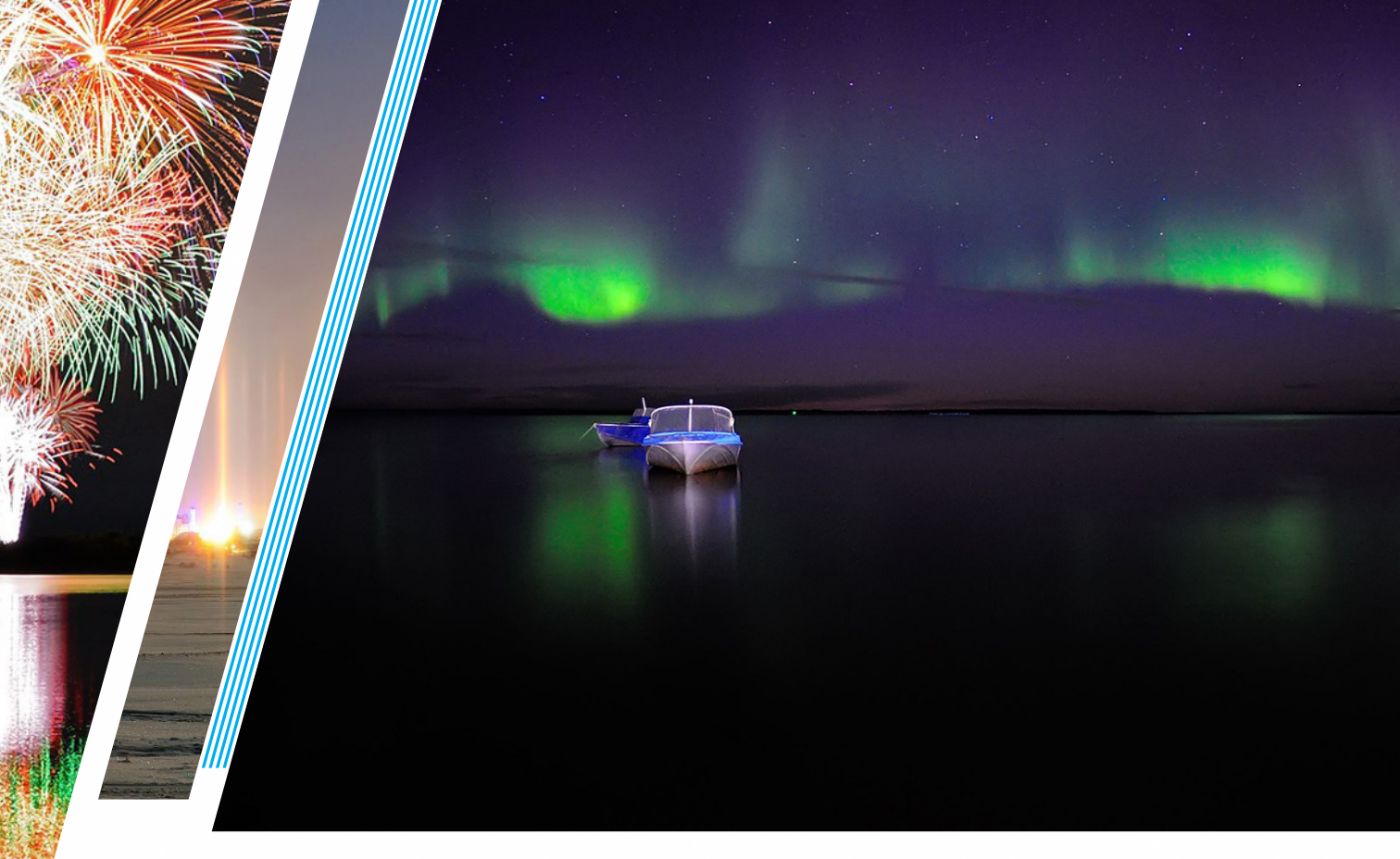




Nenets Autonomous okrug
Chairmanship
of the Barents Regional Council
in 2021–2023



INTRODUCTION

Barents cooperation, which began in 1993 when Kirkenes Declaration was signed, is an example of successful long-term international interaction aimed at social and economic development of the region.

