

Dear foreign ministers,

We have an important message for you. Please ask yourselves this question: How do you want the Barents region to be in 20 years? An industrial desert where experts fly in and fly out or a prosperous region full of possibilities and active youth with different ethnic and national backgrounds. We want the people and especially the youth living in the Barents region to be regarded as the main assets for the development within the region. We are here representing many young people who are engaged and interested in the future of this region. But we are not only the future, we are the present.

We want to co-operate across the borders on projects and issues that will make our region grow: culture, entrepreneurship, education etc. You can ensure youth participation, youth initiative and development by providing non-bureaucratic funding-possibilities for multilateral youth projects – and this should be in the mandate for the International Barents Secretariat.

There are a lot of opportunities throughout the world. But we want to stay here.

To make that happen:

Youth policy should be a part of the mandate for the International Barents Secretariat in the same way as for example culture, health and education.

We are talking about Barents co-operation in a global context. Communication is obviously an important part of co-operation. In order to communicate, we need the opportunity to learn each others languages. It is a severe challenge: for example in Murmansk there is no possibility to learn Barents languages in a good level. Another issue is transportation and logistic. Almost all our connections are going from North to South, more East-West-connections are necessary.

There is one matter that has been stressed many times but we choose to raise it again – it's visa regulations. Barents youth dream of getting easy and cheap visas for co-operation in the region.

Indigenous peoples still have rich and living cultures and ways of life. But their rights are not fully supported. Every state must secure the rights of indigenous peoples by ratifying the ILO-convention number 169 and by following the new UN-declaration of indigenous peoples.

We and our region have a huge potential. The Barents region need our competence and our knowledge. You have the power to improve young people's living conditions and working possibilities in the region. But we are the main resource of the Barents region. And we are not here today as a three minute youth alibi. We recognize the time we've been given but we want more: to take part in the decision making processes from a local level to your level.

Our answer to the question is clear. We choose a prosperous region.