



26.5.2020

Work Programme 2020-2023

Barents Euro-Arctic Council

Working Group on Environment (WGE)

Finland will chair the Barents Euro-Arctic Council's Working Group on Environment (WGE) and its Subgroups on Nature and Water (SNW) and Hot Spot Exclusion (SHE) 2020-2023. Under the Finnish Chairmanship, the WGE will focus on three thematic priorities: carbon neutral circular economy, biodiversity protection and climate change. The work programme will build on the previous activities of the WGE, as well as on the guidance from the Declaration of the 14th Meeting of the Barents Environment Ministers in Luleå February 2020.

Tentatively the WGE meetings will be held twice a year - one remotely and one face-to-face.

Carbon neutral circular economy

- Good practical examples related to **circular economy** in Barents regions will be highlighted and shared e.g. in the form of excursions and presentations.
- Work done in the **Subgroup on Hot Spot Exclusion (SHE)** significantly contributes to this thematic priority, including in areas such as waste management, mining and resource efficiency.

Biodiversity protection

- Biodiversity will be approached with a holistic view, including through the lens of nature-based solutions.
- Barents region is an important showcase in biodiversity management. Linking regional work on biodiversity to the global level through post-2020 biodiversity goals will be explored
- **Subgroup on Nature and Water (SNW)** will focus on:
 - Green Belt of Fennoscandia and sustainable nature tourism
 - Biodiversity in a changing climate including intact forests, wetlands, invasive species, and migratory fish in a changing climate
 - Water management and aquatic ecosystem restoration

Climate change

- WGE will focus on **black carbon** and synergies with the activities under the Arctic Council by promoting awareness raising, sharing of good examples and by following the outcomes of relevant projects in the Barents region.
- **The Action Plan on Climate Change** will be updated together with Norway as the BEAC Chair, encouraging involvement of different sectors in climate work. Climate change is also a cross-cutting issue in both biodiversity protection and promotion of carbon-neutral circular economy.



Promoting integrated solutions of regional relevance

Nature-based solutions and circular economy provide tools to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss while promoting resource efficiency and social benefits



Nature-based solutions (NBS) are defined as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). By definition, NBS provide multiple benefits, addressing simultaneously loss of biodiversity and at least one other societal challenge. As an example, establishment and restoration of wetlands can also help manage flooding and nutrient pollution, while also providing recreational areas and benefits to wellbeing.

Nature-based solutions can also help to address climate change and biodiversity loss in a synergetic manner. NBS can provide over one-third of the cost-effective climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 to stabilize warming to below 2°C. Adequate investment in NBS will help reduce financial consequences of climate change, and contribute to the creation of new jobs and livelihood resilience, with co-benefits to biodiversity. In practice, NBS are often implemented and designed on a regional or municipal level, making exchange of views in the Barents region highly topical.

Resource extraction and processing makes up about half of total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and more than 90 percent of biodiversity loss and water stress (Global Resources Outlook 2019).

To step up resource efficiency, we need to move from linear to **circular economy** – meaning that waste needs to be eliminated and materials kept in continuous use. This brings benefits for the environment and opportunities for businesses: e.g. in the Oulu region, it is estimated that only by enhancing the collection of biowaste, 35 000 000 kWh of energy could be produced.

In the Barents region, there is vast potential to advance both circular economy and nature-based solutions. During the Finnish chairmanship innovations and concrete examples of circular innovations and nature-based solutions of regional relevance will be highlighted.



Pictures: Mikael Ahlfors, Mikko Vähäniitty, Teemu Kuusimurto / Image bank of the Ministry of the Environment of Finland



Members and observers of the Working Group

Finland

Ms. Saija Vuola (Chair)
Ministerial Adviser
Ministry of the Environment
Tel: +358 50 306 12 88
E-mail: saija.vuola@ym.fi

Ms. Aino Lipsanen
Senior Specialist
Ministry of the Environment
Tel: +358 50 443 17 86
E-mail: aino.lipsanen@ym.fi

Sweden

Ms. Elin Kronqvist
Deputy Director, Climate Division
Ministry of the Environment
Tel: +46 76 128 13 08
E-mail: elin.kronqvist@regeringskansliet.se

Norway

Ms. Ingrid Lillehagen
Senior Adviser
Ministry of Climate and Environment
Tel: +47 22 24 58 77
E-mail: ingrid.lillehagen@kld.dep.no

Russia

Ms. Irina Fominykh
Deputy Director of the Department for International Cooperation
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
Tel: +7 499 254 82 24
E-mail: fominykh_ira@mail.ru

Indigenous Peoples' representative (nominated by the working group of indigenous peoples)

Ms. Darya Shvetsova
Journalist, VGTRK Karelia
Tel: +7 911 434 91 70
E-mail: Shvetsova.dasha@list.ru

Secretary to the WGE

Ms. Maria Dianova
Climate, Environment and Hot Spot Advisor
International Barents Secretariat
Tel: +47 48 21 74 40
E-mail: maria@barentscooperation.org

In the period from 08/2020 to 07/2021:

Ms. Henna Haapala (Chair)
Ministerial Adviser
Ministry of the Environment
Tel: +358 50 353 38 94
E-mail: henna.haapala@ym.fi