The goal of the Barents cooperation is to contribute to the sustainable development of the region by joining efforts at national and regional levels. Compared with the large-scale international cooperation in the

Arctic, the value of the Barents cooperation lies in practical approach for the interaction between Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway, implementation of joint programs and projects, and taking into account topical aspects of regional agenda when solving common tasks and problems.

COVID-19 pandemic significantly limited international cooperation at all levels in 2020–2021. Long period of isolation will require



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additional actions and resources to reestablish contacts and develop sustainable forms of cooperation.

Nenets Autonomous okrug as the Chair of the Barents Regional Council in 2021–2023 will focus on the following priority areas of cooperation: accessibility, cross-border mobility, diversified and environmentally sustainable economy, improving the life quality, human capital development. Furthermore, overcoming the challenges of remoteness and inaccessibility of territories

was chosen as a cross-cutting issue of the chairmanship. Thus, Nenets Autonomous okrug will promote enhanced cooperation aimed at improving the life quality in remote hard-to-reach territories within all priority areas.

Nenets Autonomous okrug will develop dialogue of the Barents Regional Council with other organizations and cooperation formats in the North and will promote active people-to-people contacts in various spheres.

CHAIRMANSHIP PRIORITIES OF THE NENETS AUTONOMOUS OKRUG

for 2021–2023

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF REMOTENESS AND INACCESSIBILITY OF TERRITORIES

Northern territories are characterized by a lack of transport, information and communication infrastructure. Long distances between the settlements, lack of infrastructure and harsh climate limit the access to goods and services for the residents of small remote communities and the nomadic population, as well as cause high costs for the socio-economic development of these territories.

Remote areas and indigenous communities with a traditional nomadic lifestyle should be given special attention when interacting and implementing joint projects and programs in the Barents region. It is important to exchange experience and to implement practical initiatives aimed at using the possibilities of remote communication, especially in social sphere — healthcare, education, culture, etc., promoting innovative technologies and solutions in construction, agriculture, power generation, waste management, and other sectors, contributing to the efficiency of traditional economic activities, increasing the competitiveness of local SMEs and facilitating their activities in the interregional and international markets, developing social entrepreneurship.

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PRIORITY AREAS OF COOPERATION

ACCESSIBILITY AND CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

The Arctic in general and the Barents Euro-Arctic region in particular attract greater attention of the international community. Large investment projects in the Arctic, including offshore fields development, increasing sea transportation, construction of global ICT infrastructure, open up a wide range of opportunities for the socio-economic development of northern territories.

To strengthen the role of Barents cooperation in global international cooperation in the Arctic and to promote regional agenda more effectively, it is necessary to constantly improve the infrastructure of regional interaction, to help advance accessibility and connectivity of territories, to promote cross-border mobility of people, goods, and knowledge.

An active dialogue on the development of transport system has been established in the Barents region. This cooperation should be continued with a focus on promoting, both nationally and internationally, practical initiatives aimed at improving the existing and

construction of new highways and railways in the “west-east” direction, developing air traffic between major centers of the Barents region, creation of vehicles and aviation equipment for the Arctic conditions.

With respect to the development of shipping in the Arctic, it is important to interact on improving the infrastructure of northern ports, developing transport and logistic services, implementing digital solutions in coordination and management of transport hubs, promoting sea cruise tourism, as well as improving preparedness for joint search and rescue operations in the Arctic.

Regular people-to-people contacts are important for sustainable development of economic, cultural, scientific and other cooperation. It is necessary to continue the dialogue on simplifying visa procedures in the Barents region and to promote contacts and interaction at different levels, including regional governments, local authorities, public institutions, NGOs, business companies, etc.



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DIVERSIFIED AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Dependence on natural resources is a characteristic feature for regional economies in the Barents. Basis for regional budgets and a significant number of jobs are provided by such sectors as minerals, oil and gas, timber, seafood, etc. This dependence creates risks for sustainable regional development, and the narrow focus of labor market limits employment opportunities for local population.

