



Northern Norway Tourist Board, John-Steve Linløkken 9.10.2017

## **Joint Working Group on Tourism - Activity Report for 2016-2017**

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region has a great potential to be even more attractive destination for international tourists, since tourism industry keeps growing despite the economic difficulties. The significance of tourism as a source of livelihood has grown considerably during the past decades. It has a great employment effect especially on youth and women. Tourism is very important especially in sparsely populated areas, where it is sometimes the only one bringing income.

The attractive but fragile arctic environment, natural phenomena and cultural diversity are the key factors attracting tourists to the Barents region. The tourism business needs to be developed in a sustainable way; ecological, economic, social, cultural and political. Sustainability is especially important when facing the challenges caused by climate change, which can affect as well promote tourism industry considerably.

### ***The Mandate 2013-2017***

The objectives and tasks of the mandate are

- to influence preconditions for tourism development in the BEAR when improving traffic connection
- to identify and define authentic common values in order to build common identity in tourism development
- to co-operate in the fields of tourism education and research in order to achieve common criteria in quality, safety and sustainability
- promote proactive development and realization of high quality joint products and thematic product families
- to promote synergies between parallel industries to ensure competitiveness of tourism industry

### **Actions in 2016**

John-Steve Linløkken, Director Strategic Marketing, Northern Norway Tourist Board, co-chair of the Working group took over Kairi Pääsuke's chairmanship in 2016. Valery Korovkin, Head of International Cooperation Department, Rosturizm, Russia, acted as Chair for the rest of the period.

### ***Meetings***

The Working Group met in the end of May 2016 in Kajaani, Finland. Intentions were made to meet a second time in Moscow in the end of October, but the group failed to convene.

Subjects covered in the meetings were as follow: **Current status of the Kolarctic financial instrument;** Then program has been delayed for some time and it was still not in place in May 2016. **National chairs of the working group:** Still unclear who are responsible for the JWGT on national levels in Norway and Sweden. **Sustainability - end Eco labeling systems;** presentation of a project seeking to make an overview and evaluation of existing eco labels in the Barents Region to make it easier for travelers to choose products and services certified under these standards. **Photo project for the Barents Region** – proposal made by Kainuu to better promote the Barents Region. **Meeting with the Working Groups on Culture and Transport/Logistics;** First meeting held between the groups to explore common points of interest.



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### ***ENI CBC Kolarctic financial instrument***

The JWGT members did put their opinions forward related to the content of the program guidelines of ENI CBC and Interreg, so that the programs would better support the promotion and execution of the mandate and especially the Action Plan. Unfortunately, the program was delayed until late 2017 resulting in few initiatives for and delays of new projects rooted in the action plan and the mandate of the JWGT.

### ***National Chairs of the JWGT***

It is unclear to the regional representatives of Norrbotten (Sweden) and Northern Norway Tourist Board (representing the Norwegian counties of Finnmark, Troms and Nordland) who their counterparts on the national level are. The Manager of the IBS, visiting the meeting stated that the question of the national level representatives for each individual Working Group should be brought to the Committee to the Senior Officials (CSO).

### ***Sustainability – end Eco labeling systems***

Suggestions put forward in the group that it should make an overview and evaluation about existing eco labels. The project will make it easier for travelers to choose products and services certified under these standards and also distinguish the differences between the eco labels. The project got full approval from the group. Finance will come from the Finnish Ministries as the ENI CBC Kolarctic program is not ratified yet.

### ***Photo project for the Barents Region***

The idea behind the project is to launch an annual event including a photo competition and a conference, inviting professional nature photographers and other photographers to visit each of the BARENTS regions; to produce material (professional, high quality photographs, video material) to be utilized by the BARENTS regions when producing joint tourism promotion material (brochures, web-pages, leaflets). The project was applauded by the group. Finances will come from the Kainuu and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### ***Meeting with other Working Groups on Culture and Transport/Logistics.***

Outcome of the meeting was that it became clearer to all how the different JWGs linked their projects development to their action plans and also to economic growth in general. For example, the outcome of the work JWGC Story telling is essential for the JWGT to be able to promote new interesting attractions and destinations. Furthermore, the JWG on Transport/Logistics has raised the question of border control and cross border public transport. Both very essential questions related to Tourism. The success of the meeting resulted in a wish to meet at least once a year, also inviting the WG of Indigenous People.

**REQUEST! Check out the possibilities to have video meetings!** All members to report to the Chair of the group which internet video communication tools you have available on your computers (Skype, ooVoo or other) including Video conferencing systems (easymeeting, etc), so we can decide which systems we should use for future video meetings.



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### **Actions in 2017**

Valery Korovkin, Head of International Cooperation Department, Rosturizm, Russian Federation, acted as a chair of the Working group since June 2016. John-Steve Linløkken, Director Strategic Marketing, Northern Norway Tourist Board, took over Kairi Pääsuke's chairmanship in 2016.

### **Meetings**

The Working Group has met twice in 2017. First meeting was in Moscow in the end of April and the last meeting was held in Vorkuta in the Republic of Komi in August. Mr. Linløkken also took part in the Joint Working Groups meeting in April reporting on the work and challenges in the JWGT.

Subjects covered in the meetings has been as follow: **Understanding the new elements of the Kolarctic financial instrument;** The program was ratified and some changes has been made to it. Understanding the changes is essential for financing projects related to Tourism. **Sustainability – end Eco labeling systems;** presentation of the results of the project seeking to make an overview and evaluation of existing eco labels in the Barents Region to make it easier for travelers to choose products and services certified under these standards. **Update on the Photo project for the Barents Region** – proposal made by Kainuu to better promote the Barents Region.

**Evaluating new project proposals;** The JWGT has received three new project proposals to evaluate. They all relate to sea/lake cruise/boat tourism.

Next meeting will be held in Turku in Finland on the 2 November 2017.

Agenda for the meeting will be:

- 1. Rotation of the chairmanship and co-chairs of the group as Sweden is taking over the leading role.** Discussion and decision making.
- 2. New Mandate for the Joint Working Group on Tourism (2018-2020?)**  
Current mandate for the JWGT will finish in the end of 2017. Proposal to discuss, draft will be sent during the next week. Discussion and decision making.
- 3. Action Plan of the JWGT**  
Do we need a new action plan? Discussion and decision making.
- 4. Presentation on the theme "gastronomic tourism" by representative from this sphere** (Information concerning person will be sent later). Discussion.
- 5. Cooperation on the joint marketing of tourism in the Barents region: "Century of Nature Photography in the Barents Area" photo competition and Discover Barents nature tourism and photography seminar on 9-10 November 2017 in Kuhmo and in Hossa, Finland.**  
Discussion.
- 6. Tourism Quality and Sustainability Programmes, Labels and Criteria in the Barents Region**  
Next steps and how to proceed with the recommendations. Discussion and decision making.
- 7. On-going Kolarctic Applications,** an overview will be given. Discussion.
- 8. Future meetings with the Working Groups of Culture, Transport and Logistics and the Indigenous peoples.**