

BEAC Working Group on Environment

Work program under the Norwegian Chairmanship
2016-2017



Norwegian Ministry
of Climate and Environment



For more than 20 years, the Barents Cooperation has stimulated cross-border co-operation, regional development, trust and people-to-people contact in the Barents Region.

The Barents Region has unique natural qualities and unbroken wilderness areas. The region is, however, faced with the challenges of climate change, pressure on biological and mineral resources, loss of biodiversity and pollution from both present and past industrial activities.

Nature knows no borders. Continued cooperation on transboundary nature conservation and protection of transboundary waters and river basin systems is therefore essential. Environmental monitoring is also needed in order to predict and reduce harmful impacts from human activity. There is a great need to safeguard the ecosystems so they can continue to deliver the ecosystem services that we all depend on.

The efforts aimed at solving the environmental issues related to the

Barents “hot spots” should continue with undiminished strength. Environmental improvements and elimination of the Barents “hot spots” will contribute to reduced emissions of climate gases and other pollutants to the environment.

Action on climate change is an overarching priority and will have the Paris Agreement as its point of departure. The Barents Euro-Arctic Council’s (BEAC) joint communique of 15 October 2015 highlights the importance of adaptation and mitigation of climate change. Under the Norwegian Chairmanship, the BEAC Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation will be updated. The aim will be to integrate mitigation and adaptation to climate change, as well as considerations of long-term sustainability, into the work of all the working groups under the Barents Council.

The declaration from the Environment Ministers’ meeting 25 November 2015 in Sortavala will form the basis for the two-year period 2016-2017.



Priorities for the Norwegian Chairmanship 2016-2017:

The declaration from the ministerial meeting in Sortavala will form the overall basis for the next two-year period. Under the Norwegian Chairmanship, the following issues will be especially highlighted:

1. Barents Environmental “hot spots”

- Continue exclusion of “hot spots” according to exclusion procedure
- Develop specific criteria for exclusion, with reference to step #3 in the procedure
- Facilitate capacity building for the regional “hot spots” exclusion groups
- Carry out support activities and stimulate implementation of Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practices in sectors relevant to “hot spots”

2. Nature protection, water issues and regional work

- Pursue preservation and restoration of mires and wetlands as important carbon sinks, ensuring the ecosystems
- Strive for implementation of the Strategy for protection of intact forests in the Barents Region

- Conduct water protection and management activities
- Implement the Barents Protected Area Network-project phase II
- Launch and implement new projects under the Green Belt of Fennoscandia
- Follow-up ongoing inter-regional projects and coordinate applications for new projects (to EU, Nordic and North Calotte funding programs)
- Organize the 9th Habitat Contact Forum in Finland in 2017

3. Climate and sustainability

- Update the Action Plan on climate change for the Barents cooperation
- Support the further development and adoption of regional climate strategies in the Barents region and stimulate implementation of joint climate projects
- Outline a post-Paris long-term climate change strategy towards a low carbon and climate resilient future in the Barents Region, “Barents 2050”



Organization of work

The Subgroup on Nature Protection and the Subgroup on Water Issues will meet jointly with the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE). The Norwegian Chairmanship will seek to apply a holistic approach to the challenges in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of water resources, on the backdrop of climate change.

The Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion will pursue implementation of the procedure for excluding "hot spots" from the list and organize supportive activities.

Work on climate change and sustainable development will be handled directly by the WGE. Climate change aspects should be incorporated in the work programs and all relevant projects under the WGE and its Subgroups

The Subgroup on Cleaner Production and Environmentally Sound Consumption will temporarily be put on hold, pending new project initiatives.

To guide work on the "Barents 2050" strategy a reference group will be established, composed of one representative of each country as well as one representing indigenous peoples.

The Working Group on Environment and the Regional Working Group on Environment will continue to collaborate closely

Close co-operation with the Russian Chairmanship in BEAC and other working groups under BEAC will also be pursued.

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