

**The Barents Regional  
Youth Program  
2011-2014**

## Background

At its meeting on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2001, the Barents Regional Council decided to draw up a youth programme for the Barents Region. The Barents Regional Council adopted the first Barents Regional Youth Program in 2002. The same year the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Family Affairs decided to allocate funds for multilateral youth projects in the Barents region as an element in the implementation of the Youth programme. At first the funds were given for a period of three years, but due to its success the youth programme has been prolonged and is still active. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat is administrating the funds according to the priorities in the Barents Regional Youth Program.



## About the region

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region has a population of 6 million and consists of the northern areas of Finland (Lapland, Kainuu, Oulu), Sweden (Norrbottnen, Västerbotten), Norway (Nordland, Troms, Finnmark) and North-west Russia (Nenets, Komi, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Karelia). With its surface area of 1.75 million km<sup>2</sup>, the region is larger than France, Spain and Portugal put together. The Barents region is extremely rich in natural resources; the most significant are the forest, fish, ore and petroleum resources. The natural resources are partly unexploited.

The Barents Region is in the Arctic and characterized by sparsely populated areas with long distances and at times harsh climate. People in the Barents region have maintained contact with each other for thousands of years through trade and culture. In spite of differences in social and economic conditions, the member

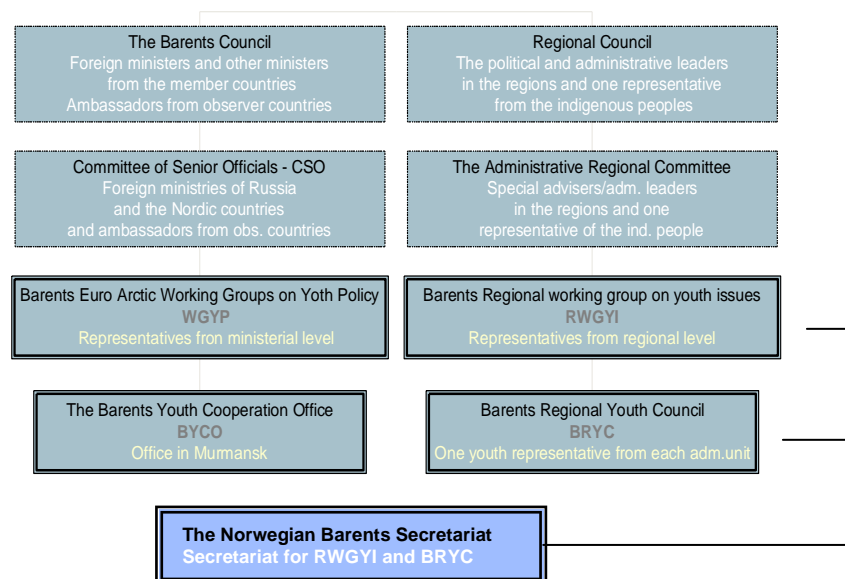
regions of the Barents cooperation face many common challenges, for example they are situated far away from the capitals in their country and have long distances to the large markets. The economy and the business sector are heavily based on natural resources and heavy industry and therefore the business sector is not very diversified.

## The Barents cooperation

The Barents Cooperation was established in 1993, when the foreign ministers of the member countries and the European Commission signed the Kirkenes Declaration. The Cooperation is based on two pillars – one national and one regional. The national part of the cooperation is represented by the central government authorities in Moscow, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo. The highest decision-making body is the Barents Council, which consists of ministers. The regional pillar of the cooperation is represented by the county authorities. The highest regional decision-making body is the Regional Council, which consists of the political and administrative leaders of the regions.

## Organisation chart

YOUTH COOPERATION STRUCTURES IN THE BARENTS REGION



## Important Structures for youth cooperation in The Barents Region

**The Working Group on Youth Policy (WGYP)** under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council was established in May 1999 based on a Finnish initiative. WGYP consists of representatives from the departments responsible for youth policy in the different member countries.

During the Barents Youth Conference in Tromsø 2002, WGYP decided to establish an office in Murmansk to support and facilitate all cross border cooperation related to youth issues on regional level. **The Barents Youth Cooperation office**

**(BYCO)** was established and plays an important role in the implementation of the Youth Programme. The office is co- financed by the governments of Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

In April 2003 the **Regional Working Group On youth Issues** (RWGYI) was established. The group is actively working with the implementation of the youth programme and has a close cooperation with WGYP and BRYC.

In order to make sure that young people have an arena to facilitate active participation and realisation of youth initiatives, **the Barents Regional Youth Council** (BRYC) was established in January 2004. BRYC consist of one youth representative from each of the administrative units in the Barents area and one youth representative for indigenous people. BRYC is the closest collaborator for RWGYI.

