



**THE BARENTS EURO-
ARCTIC REGION**

**NORWEGIAN CHAIR OF
THE BARENTS EURO-
ARCTIC COUNCIL**
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**NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

A resource-rich region in Europe

The Barents region is a region that increasingly attracts international attention. It is a region with vast resources - both human and natural - and a great potential for new economic development.

Since 2005, the High North has been the Norwegian Government's most important strategic foreign policy priority. The Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation plays a key part in this.

The Barents cooperation has been a driving force in our cross-border and regional cooperation since 1993. It has continually grown in scope and importance. The Barents region is a fertile meeting place for all levels of society, the national, the regional, the local, indigenous peoples and individuals.

In 2013, we will mark 20 years of an ever increasing practical and result-oriented cooperation, focusing on concrete results for the peoples and countries of the Barents region.

Our strategic goals are intended to promote business development, protect the environment and maintain settlement patterns. We need to simultaneously address the challenges of ensuring economic growth, energy security, and the sustainable use of natural resources while adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. No country can address these challenges alone. They have to be met in concert, through mutually beneficial cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

Together we must grasp this opportunity and make the most of it.

Together we can develop the Barents region in a sustainable way on the basis of knowledge.

Together we can create economic growth and prosperity while meeting the highest environmental standards, and promoting modernization and innovation.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonas Gahr Støre'.

Jonas Gahr Støre

Norwegian priorities

During its chairmanship Norway intends to highlight and promote the Barents region as a resource-rich region in Europe.

The Barents region is immensely rich in natural resources: oil and gas, fish and seafood, forests, minerals, metals and - not to forget - human resources.

The Barents region has a highly skilled labour force, a range of universities and other centres of learning, research and scientific centres and industrial clusters. The region boasts world-leading technology for the safe environmental management of natural resources in Arctic conditions.

The region provides raw materials to European and distant markets, but the rich resources are also processed in the region. We want to foster environmentally-friendly industrial development in the region.

The indigenous peoples with their invaluable traditional knowledge must play an active role in the modern development of the region. We want to further support the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples and strengthen its cooperation with other actors in the Barents region.

Much has been achieved since the Barents cooperation was established in 1993. The greatest achievement is an overall normalisation of human relations, people-to-people contact. Local and regional cross-border activities have provided a form of “soft security” and laid the foundation for mutual trust and confidence between good neighbours. But there are still challenges. We must be able to respond adequately and adapt to these new challenges and new realities.

We will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the BEAC in Kirkenes in 2013. This will be an occasion to look back and take stock, but first and foremost to look ahead at the challenges and opportunities presenting themselves in the next 20 years. A new Kirkenes Declaration will be called for, a Kirkenes II, where we define future strategic priorities for the Barents cooperation.

The Norwegian chairmanship will work for continuity and adaptability, with three main priorities:

1. Sustainable economic and industrial development

International development, climate change and the global demand for resources have all contributed to the ever-growing attention directed towards the High North and the Barents Region. The extraction of metals and minerals may become an even more important activity in the region, including the regional processing of raw materials. However, for this to occur, there must be a major concerted effort to develop transport links and logistics. International cooperation in this field is crucial. The Barents cooperation can play a key role in this work.

2. Environmentally safe and climate-friendly development based on knowledge

Our aim is to implement the highest environmental standards using the scientific potential of the region as well as international research and cooperation in this field. Corporate social responsibility and ethical standards must be high on the



agenda. Continued support will be given to efforts in the areas of renewable energy and energy efficiency, as well as to the activities aimed at eliminating the environmental “Hot Spots”. Cross-sector activities are important. Norway will arrange a “Vadsø II”- conference on climate change. The work on an action plan for climate change in the Barents region is a high priority.

3. The human dimension

The multitude of activities and contacts between ordinary citizens is the true foundation of the Barents cooperation. The broad cultural cooperation is at the core of this. We will also continue to encourage and support other important cooperation areas such as health and social issues, sports, youth, education, science and research, tourism, and emergency and rescue cooperation. Good networks and close contacts are necessary for building a regional identity.

Interaction between the national and regional levels is a particular feature of the Barents cooperation. As chair of the BEAC, Norway intends to cooperate closely with the chair of the Barents Regional Council (BRC), Norrbotten. The working groups are the practical instruments of our cooperation.

We will make every effort to support and stimulate their work. The International Barents Secretariat (IBS) in Kirkenes is a valuable centre for coordinating activities in the Barents region. For the Norwegian Chairmanship, the Norwegian Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes is also an important partner and implementing party for practical project cooperation.

Enhanced cross-border cooperation is an integral part of the general Barents cooperation. Finally, it is our aim to coordinate the work in the BEAC with other regional organisations and bodies, the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Northern Dimension.

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- Jonas Gahr Støre

Barents cooperation – basic facts

- The Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) was established in January 1993.
- It operates on two levels: an intergovernmental level and a regional level.
- Members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) are Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the European Commission.
- The Barents Regional Council (BRC) consists of 13 sub-national entities.
 - Finnish member regions: Kainuu, Lapland and Oulu. Observer: North Karelia.
 - Norwegian member regions: Finnmark, Nordland and Troms. Applying for observer status: Rogaland
 - Russian member regions: Arkhangelsk, the Republics of Karelia and Komi, Murmansk and Nenets Autonomous Okrug
 - Swedish member regions: Norrbotten and Västerbotten
- The indigenous peoples have an advisory role both to the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Barents Regional Council.
- Norway will serve as chair of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2011-2013
- The County of Norrbotten will serve as chair of the Barents Regional Council 2011-2013

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