transferred to next year, but the estimated surplus for 2010 is unknown.

Mr Hansen stressed the need to have a clear explanation and arguments for personal and taxes of contributions from NYC, in order to have discussion on national level. Contribution should be net contribution, i.e. the funding countries need to know the rules to be able to contribute with the full amount. Ms Kähkönen underlined that it is difficult to discuss budget issues without outcomes of the current budget.

The chair will urge the NYC to submit an update of the budget for 2010, as well as the explanation of the taxes of contribution and the raise of personal taxes. The budget for administration, publications etc. should be made in Rubles and Euro, with information on exchange rate used. If exchange rate fluctuates, then adjustments to the budget can be made.



Ms Petrova informed the working group that since the salary is set in Euro, her salary fluctuates over the year and the loss can accumulate to quite large amount. Finland suggested that salary would be paid in Rubel, if this would solve the problem.

Mr Hansen stressed that the discussion of salary level and currency cannot be postponed. NO was in favor of fixing the salary to 50.000 Rubel brut salary/month, thus avoiding the exchange fluctuation. SE and FI seconded the suggestion and the countries present agreed that the chair will contact the RU colleagues to get their approval, that as from 1/11 2010 Maria Petrova will have a brut salary of 50.000 Rubels.

### ***Initial ideas and priorities to develop BYCO Work plan for 2011***

Ms Petrova presented the prepared BYCO strategy document, which can be seen as a basis how to develop work with BYCO. Ms Petrova outline target groups, current situation, etc, and pointed out that there might be a need to revise the aims and objectives of BYCO as there have been changes in environment since the start of the organization. The document was much welcomed by the working group as starting point for discussion.

Mr Hansen pointed out several areas of development and discussion.

- Could be useful at times as we are working also with target groups under 18 to mention child- and youth policy as we are reaching out to the larger target group.
- Would like the objectives parts to be developed, to focus on people-to-people cooperation for mutual understanding in the region.
- Children and youth at risk, could this be enhanced a bit also in the region? Would be worthwhile that we get acquaintance and information about the other type of projects that are going on in the region. Would highlight youth work.
- The Youth in Action programme in the region. How can we highlight best practice projects within the region? To apply from the programme is more complicated and more practical support is needed. European Youth Fund is also lacking applications from the Barents region. Apparently financial resources are existing, the Barents region needs to be highlighted and visible within the different programmes and organizations.
- Also the national authorities should be included in the target group. They can assist in training, cooperation, participation.
- How to elaborate the cooperation between the regional working groups? Could components to be used more efficiently and/or differently?
- How to get BRYC more to be an organization than a network of participants? There is a need to offer a variety of activities. Not necessarily the same people to go to all activities.

Ms Kähkönen asked for more time for reflection and stressed the importance of linking it to the development of the plan of action. Cooperation with the Nordic council of ministers could probably be included. Ms Puura agreed with Ms Kähkönen and asked if BYCO had investigated the financing possibilities for EVS.

Furthermore Ms Kähkönen stressed the importance of continuity for young representatives. For instance young men go to the army or to study somewhere else, there needs to be stability. How to solve this issue when young people cannot commit for a long time? Ms Kähkönen finally raised the issue how to use modern ways of communications, Facebook, the "Russian version" of Facebook and other social media as well to complement to other activities. It would be of value to include this in the strategy document for the future.



Ms Petrova informed that Swedish chair and BYCO has looked into possibilities for EVS volunteers, but there is a need to sort out who could be sending/hosting organizations. One idea is to find a youth organization in Murmansk, who could share tasks with BYCO and act as a formal hosting body. Another suggestion is to ask Länsstyrelsen Västerbotten to act as sending organization, but all the structures need to be put in place and willing to go forward.

Ms Petrova also explained that BRYC does not need as much support as before, they have become quite strong and developing their own activities without so much support, and the BYCO role has become more administrative supporting with travels and visas. Ms Kähkönen stressed the importance of the support, as visa procedures are still very complicated.

Ms Dalhaug pointed out the important task of BYCO in the recruitment of new youngsters to BRYC. She also raised some challenges for the future, i.e. changes in the way of looking at project financing in Russia. There will be a larger demand from Norwegian and other international programmes on more Russian co-financing. Need to find ways to get Russian funding, or contribution in kind to be shown, in final accounts. This could affect the possibilities of funding projects in Russia and elsewhere.

