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External communication strategy for Barents cooperation

Introduction

The Barents cooperation contributes to a peaceful and secure region. It is an important vehicle promoting sustainable social, environmental and economic development in the Barents region. The cooperation is based on people-to-people contacts and focused on promoting regional cross-border cooperation. The cooperation is unique, with stakeholders at national, regional and local level, including societies of indigenous peoples.

There is a need to draw attention to the Barents region, with its unique opportunities and challenges, coupled with a need to communicate and educate on the changes taking place and the consequences for the region to better understand the Barents Euro-Arctic Council's central role in promoting a constructive, regional approach to addressing these changes.

This External Communication Strategy for Barents Cooperation seeks to guide our common communications efforts.

Mission

To provide increased visibility of the Barents Cooperation and the Barents region to key target audiences.

General Purpose

- Increase awareness and raise interest in the Barents region
- Promote Barents Cooperation and the Barents identity
- Highlight the tangible results and outcomes of the work of the Working Groups and from cross border cooperation.
- Promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG:s) and Agenda 2030 in the region
- Promote current Chairmanships priorities

Key Messages – Barents Cooperation

- The will to maintain a peaceful and secure Barents region.
- To achieve regional sustainable development based on Agenda 2030.
- To increase regional and cross-border cooperation.
- To enhance and support people-to-people contacts in the region.
- To promote and share regional success stories.
- To maintain the unique cooperation format including indigenous peoples.
- To promote Barents cooperation as a model for successful regional cooperation.

Target Audiences

Inhabitants of Barents region. Keeping those living in the region informed of the Council's work increases understanding of and support for that work. Raising awareness of the Council's work among those living in the region can help to generate support for allocating greater resources.

Youth. Informing and engaging the young generation to maintain long-term viable cooperation.

Media. Inform and engage media on local, regional, national and international level to raise awareness of the Barents Cooperation as a successful regional cooperation and give concrete local examples of success stories.

Policymakers. Policymakers on local, regional, national and international level engaged with the Barents region benefit from a fuller awareness of the Council's work. The Barents region and the Council's work benefit from the decisions made by well-informed policymakers.

Academia. Raise greater awareness and develop dialogue and knowledge sharing between academia and the Barents cooperation

NGOs and IGOs. Maintaining an ongoing dialogue enhances the ability and opportunities to amplify messages on issues of common concern.

Business sector. Communicate business opportunities in the region and also the importance of sustainable development. Outreach to businesses and industries active in the region or with an interest in the region (e.g., resource development, energy, shipping, tourism, and others) can help establish and maintain a dialogue with them on opportunities for sustainable development in the region.

Communication Channels

- Barents cooperation website- barentscooperation.org. The main communication channel and often the first point-of-contact. Provides general information on the Barents region and serves as the public face of the cooperation including presentations of Barents related programs, projects and contact information to the Working groups. Also serves as a joint information point for the BEAC and the BRC cooperation and as focal point regarding documents, archives and publications. It also features cover stories, calendar of events, project funding etc.
- Social Media (twitter.com/barents_beac, facebook.com/BarentsCooperation). Other media i.e. Snapchat, Instagram etc may also be used in the future. The ability of social media to both amplify messages and reach key audiences – notably opinion leaders, journalists, and youth – continues to grow. It is the fastest way to reach an audience. However, effective use of social media requires ongoing, real-time interaction. Used for information and own content (meetings, reports, conferences, events), sharing information and news from webpages with relevance for the Barents cooperation, retweeting. Upcoming events and reports can be promoted. Use hashtags #barents and #barents_beac as well as other relevant to the tweet. For Working groups preferably #barentsTransport, #barentsEconomy, #barentsCulture, #barentsEnvironment etc.
- Traditional Media (TV, radio and print) remain one of the most important sources of information for most people today, capable of drawing a wide audience on a regular basis. Media should be invited to and alerted about all major events.

- Press releases. Used to raise awareness and interest in meetings and exercises taking place.
- Events and Conferences. The Barents cooperation (Chairmanship, IBS, and WG etc. as appropriate) should be visible and hold presentations at meetings and events related to the region.
- Multimedia (photo, video, and audio). Multimedia should be used to tell stories and amplify messages. While it is both costly and time-consuming to produce high-quality photographs and video and audio material in-house to highlight the work of the cooperation, it has a long lifetime and added value.

Principles of Communication

- It is strongly advised to put communication on the agenda of all relevant meetings in the Barents cooperation.
- When possible add relevant pictures and film to text messages.
- Content and information should always be up-to-date and relevant.
- English is the preferred language for all external communication.

Responsibilities and Implementation

The aim is to keep all participants of Barents cooperation (Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Barents Regional Council, Working groups, International Barents Secretariat, Chairmanships) engaged in communication. Whenever something of relevance to the Barents cooperation happens it should be communicated through appropriate communication channels.

The IBS has a key role in facilitating smooth external and internal communication within the Barents cooperation. The Chairmanships, the CSO, IBS, Working groups, and the RC depend on an active exchange of information, best practices, success stories and results to become successful also in the external communication.

IBS, in close cooperation with the Chairmanships, is responsible for executing the communication strategy and keeping communication material updated. The Head of the IBS has the overall responsibility for executing information from the IBS. Media contacts are to be handled in cooperation between the Chairmanships and the IBS. The Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi supports the IBS in communications and data management. The Arctic Centre is the host for webpages.

Evaluation and Review

Follow-up of number of visitors to the website, followers on social media accounts, likes and retweets should be conducted by the IBS and reported on a half year basis to the CSO and the RC.

IBS together with the current Chairmanships may conduct a review of this strategy as appropriate.