



Terms of Reference of the International Barents Secretariat for the Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region

1. Introduction

Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is anchored under the two political bodies: the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the Barents Regional Council (BRC).

The Working Group of the Indigenous Peoples has, in addition to its operational role as a working group, also an advisory role in relation to both the BEAC and the BRC.

The BEAC Chairmanship and the BRC Chairmanship rotate every two years. The BEAC acts through its Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) between the Ministerial Meetings, and the BRC between the BRC meetings through its Regional Committee (RC).

The International Barents Secretariat (IBS) was established on 15 November 2007 to make the Barents cooperation more coherent and efficient. The objective of the IBS is to provide technical and administrative support to the multilateral coordinated regional activities within the framework of the BEAC and the BRC.

The BEAC and the BRC aim at strengthening the multilateral efforts of the Barents cooperation and enhancing its practical content, inter alia by securing continuity in the work, by better utilizing available administrative and financial resources as well as by promoting more effective coordination and implementation of the decisions of the BEAC and the BRC.

The scope of the IBS, in addition to the organizational setup, and the financial arrangements, are described in these Terms of Reference.

The location of the IBS is in Kirkenes, Norway.

The working language of the IBS shall be English.

2. Scope

The IBS shall perform secretarial and administrative service within the framework set forward in these Terms of Reference.

To this end the IBS shall:

- Provide administrative support to the BEAC and the BRC Chairmanships, to the CSO and the RC, to the Working Groups and to other subsidiary bodies, as decided by the CSO and supported by the RC. Administrative support may include assistance in organising meetings, preparing written material and summary reports, maintaining updated registers and mailing lists, and providing other technical services.
- Keep records, files and documentation from relevant meetings, conferences and projects, including databases, and in this way, constitute an "institutional memory" for the Barents cooperation. All documents and files shall be available to the BEAC and the BRC.

- Maintain, service and update the www.barentscooperation.org website including its regional segments and relevant links, and any other websites or databases to be decided, and to promote internal and external dissemination of information on Barents issues in general. The IBS has a leading role in internal and external communication (please refer to the Communication Strategy for the Barents Cooperation for more details).
- Upon written request by the CSO Chairmanship, or by the RC Chairmanship, prepare specific information material and background documentation.
- Publish updated information on financial support from different sources on the website. Facilitate contacts between the Barents actors and the various financial sources. The IBS may assist in project implementation as agreed upon and in consultation with the Chairmanships of the BEAC and the BRC. However, project leadership shall remain the responsibility of the relevant structures, or lead country/regional administration.

3. Head of the Secretariat

The IBS shall be led by a Head of Secretariat, selected among qualified citizens of a state of one of the Parties to the Agreement on the Establishment of an International Barents Secretariat for the Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (Finland, Norway, Russia, Sweden).

The RC will assist the CSO in evaluating the candidates. The CSO, with the support of the RC, will make the decision to appoint a Head of the IBS. An Ad Hoc Group with balanced representation could be established to assist in the evaluation of the candidates.

The Head of the IBS, as the chief administrative officer, shall have an overall responsibility for the proper management and efficient use of the financial and staff resources. Depending on the nature of the issue, he/she shall receive tasks from and report to the Chairs of the CSO and the RC. The Head of Secretariat shall consult the Chairs of the CSO and the RC in all matters of importance according to the established division of labour.

The Head of Secretariat shall be responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the IBS and shall represent the IBS externally as instructed by the Chairs of the CSO and the RC, depending on the established division of labour.

The Head of Secretariat has been authorized by the CSO to sign a Host Country Agreement with the Government of Norway. The Head of Secretariat shall also be authorized to sign any subsequent amendment to that agreement as approved by the CSO. The CSO shall consult with the RC before such authorization is granted.

The Head of Secretariat shall:

- propose working plans and activities for the IBS to the CSO as instructed by the Chairs of the CSO and the RC;
- present budget proposals for the IBS for each calendar year to the CSO for approval;
- prepare and submit accounts of the IBS and other reports to the CSO and the RC;
- submit annual reports of the IBS to the CSO and the RC;
- employ and manage the IBS staff;
- enter into and manage contracts regarding acquirement of goods and services to the IBS;
- monitor the performance of contractors that perform tasks that have been outsourced by the IBS.

4. Permanent Staff Members

The IBS shall be staffed commensurate to its tasks. In addition to the Head of Secretariat there shall at least be one executive officer and one secretary /accountant. Additional personnel can be recruited upon the acceptance of the CSO.

Based upon prior consultations with the RC and final approval by the CSO, Permanent Staff Members shall be employed by the Head of Secretariat. A balance among the nationalities of the Parties to the Agreement and gender shall be sought through a rotation when appointing the Permanent Staff Members of the IBS.

Contracts for Permanent Staff Members of the IBS shall be offered for a period of three years, with the possibility of prolongation for a maximum of two additional years upon approval by the CSO.

Since the work of the Secretary/Accountant requires local knowledge of prevalent practices in dealings with the authorities of the Host Country, the Secretary/Accountant can reapply for this position without limits.

Additional staff members may be seconded from other entities upon the acceptance of the CSO after prior consultations with the RC. Acceptance of seconded personnel is subject to the condition that the sending government, regional administration or sponsoring institution covers all the expenses, except the use of office facilities which are covered by the Secretariat. Seconded personnel are considered legally employed by the sending entity.

5. Internships

Internships may be offered to young professionals from a state of one of the Parties to the Agreement on the Establishment of an International Barents Secretariat for the Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, who for a period of three months, with the possibility of prolongation for one or two months. Monthly allowances for internships are to be included in the annual budget of the IBS.

6. The Roles of the BEAC and the BRC

The CSO shall, in close cooperation with the RC, instruct, supervise, and provide further guidance of the activities of the IBS.

To this end the CSO and the BRC/RC shall, depending on the established division of labour:

- participate in the process of appointing and dismissing the Head of the IBS;
- approve work programmes, accounts and budgets for the IBS for each calendar year;
- ensure that the composition and qualifications of the staff of the IBS are adequate to fulfil the tasks of the IBS and
- approve the Financial and Staff Rules of the IBS.

7. Financial Contributions

The operating budget for each calendar year shall be financed through assessed contributions based upon the payment scheme as defined in Article 5 of the Agreement on the Establishment of an International Barents Secretariat for the Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

Any programme or project activities to be managed or supervised by the IBS shall be financed outside the budget.

8. Accounting

The Head of Secretariat shall ensure that accounting records are kept in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice and standards and the specific requirements under the Norwegian law.

9. Auditing Procedures

The CSO shall appoint an external auditor upon proposal by the Government of Norway. The auditor shall be a registered state auditor in Norway. The report and findings of the external auditor shall be submitted to the CSO for review and consideration.

10. Amendments to these Terms of Reference

The CSO, the RC and the Head of Secretariat may propose amendments to these Terms of Reference. Amendments should be approved by the CSO and the RC.

Adopted by the Barents Regional Council on 6 September 2007 in Tromsø and by the Committee of Senior Officials of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council on 9 October 2007 in Helsinki.

Amended by the Committee of Senior Officials on 1 June 2018 in Skellefteå (and the RC on 26 September 2018 in Sykkvkar).