Nenets Autonomous okrug during its Chairmanship will promote interaction on increasing the economic efficiency of traditional industries and agriculture, as well as on growth of new production areas for sustainable development of local communities, including indigenous population. It is important to exchange experience in innovative technologies and solutions, to implement joint projects on developing deep processing of forest resources, agricultural





products, aquatic biological resources, to create and modernize fish processing and livestock complexes, greenhouses, wild plants processing and aquaculture facilities, as well as to cooperate in the field of natural resources restoration.

One of the fastest growing and promising economic sectors in the Barents region is tourism. The region attracts tourists with the unique Arctic nature, harsh climate, rich cultural and historic heritage. At the same time, tourism industry is very vulnerable and dependent on many external factors. Coronavirus pandemic of 2020-2021 confirmed it once again. To make tourism a reliable source of income and economic well-being of the regions it is extremely important to jointly develop hospitality and recreation infrastructure, to diversify tourism products and promote different types of tourism, e.g. educational, extreme, ethnographic, industrial, religious, eco-tourism, as well as to develop and implement joint products to increase the competitiveness of the territory in the global tourism market.

One of the growth points for the Barents region can be areas related to cold climate and «clean technologies». They require interdisciplinary and multi-level dialogue of science, industry, SMEs, public authorities and local governments.

The most important area of regional cooperation in the Barents is the environmental sustainability of economic and other activities, incl. minimizing the emissions into the environment, introduction of best available technologies, and ensuring sustainability of infrastructure to climate change.

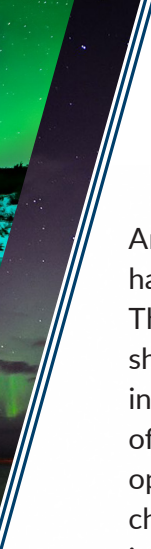


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IMPROVING THE LIFE QUALITY AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

There is a tendency towards an outflow of the population in the Barents region, especially among young and working age people. To overcome the negative trend, it is necessary to join efforts for developing material, intellectual and spiritual potential of the population, increasing investments in human capital, and expanding opportunities for self-actualization.

Barents region has a number of successful joint healthcare projects aiming at improving the quality of life in the North. It is necessary to develop this experience and to involve all the territories of the Barents region in cooperation on preserving health of the population, developing modern forms and methods of providing medical care, and promoting healthy lifestyle.



An active dialogue in education and culture has been established in the Barents region. This dialogue should be continued. Support should be provided to joint projects and initiatives aimed at increasing the availability of quality education, expanding the opportunities for additional education for children, developing vocational education, implementing joint Arctic skills training programs, promoting lifelong learning, preserving and promoting cultural heritage, especially the languages and traditions of indigenous peoples, facilitating mobility and cross-border cooperation of artists.

Particular attention should be paid to the youth. Support of educational and cultural exchanges of young people is needed.

Nenets Autonomous okrug proposes to intensify interaction on creating comfortable living conditions, modern urban environment in the settlements of the Barents region,

including through the improvement of public spaces and the development of a «barrier-free environment» with advanced digital and engineering solutions.

Creative industries as one of the key sectors contributing to social development and economic growth of territories has significant potential for cooperation. Possible joint actions are assessment of creative sector potential, drawing up a map of cultural and creative resources of the Barents region, developing mechanisms for systematic support of SMEs and talented individuals, introducing innovations into cultural sphere and implementing innovative educational programs, promoting initiatives aimed at commercializing creative products.



Photo by Viktor Kulikov

ADMINISTRATION
OF THE NENETS
AUTONOMOUS OKRUG

20 Smidovich street,
Naryan-Mar,
Russian Federation

CHAIR
OF THE BARENTS
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Yuri Bezdudny

Tel: +7 818 534 21 13
priem@adm-nao.ru

CHAIR
OF THE BARENTS
REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Sergey Kungurtcev

Tel: +7 818 532 19 25
skungurtcev@adm-nao.ru