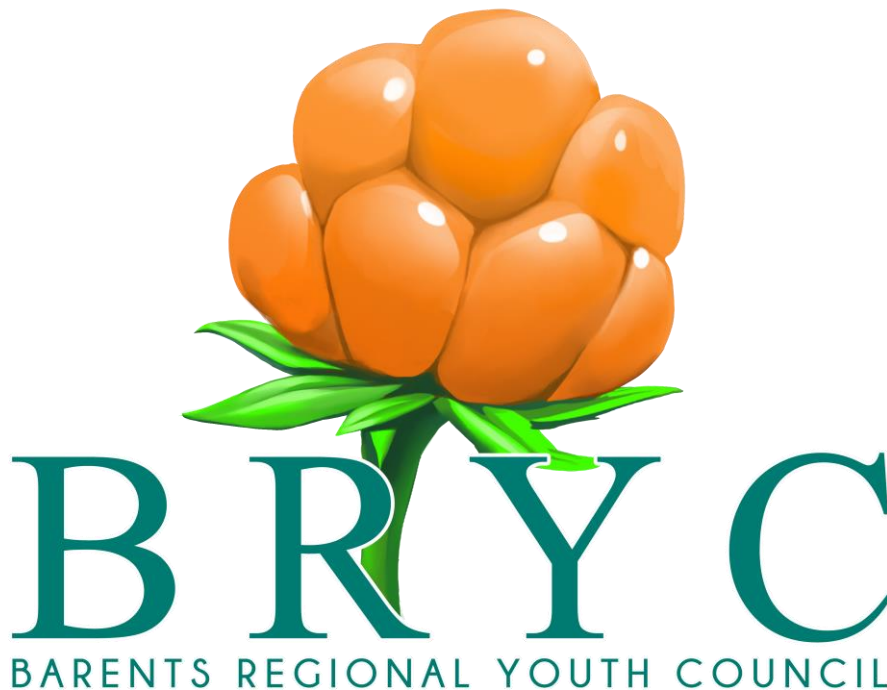


# BRYC Annual Report 2023



The Barents Regional Council has had one of its busiest years in terms of activity in its 20-year history. The council has always and will always focus on the long term sustainability of the Barents cooperation by facilitating and supporting youth cooperation and more meeting places for youth. The year has not been without challenges. The council has worked on improving ways to work in more a more efficient manner to meet its increased workload. With great help from the IBS and the BRC the council has achieved a lot this year. There has also been a generational shift in the organization with several new representatives from the regions elected to fill the council positions from the regions. There were several big events launched this year by the Council, with hundreds of young people from all over the Barents region attending events hosted by the council. The future of the Barents cooperation is in the hands of the youth who inhabit this great region and BRYC will continue to make sure the youth of the Barents region will have the opportunity to collaborate

and have meeting places to facilitate international cooperation among young people and highlight the limitless potential in the Barents.

### **January 2023**

BRYC started the year with a Board meeting in Copenhagen 28-29 January 2023. The main decision point was Annual event, The Youth event in Brussels and The Generation Barents event. BRYC Board also discussed the representation in the other FoP working groups. The CYAR workshop in January was great for BRYC to participate in, and the cooperation with this working group for the upcoming time will be important. The meeting was a great success and the Board had a great foundation to make sure the upcoming events would be a success.

### **February 2023**

BRYC Annual Event 2023 was held in Rovaniemi in cooperation with the University of Lapland. The name of the event was “Think Green”. The event started with welcoming words from BRYC Chair Daria Makhotina Gudnason, briefing the event about BRYC’s recent activities. This was followed by an introduction about business and sustainable development in the Barents region, by Liisa Ansala, CEO of Lapland Chamber of Commerce. Ambassador of Finland to the Barents and Northern Dimension Jari Vilén also dropped by and wished BRYC good luck with the event. During the event the participants got to take part in a variety of workshops, designed by University of Lapland. The topics of the workshops were:

- Community Art as activism experience and expression
- Light painting the Climate crisis
- Media art
- Sustainable design

The event concluded with a panel discussion with the participants as panelists, summarizing reflections after the event. It was stated by the attendees that the program was ambitious, but that this was positive and that “there was no time to feel bored” during the event.