Ms Östensson proposed to circulate the document or parts of the document to BRYC to get the feedback and bring in ideas from the target group.

Mr Utsi offered to provide IBS feedback on the youth issues to be done. The document could also serve as a starting point for the planned stakeholders meeting this year on roles and responsibilities.

Ms Petrova will reformulate the work plan and send it to the working group on November 15. The working group needs to reply with comments by December 10.

### **Information from BRYC**

Ms Pavval gave a presentation of the current BRYC issues together with Mr Möller, involved in the BRYC event 2010. The BRYC board meeting in September selected a new chairperson Ms Ksenia Kipurova. BRYC has during the last year moved away from making conferences to more creative workshops for the future. *Barents Passion week (BPW)* taking place in Kirkenes in end of October, will focus on positive things, and why it is great to live in the high north. 7-8 workshops are planned in parallel during BPW, dancing, staging, music, photo, showing the diversity of Barents identity. The BPW will consist of two days of workshops and a flash mob in center of Kirkenes. The event will gather 80-90 participants, ending the week with café including interactive performances, to outreach with population of Kirkenes. The conclusions of the BPW and vision of the good future for young people in the north will be taken forward to be worked on at the Swedish chairmanship event in the spring of 2011.

Mr Möller and MS Pavval also presented the project *Barents stories* – a way of showing, visualize Barents identity in different aspects. Photo is used as a method to create a vision of the region and the project could act as catalyst as improving cooperation between, inside and among different actors. Mr Möller pointed out that branding Barents identity outside the region is important and that is has been somewhat challenging with the static images of the region. The Project will give young people possible ways for changing that.



Ms Dalhaug emphasized that project looks fantastic and ambitious. This could be a way to learn on how to continue to communicate and talk about the region, focusing on good life and good possibilities in the region.

### **The Draft Plan of Action for the WGYP**

First draft circulated early July, comments were integrated and the second version was sent out end of September.

Ms Puura welcomed the draft as basis for further discussion. She noted that this draft plan of action was more general than the previous one and raised the question if it should not be more precise in the part of activities. It would be positive with a clarification on the roles and tasks of the WGYP, BYCO, BRYC etc.

Mr Hansen remarked that he missed some concrete elements or areas for example the area of research. Not that we should start research, but somehow following what sort of research is done on the region. Further exchange of experiences within public youth work could also be an area of further development.

Mr Hansen also stressed the importance of youth mobility and the question of visa, which still hinders cooperation in the area. The WGYP cannot solve the problems, but could point out different practices of different regulations. Under the activities section Mr Hansen pointed out that parts should be formulated differently to sharpen the document. Finally Mr Hansen noted that references should be made to the Council of Europe resolution of youth policy rather than the Agenda 2020 and also to mention Youth on the Move. If EU document are referred to, then member countries (SE, FI) need to more actively include non member countries (NO, RU) into the work of flagships and EU 2020.

The chair explained the purpose of not including precise activities as this should be complemented with annual work plans, chairmanship priorities etc, why the plan of action was more on a general terms.

Mr Hansen stressed that there needs to be some guidance on long term. For example, BRYC to be invited in the all meetings and there is a need to have a paragraph on the link to CSO and other working groups, closer cooperation on Health and wellbeing needed. The chair was asked to reformulation of last bullet point on the first page.

A discussion followed on merging the two working groups. The proposal was to have a joint meeting, to further discuss the composition and mandate. Ms Östensson, strongly supported a closer collaboration between the working groups, also more internal issues that need to be sorted out, Mr Hansen stressed that the procedure is simple. The working groups should sort out representation present their ideas to CSO for a formal decision. The only difficulty could be the part related to steering and monitoring of BYCO. Ms Kähkönen informed every meeting in Finland was a joint meeting and this was successful. Mr Utsi pointed out that some of the representatives are now in both working groups, so back-to-back meetings are not always very efficient.

The proposal was that the next step would be to have joint meeting, and identify what has to be discussed separately and what should be discussed jointly. From there a future possible merge could be developed. Ms Östensson agreed to bring the proposal of a joint meeting and process to RWGYI meeting in Kirkenes in October 29. Meanwhile it was agreed to finalize the plan of action.