**The Norwegian Barents Secretariat** is the secretariat for RWGYI and BRYC and is administrating the Norwegian funds for multilateral youth cooperation in the Barents region.

## **Aims and perspectives**

The overall aim of the programme is to make the Barents Region more attractive for young people and to encourage them to choose to stay in the region or return to it after completing their education.

The Programme offers young people opportunities;

- to realize their project ideas,
- to be an active part in the Barents cooperation and
- to develop the Barents Region.

The program aims to highlight the quality of life in the north with special focus on promoting diversity and multiculturalism. It aims to contribute to increased cross border youth cooperation within all areas and to develop skills and competencies to promote active citizenship.

The programme has the following objectives:

- To increase youth participation in the Barents Regional cooperation's networks by giving young people increased influence in and possibilities for cross border activities.
- To contribute to a good reputation of the regions, promote the good quality of life in the high north, the inhabitants pride toward the region and awareness of its qualities.
- To strengthen young people's Barents identity as members of the region by establishing contact over cultural and geographical borders

- To encourage young people to play an active role in strengthening civil society and democracy in the Barents Region
- To encourage young people to give free expression and support the fight against racism and xenophobia.
- To strengthen the position and rights for indigenous youth and minorities through increased multilateral and multicultural cooperation

## Focus areas

- ♥ **Culture and sport**  
*Including Tolerance and anti-racism*
- ♥ **Competence and Entrepreneurship**
- ♥ **Human Rights and Democracy**
- ♥ **Environmental issues**
- ♥ **Community development**  
*Including promotion of active citizenship*

## Yearly priorities

Within the framework of the aforementioned general objectives and priorities, the Barents Regional Committee draws up specific priorities each year.

*In 2011 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:*

- *Human Rights*
- *Diversity and quality of life- promoting the good life in the high north*

*In 2012 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:*

- *Culture*
- *Gender equality*

*In 2013 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:*

- *Innovation, entrepreneurship and international business development in the Barents region.*

*In 2014 priority will be given to projects and initiatives dealing with:*

- *Environmental issues with focus on climate change*

- Promotion of active citizenship and empowerment of young people in the Barents region.

## **Target group**

The Barents Regional youth programme primarily addresses young people aged between 15 and 30 who are legally resident in one of the administrative units being considered a part in the Barents regional cooperation (see previously information about the region).

The following groups can participate in the Programme:

- ♥ Groups of young people who want to organise a multilateral youth project
- ♥ Youth organisations
- ♥ Youth leaders
- ♥ Youth workers
- ♥ Project managers or organisers in the field of youth and non-formal education
- ♥ Other non-profit-making organisations, associations or structures working with or for young people



## Important measures

- ♣ Facilitation of border crossing procedures
- ♣ Free-of-charge visas for international youth projects
- ♣ Possibilities for grants for multilateral projects and exchange programmes
- ♣ Support and strengthening of BRYC as a representative body for youth in the region
- ♣ The BYCO office continue to facilitate youth projects
- ♣ Provide updated information on the Internet on “[www.barentsyouth.org](http://www.barentsyouth.org)”

## Guidelines for realization of the programme

### Cooperation between structures

To make a good fundament for the implementation of the programme it is crucial that all Barents structures working with youth issues are involved in the development of the programme and the implementation of it. The Regional and intergovernmental working groups on youth matters and BYCO must continue to develop their cooperation and also include the Barents Regional Youth Council in their joint initiatives. In addition, the RWGYI should cooperate with the other working groups where appropriate.

## **Youth Participation**

An important step towards the active involvement of young people in the *Barents Regional Youth programme* and the Barents cooperation have been the establishment of BRYC. BRYC has an important role and has initiated and implemented many multilateral youth projects since its establishment.

In order to secure the participation of youth and the legitimacy of the programme the involvement of BRYC is of high importance for the implementation.

Support from all regions to their respective representative in BRYC is crucial for the future of this youth forum.

## **Funding**

In order to ensure that the Barents Regional Youth Programme is properly implemented, economical support for youth projects should be given from the member regions.

Each of the 8 Nordic member counties contribute with 10 000 Euros annually to finance BRYCs activities. Russian regions will cover participation costs for their representatives.

Other possible sources of funding are:

- The Barents Regional Youth Programme
- Interreg
- Kolarctic
- The Youth in Action Programme 2007-2013  
(The Youth programme of the European Commission)
- European Youth Foundation  
(youth programme of the Council of Europe)
- Nordic Council of Ministers
- National funding
- Regional funding

## **Information**

To spread the information about events and grant programmes it's important to use, develop and update the website for youth cooperation in Barents [www.barentsyouth.org](http://www.barentsyouth.org).