### **March 2023**

The Barents Regional Youth Council worked together with the EU-Sami Youth Idea Lab to make a side event for the Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People. The event consisted of a presentation focusing on exploring all the great things about the Barents Region held by Chair of BRYC Daria Makhotina Gudnason. Followed by a Panel discussion – “Let’s talk it out” moderated by Vice chair Martin Gamst Johnsen with the following speakers:

- Sondre Sætaberget, Art Mediator at NNKM, Perspektivet Museum
- Audun Mathisen Anvik, Teacher.
- Anton Petter Hauan Chair of the Sámi Parliamentary Youth Council, Manager of Norske Samers Riksforbund
- Nils-Gustu Kuhmunen, Reindeer herder.
- Lotta Hagelin, Activist.

The panel went great and several important topics were discussed, some of the key takeaways was how cultural experiences such as festivals and music be a part of making a society attractive to live in, How the Green transition can be achieved without hurting the Sami people’s traditions such as reindeer herding, we also talked in detail about the Fosen Case and how big of an impact this has on sami youth. We also discussed what national governments and local governments can do to make sure indigenous people rights are protected and their voices are heard. This panel was a great success and made the audience have a lot to think about as we went into the next part of the event, which was the workshop hosted by the EU-Sami Youth Idea Lab. The Workshop consisted of 4 groups who had a manager that asked prepared questions and facilitated debate with everyone within the group. The results were written down by the facilitators and the workshop produced several great ideas and both the audience and organizers were very happy with the event. The last part of the event was focused on networking where everyone shared some coffee and cake and had several good discussions. The event was a great project and BRYC had a good working relationship with the EU-Sami Youth Idea Lab and was very happy to work with them on the project.

BRYC participated in the “Summit of Barents Euro-Arctic Indigenous Sámi People” with several representatives as the topics discussed are highly important to the organization. It was a great event and a good networking arena where we met several people we would cooperate with on future projects. BRYCs participation in

this event was very valuable as it gave several representatives a good perspective on several issues in the region we could work to improve.

### **April 2023**

BRYC Board had a preparation meeting in relation to Generation Barents on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April. During this Meeting the Board was also informed of the resignation of BRYCs Chair. It was requested by the Board that the Vice chair would be acting chair of the council until an extraordinary council meeting could be held by the request of the board.



In April the Barents Regional Youth Council launched the Generation Barents Conference concept back-to-back with The High North Dialog. The Project had been worked on for 1 year and 6 months by a working group consisting of Elizaveta Vassilieva from NBS, Åshild Opøyen from NFK, Eilen Wibeke Bruun Zakariassen from NFK, Anette Bang BRYC Nordland, Martin Gamst Johnsen BRYC Vice Chair. In cooperation with several great partners such as Nordland fylkeskommune and The Norwegian Barents secretariat the project launched in Bodø Norway 21<sup>st</sup> of April. The event was moderated by the (at that time) Acting Chair of BRYC Martin Gamst Johnsen and BRYC Representative Anette Bang. One of BRYCs core aims is People-to-people contact and we believe this is the essence of the Barents Cooperation, which makes the Barents region unique. This foundation has been put

to the test since February 24th 2022, as official contact between Russia and the other Barents regions has been put on hold.

However, people-to-people contact is still in the very heart of the Barents Cooperation, and we believed that creating a space for young people to meet, discuss, reflect and learn new skills would undoubtedly contribute to making the Barents Region more attractive. One of the event's aims was to create a platform for young leaders in the High North. We welcomed students, members of youth councils and youth organizations, young entrepreneurs and other interested youths (in the age group 18-30) to network, discuss and develop awareness around building the future of the Barents Region. Participation included admission to the seminar, lunch, dinner and our VIP evening program: Live concert with a meet-and-greet gathering in the evening of 20 April. The event had several Speakers and panels with a wonderful workshop at the end of the day. This was a great project for BRYC and we were very happy with the results and the number of participants who came from all around the world to participate.

## **May 2023**

### Board Meeting

BRYC held a board meeting in May to plan an extraordinary council meeting in June. Other topics we discussed were BRYCs possible participation in the youth target group in The Barents Program on New Technologies and Methods of health care in sparsely populated Areas. The board decided to move forward with this project and endorsed BRYCs participation as a partner in the project.

## **June 2023**

### BRYC extraordinary meeting

During the 28<sup>th</sup> of June BRYC held an extraordinary meeting to elect a new Board. Other some of the other topics that were discussed where as follows: Suggestions for focus areas for the upcoming North Karelian presidency in FoP BRC, Establishment of Task Force related to statutes-changes prior to Annual meeting 2023, Discuss the possibility for making BRYC merchandise, Regional and national updates and the status updates from the BRYC members, including update from representation in

other Friend of the presidency (FoP) Working Groups the meeting was a success and BRYC had a new Board, Chair and Vice Chair.

