

Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), Working Group on Environment

Work programme for Subgroup on Water Issues

Chair: Jari Pasanen (Finland)

Members: Mattias Lindgren, Bente Christiansen and Anna Osinina

Other participated experts: Roar Høgsæt, Asbjørg Fyhn, Tero Väisänen, Tatiana Tiupenko, Raija Urpelainen, Ilona Grekelä, Lotten Sjölander, Ruslan Kayumov and Anna Prakhova

Activities 2012-2013

Background

The Water Issues Subgroup of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council's (BEAC) Working Group on Environment (WGE) implements and coordinates co-operation on water management. The WGE work is closely linked to the work done by the Regional Working Group on Environment (RWGE). The WGE and the RWGE group may also in joint cooperation initiate environmental projects within the Barents Region.

Where the state of natural waters is concerned in the Barents area, the most important environmental issues are acidification, heavy metals and POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants). All these threats are connected with industrial emissions. Insufficient purification of municipal wastewaters, eutrophication and hygienic pollution also cause severe problems.

Drinking water is usually taken from the surface water in the region and purification is often limited to chlorination. Many surface water supplies are clearly influenced by air- and waterborne pollution. Improved drinking water quality would quickly improve the health of most of the region's population.

At the moment, the mining industry in the Barents Region is developing. Growing demand has increased the production rates at many sites and new technologies enable short term operations and the extraction of relatively small deposits. Many companies pay more attention to environmental issues by introducing environmental management systems, or even making investments to reduce discharges into water.

Because of the evident ongoing climate change, the risk of severe flooding is increasing in the whole Barents area. River valleys are traditional places for settlements in all northern areas, whereby the risk of flood damage, especially in the future, is more and more obvious.

Transboundary water bodies and water management issues in the area are also important questions. The Barents region consists of 13 different regions. Some of the world's most important salmon rivers are shared water bodies between the co-partners in the region.

Goals

The overall goal under the Finnish presidency was to strengthen multilateral co-operation in the Barents region and coordination in water management issues on the transboundary water areas. This has been done by project implementation and information change on several water related topics.

Special priority has been given for water management activities in international and national river basins and interactions between water resources and climate change. Especially activities with the EU water framework directive have been emphasized on international river basin areas.

Project activities

Concrete water related projects have been implemented on focused environmental issues during the Finnish chairmanship. Work has been done according to the ministerial declaration adopted in Umeå November 2011. Projects have been bilateral or multilateral and wide scale of financing instruments has been used for the project implementation. Following projects have been started and carried out during the Finnish chairmanship in cooperation with several Barents regions.

Water management activities in international and national river basin areas:

- Forestry impact and water management in Torne International River Basin (financed by Interreg IV A Nord, 720 000 €)
 - Project time: 2011-2014
 - Regions participating: Norrbotten and Lapland

Need of the restoration activities in the certain rivers has been clarified and ecological inventories has been made according to the EU water framework directive. One of the project results will be detailed water restoration plans for pilot rivers in the river basin area.

- EU water framework directive information project in Kola Peninsula (financed by Ministry of the environment Finland, 30 000€)
 - Project time: 2011-2012
 - Regions participating: Lapland, Finnmark and Murmansk

Information has been changed on EU water framework directive and Russian water strategy between environmental monitoring authorities in Murmansk, Finnmark and Lapland. Seminars and expert meetings have been used as a tool for the project goals.

- Water Management Initiative in Archangelsk and other Barents regions (financed by Nordic Council of ministers, 130 000 €)
 - Project time: 2012-2013
 - Regions participating: Norrbotten, Arkangel, Komi, Murmansk and North Ostrobothnia

Seminars and study tours have been arranged in participating regions and during these activities water experts in the Barents region have exchanged experiences on topics relating to surface waters and sustainable urban water systems.

Water resources and climate change issues:

- Trilateral cooperation on Environmental Challenges in the Joint Border Area (Financed by Kolarctic ENPI, 1,5 M€)
 - Project time: 2012-2014
 - Regions participating: Lapland, Finnmark and Murmansk

Mitigation of the harmful effects of climate change, water regulation and contamination has been studied in the Finnish, Norwegian and Russian border area. Information will be produced on environmental impacts and adaptation to the climate change and other anthropogenic effects on a regional level. Also the effects of climate change and water regulation on the fish populations will be evaluated in the river Pasvik area.

- Trilateral cooperation on our common resource the Atlantic salmon in the Barents region (Financed by Kolarctic ENPI, 3,2 M€)
 - Project time: 2011-2014
 - Regions participating: Finnmark, Lapland, Murmansk and Arkangel

Management of the shared Atlantic salmon resource in the Barents region has been developed and enhanced for enabling sustainable harvesting regime and conservation of the fishing traditions. Information on salmon wintering behaviour in coastal waters has been collected and a gen map for salmon populations in the study area will be created. Also effects of the climate change on salmon migration patterns and behaviour will be studied.

- Ground water supply in Sortavala district (Financed by Karelia ENPI, 250 000 €)
 - Project time: 2011-2013
 - Regions participating: Lapland and Karelia

Construction designs of ground water intakes, treatment and pipelines has been developed for two pilot areas in Kaalamo and Ruskeala located in Sortavala district. Fields with the deposits of pure ground water have been found in Kaalamo and Ruskeala villages to develop design estimates for the construction of ground water intakes. Treatment facilities and pipelines for two pilot areas in Kaalamo and Ruskeala have been planned.