



## **Report on the Swedish chairmanship in the Barents Joint Committee on Rescue Cooperation under 2016**

### **Summary**

During the Swedish Chairmanship in the Barents Joint Committee on Rescue Cooperation (JC) the work of the JC has been systematized and structured in order to better fulfill the purpose of the agreement. The JC has decided that the exercises will be carried out every three years starting from 2019 instead of every two years. In general the cooperation is constructive and pragmatic with active participation from all Barents countries.

### **Background**

In December 2008 the Barents agreement was signed by the governments in the region: Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. The agreement between the Barents countries should enhance the effectiveness of cooperation in the field of prevention of, preparedness for and response to emergencies. An agreement to facilitate and provide a common legal basis for border crossings, requests for assistance, provision of equipment, etc.

A special Joint Committee with representatives from all Barents countries, both at the national and regional levels, was established to implement the agreement. The JC meets annually or when needed to coordinate and plan cooperation and to evaluate the implementation of this agreement.

The chairmanship of the JC is rotating; in 2016 Sweden chaired the Committee's work. Sweden is represented by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the Administrative Board of Norrbotten County in the JC.

### **Meetings**

During 2016 two meetings of the Joint Committee have been organized: in Luleå, Sweden the 19 April 2016 and in St. Petersburg, Russia the 8 December 2016 (back-to-back to the Main Planning Conference of the Barents Exercise 2017).

### **Priorities under Swedish chairmanship**

During chairmanship Sweden has mainly focused on strengthening and structuring the JC work and the JC role in the planning and evaluation of activities in the Barents region, including exercises.

In addition, the Committee also analyzed the Action Plan for Climate Change in the Barents region and ways to contribute to it as well as worked with the task to find synergies with other regional cooperation, especially Arctic cooperation.

### **Achievements under chairmanship**

Sweden during its chairmanship in JC, together with other countries, improved the efficiency of the cooperation within the Barents Agreement by:

#### *Structure*

A clearer structure for the preparation of the JC meetings has been implemented. Better planning and preparation facilitates national preparation processes and make possibly decision making during meetings.

#### *Planning and evaluation*

The JC reorganized, expanded and clarified the role of a Planning and Evaluation Working Group (PEWG) under the JC so that the PEWG acts on behalf of the Committee in the planning and evaluating of exercises and reports to the Committee. In addition, planning and evaluation of exercises strengthened so that they more clearly relate to the purpose of the agreement.

#### *Exercise format and frequency*

The JC has decided that the Barents activities, including exercises in the future may be designed in a more flexible way. The JC has also decided that it is sufficient to carry out activities, including exercises every three years instead of every two years.

#### *Action Plan for Climate Change in the Barents region*

JC has analyzed the Action Plan and noted that ongoing cooperation already contributed to the implementation of the Action Plan - the training in common tactics on how to work with landslides in Barents region have been organized as a part of Barents Rescue exercises.

JC gave a task to the PEWG to ensure that in future the Action Plan is taken into account during the planning of Barents events.