

Meeting minutes

Regional Working Group on Investments and Economic Cooperation

Murmansk November 16th 2016

Attendance:

Russia: Elena Mikhailovna Tihonova and Anna Lokteva

Norway: Christian Chramer and Morten Brugård

IBS: Tomas Hallberg, Sunna Kokkonen, Laura Quist

Royal Norwegian General Consulate in Murmansk: Ina N. Mossin, Svetlana Konopleva

Observers: Dmitry Bystrov (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Russia), Susanna Niinivaara (Consulate General of Finland in St. Petersburg), Sari Pöyhönen (Consulate General of Finland in St. Petersburg, Murmansk office), Yury Zaharinskiy (Government of Krasnoyarskiy krai), Aleksandr Maidanich (Government of the Republic of Komi)

Agenda:

Meeting was opened with remarks from the working group leader Christian Chramer (Norway) before a round of presentations. In the opening remarks it was said that the meeting would have a limited agenda as only two out of four countries (Norway and Russia) were present with members of the working group.

Theme 1 – International Barents Secretariat – status of working groups

The working group invited Tomas Hallberg, Head of the International Barents Secretariat (IBS), to inform about the status of the work in the various working groups of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Barents Regional Council and wanted to hear about the ambitions for the Working Group on Investment and Economic Cooperation.

The IBS presented the organizational structure and how the different levels co-operate and co-function. IBS handed out a report on the communication and function of the various working groups: <http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/Fullreport-BEACCommunicationProject-FINALVERSION2.pdf>

Additionally, the IBS presented a recently launched funding portal for Barents cooperation projects: <http://www.barentscooperation.org/en/Funding>

The main feedback from the Secretariat was that the RWGIEC must find its own way of structuring its work. However, the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) is in the process of standardizing the mandates and clarifying the guidelines for all the Barents working groups. The IBS will be in touch with the chairs of working groups once the official decisions have been made on the CSO level.

Theme 2 – Norwegian-Russian economic cooperation in Barents

Following an invitation from the working group the Royal Norwegian Consulate General in Murmansk represented by Ms. Ina N. Mossin gave a presentation of the electronic business guide on Russian companies in Norway and vice versa.

The General consulate underlined that economic cooperation is one of the Norwegian priorities in the Barents cooperation and that Team Norway is working with North Western Russia in the economic sphere.

Ms. Mossing introduced the electronic business guide at www.norbiz.ru www.doburu.ru that aims at giving up-to-date practical info on how to do business in Norway/Russia. The Consulate General invited the participants to give feedback on their portal cons.gen.murmansk@mfa.no .

Theme 3 – Russian economic situation in the North West

Minister of Economic Development of the Murmansk Region Elena Mikhailovna Tihonova gave an introduction on the economic status of the region.

There is a 6 % growth in the industry and the NW region has the most diverse economy out of all Russian Arctic regions. There is a strong growth in the cargo volume at the Murmansk port, and 80% of the turnover is export. Lukoil and Gazprom projects in Kola represent significant investments. The Minister underlined the close cooperation with neighboring countries and urged the Barents actors to use the financial instruments, such as Kolarctic, in order to enhance the economic cooperation.

Theme 4 – Norwegian economic development in the North

Regional director of The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, Christian Chramer gave a presentation on the latest economic report of the north. The report can be found at www.kbnn.no

Theme 5 – Discussion on the continued effort of the working group

The leader of the Regional Working Group addressed the difficulty of gathering the working group together for a meeting. The meeting in Murmansk was planned in the spring, but it still lacked representatives from two of the four Barents countries: Sweden and Finland. Thus, the Murmansk meeting had a weak mandate to make decisions on the future work and strategy of the working group. In addition to this, the Russian delegation leader, Ms. Tihonova had to leave the meeting due to official duties.

Tomas Hallberg from the IBS suggested the working group could organize video conferences in addition to physical meetings in order to enhance participation.

Christian Chramer will be leaving his assignment in the northern region to take up a new role in Oslo, Norway. He asked to be relieved from the duty as leader of the working group and will discuss with Norway's regional level do find a replacement.

Following the low turnout, the Climate report that the group was asked to review was not discussed in the meeting.

It was suggested that the next meeting could take place in Tromsø, Norway in the period from 22nd to the 27th of January 2017 but a decision was not made and responsible organizers not appointed.

Christian Chramer

Working group leader