Barents geographic features

The area of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region is approximately 1,800,000 square kilometres which corresponds to the combined surface of France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, with a population of approximately 5.4 million. The region is very rich in natural resources such as fish, timber, minerals, oil and gas. It also has important processing and engineering industries as well as high-quality universities, research institutions and science centres. The Barents region is characterised by harsh climatic conditions, vulnerable environment and long distances which pose challenges to people, business and authorities. Three indigenous peoples inhabit the Barents Region: the Nenets in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the Saami in northern Finland, Sweden Norway and Kola Peninsula, and the Veps in the Karelian Republic.
As of October 2011, the County Ad-
inistrative Board of Norrbotten, in the
honour of chairing the Barents Regional
Council, Regional Authority, and the
Norwegian national chairmanship of
the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the County Administrative Board of
Norrbotten will continue implementing
the points and timely initiatives undertaken by both Torne County Council and by Sweden during their 2009-2011 chairmanship on regional and national levels.

As the chair of the Barents Regional Council, we have the privilege to suggest the agenda for the regional Barents cooperation for the coming two years. Our main task will be to promote the strategic role that the Barents region could play in response to growing international needs in terms of natural and mineral resources. We believe that our Barents – Our Future generation, inviting them to play a more active role in all Barents activities and ensuring a broader representation of youth on all levels of Barents cooperation.

During our chairmanship, the Barents cooperation will mark its 20th anniversary, which allows us to look into the future as well as to learn from past experiences. Our challenges include drafting the new Barents regional cooperation program, strengthening and capacity building of regional working groups and existing banner synergies between national and regional levels of cooperation. All these challenges are on our chairmanship agenda but we can only achieve them together. Therefore the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, in the name of its county and regional partners, would like to continue and strengthen the image of the Barents region on all levels. The County Administrative Board of Norrbotten would like to continue the efforts undertaken by the Climate Change and Industrial Development Steering Group for the Barents Region, to help shape the long-term strategic ambitions for the future of the Barents Region. The future role of the Barents Region is of interest, and special attention should be given to joint cooperation between the regions to promote nature protection and sustainable tourism. All these joint efforts should be strengthened and encouraged, to support and maintain sustainable development in the Barents Region.

Economic cooperation
The County Administrative Board of Norrbotten will continue to explore the possibilities of broader cross-border economic cooperation and investments focusing on customers’ needs and market opportunities. In the Barents Region, strategic importance, and the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten department will be to increase their competitiveness in light of the strategic ambitions for the future of the Barents Region. The regional working group on investments and economic cooperation will be encouraged to undertake initiatives in this direction and to provide support to regional companies. Contacts between young entrepreneurs from all Barents regions should be facilitated at all times, and business initiatives of the younger generation should be promoted and supported.

Cultural cooperation and creative industries
The County Administrative Board of Norrbotten will continue promoting cultural cooperation on the regional level, excluding the existing network of creative industries, as its impact on culture in the Barents Region. Rich historical heritages and creative industries, same time common Barents identity makes our region unique as the base for the cross-border cooperation. Through supporting the activities of the joint working groups on culture and tourism, we would like to promote cultural tourism, especially among the representatives of the younger generation. Joint sport initiatives should also be welcomed, to show the interest among the younger generation in the Barents Region. Joint tourism initiatives should also be welcomed, to promote tourism as a key economic sector.

Information and promotion
The County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, with the support of all in and close cooperation with all national and regional partners, will continue to promote the Barents Region on all levels. In particular, the events organised as a preparation to and during the anniversary year of 2013 would correspond to this ongoing long-term activity. Furthermore, we would support the efforts undertaken by the national chairmanship to promote the Barents Region on the EU level and internationally. We would further explore synergies, possibilities and opportunities of cooperation with the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Nordic Council of Ministers, in terms of implementation of joint projects.

Our Barents – Our Future

Our challenge is to present the region in a new light, with reference to the strategic role that the Barents region could play in response to growing international needs in terms of natural and mineral resources. We believe that our Barents – Our Future generation, inviting them to play a more active role in all Barents activities and ensuring a broader representation of youth on all levels of Barents cooperation.

An emphasis on the younger generation
Youth should definitely play a bigger role in Barents cooperation and representation of the younger generations should be more actively involved in all Barents activities. Starting from creating stronger synergies between youth and cultural cooperation in Barents, the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten will strive to ensure a broader representation of youth - young artists, students, scientists, entrepreneurs, etc. - on all levels of Barents cooperation.

Sustainable and eco-efficient management of natural resources
It is the ambition of the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten Chairmanship to contribute to the strategy, put together by all the regions within the EU at a key region to respond to the growing EU needs in terms of natural resources. This in turn should ensure investments in mining and refining industries, infrastructure, education and research. It will also contribute to strengthening the image of the Barents region on the European area, making it all more visible and valuable for our strategic partners.

Transport and infrastructure development
Development of communications inside the Barents region is a key factor to increased economic, scientific and cultural cross-border ties and to more people-to-people exchanges. With the active participation of the regional working group on transport and logistics, the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, would like to continue and strengthen the cooperation between regions in health, education and tourism, willing to stay in the High North and to invest their energy and skills in the continued development of our region. It is thus the near future priority of our chairmanship, to focus on the younger generation, starting them to play a more active role in all Barents activities and ensuring a broader representation of youth on all levels of Barents cooperation.

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