The chair will reformulate the plan of action and send it to the working group on November 15. The working group needs to reply with comments by December 10. All comments sent in before reformulation of work plan are welcomed by the chair.

### **News from the Swedish chairmanship**

The Swedish chairmanship started in October 2009; overall priorities are to develop the economic potential of the region in an environmentally sustainable way and promoting an "eco-efficient economy" in the North. Small and medium-sized companies will play an essential role. Environmentally sustainable, economic development is identified as a focus area during the Swedish chairmanship. The Committee of Senior Officials developed an action plan for further work on climate change. A draft is prepared to be discussed at a senior officials meeting in mid October 2010.

Another issue on which we are continuously working is the so called hot spots, environmentally polluted areas which need to be cleaned up.

The chairmanship will hold three ministerial meetings during the presidency, one, namely the meeting of the ministers of competitiveness. The other two ministerials are the Environments Ministers' meeting and the Foreign Ministers' meeting.

Identified working areas from the competitiveness ministers' meeting include promoting expanding sustainable use of natural resources, promote access to the global markets for the region's resources, thus increasing interconnectedness for transports, support of development of renewable energy, promoting entrepreneurship by cross border cooperation as well as expanding sustainable tourism. Other areas are energy efficiency and supply of renewable energy and building sustainable networks in the regions.

There are plans to organize a seminar in cooperation with the European Parliament in Brussels during the presidency, aiming at highlighting the region and its vast natural resources. The presidency acknowledges that the Barents cooperation is to a large extent project based, but some good project ideas cannot be implemented due to lack of resources. Hence they have financed a secondment to the International Barents secretariat, to make an inventory of all available project financing resources in the region, compile and spread knowledge.

Ms Irina Nazarova started working with this task in IBS a month ago.

Furthermore cooperation takes place in the field of culture, working group on indigenous peoples has regular meetings and a conference for Barents parliamentarians is scheduled. We are striving towards coordination and synergies with work done in other fora, such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of Baltic Sea states and the Northern Dimension.

### **The Swedish chairmanship event in 2011**

The chair presented the draft outline of the Swedish chairmanship event. The idea of the event was born in discussion with BRYC and RWGYI, where the perceived absence of real dialogue between young people and decision makers was the starting point. The funding for the event is still not clear, hence planning has been a bit difficult. The next step will be to find a trainer/facilitator and give the event a concrete frame. The overarching aim is to create dialogue on the regional/local level and developed the region even further. The Barents Passion week vision will feed in to the chairmanship event and give the basis action plans at local level. The methods expected to be interactive and dynamic.



Mr Hansen expressed his appreciation and asked for continuous information of the planning of content in the event. He also informed that in previous events, the Russian participants have covered their costs to border, and the hosting country from the border to the venue. Furthermore Mr Hansen stated that he would preferably have participation from DK and IS and the national youth councils in the 6 countries, to create a link between the youth representatives at regional level and the participation on national level. Invitations should also be sent to the European Commission, Council of Europe, the observing states IT, FRA, NL, Japan.

The working group agreed that ministerial conferences should only take place when needed, i.e. in connection to important policy development etc.

### **Any other business**

#### ***Moscow meeting 15-17 October***

The Russian youth council, in cooperation with the Ministry of youth, sports and tourism and BYCO has invited representatives of the national councils in Sweden, Norway and Finland to Moscow on October 15-17 in order to discuss Barents region issues with aim of strengthening the partnerships in the region as well to discussing the up-coming EYF elections.

Since there was no Russian representation at the meeting questions were raised by the members. The working group lacked information about the meeting and Ms Petrovas role in the meeting was unclear as well as the aims of the meeting. The members of the working group will check with their respective national youth councils on the outcomes , furthermore Ms Petrova, will send a report from the afterwards.

#### ***Statement of approval***

Ms Petrova informed the working group that the NYC would need a signed approval stating that the NYC have spent the money in accordance to what was planned. The working group agreed that a full report of the accounts is conditional before sending the approval.

#### **Date and venue of the next meeting**

The next WGYF meeting will be held in Umeå, preliminary dates are end of February/beginning of March 2011, possibly week 9 or 10.

The meeting will be a joint/back to back meeting with the RWGYI and the main aims will be to proceed with the discussion of joining of the two working groups, planning of the chairmanship event, and finalizing the plan of action.