### Working Group on youth

The new Chair Martin Gamst Johnsen participated in the Working Group on Youth meeting where he held a presentation for the Working Group on youth. The presentation consisted of what BRYC is and how we work, current and future projects.

### **July 2023**

Everyone had a great summer ☺

### **August 2023**

#### Task Force meeting in Oslo

After a great summer the task force that was working on the statutes had a meeting in Oslo to continue its work from before the summer on the new BRYC statutes.

#### Baltic Sea State Youth Forum

The Chair of BRYC was invited to participate in the Baltic Sea State Youth Forum, Martin went to Berlin and joined the Youth delegates in formulating a youth program that would be presented at the Baltic Sea State Council meeting.

#### Baltic Sea State Council Meeting

Martin Participated in the Baltic Sea State Council meeting together with the youth delegation from The Baltic Sea State Youth forum where he gave a speech at the Reichstag about the importance of youth council and youth participation in Democracy. After the Meeting the delegation went to meet the president of Germany.

### **September 2023**

#### Barents Parliamentary Conference

The Chair of BRYC participated at the Barents Parliamentary Conference, during the conference Martin moderated a panel of Sami youth.

## **October 2023**

2.–3. October 2023 BRYC participated in the meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) in Helsinki. On Monday October the 2nd BRYC were present in the evening dinner at Restaurant Katajanokan Kasino hosted by the Finnish Presidency. On Tuesday BRYC represented in the actual meeting at the Foreign Ministry of Finland. The meeting discussed the future of the Barents cooperation between the Nordic countries and the future format of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) Presidency. BRYC was active in the discussion and raised the benefits of the Barents Cooperation to youth.

### Youth Arctic Forest Solutions Hackathon for the Barents Forest Forum 2023

The month of October was a very productive week for the Council. One of the great events of this quarter was the Forest Hackathon held in Rovaniemi on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. BRYC participated in the event and the workshop with 2 representatives together with 18 other young people from all over the Barents Region where the main aim was to create innovative solutions that would shape the Future of Arctic Sustainability in relation to Forestry. There were 4 workshop teams that formulated 4 projects that would be presented during the Barents Forest Forum on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October.

### Barents Forest Forum

During the Barents Forest Forum BRYC was invited to participate in a Panel discussion "Ensuring sustainable forest use for current and future generations" this was very relevant to BRYC as it filled many of the key topics related to point 4.4 "Environment" in the Barents Youth Program. The BRYC chair participated in the panel discussion as BRYCs representative. The highlighted points from BRYCs representative were sustainability in the forest industry, modernization and integration of technology alongside environmental concerns and nature conservation.

The BRYC vice representative from Kainuu held a presentation of one of the 4 projects that were developed during the Hackathon workshop. The main focus of this presentation was a biannual Barents Forest conference that would include several stakeholders related to local communities, indigenous communities, and private forestry related businesses. Where the main purpose would be to facilitate dialog

among all stakeholders related to the forestry industry. Another topic that was included in the presentation was how we can innovate the forestry industry by including new sensor technology to facilitate and support agroforestry, monitor health of the forest and the animals that inhabit it, alongside efficient tracking of potential forest fires within a sustainable economic long term profitable framework.

### The Conference on Green Transition and Regional Sustainability

The Barents Regional Youth council received a request from the Country government of Norrbotten Sweden to hold a presentation during the Green Transition and Regional Sustainability Conference on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of October. BRYC decided to send 3 representatives to the conference. Anette Bang council representative for Nordland, Emma Albert council representative for North Karelia and BRYC chair Martin Gamst Johnsen. The conference was highly informative and relevant to the work of BRYC as the council had worked on giving input to the “Green Transition Plan” that was published by the Finish presidency. The BRYC chair held a presentation during the conference that focused on Youth and the Environment. Some of the main topics of the presentation were the urgency of climate change, Land use and green energy, Environmental impact of mining, indigenous youth concerns, Alternative energy solutions, youth activism and advocacy.

### BRYC Board Meeting and Task Force Meeting

BRYC Board had a meeting the 15<sup>th</sup> of October in Oslo Norway where some of the key topics were Regional and national updates and the status updates from the BRYC members, including updates from representation in other Working Groups. The Board also gave feedback on The Format of the Future Presidency of North Karelia (FFPNK) of the Barents Regional Committee (BRC). The Board was also eagerly planning the Generation Barents Event in Joensuu in October 2023. The Board on the request of the vice representative of Kainuu Region looked into current and possible partners and projects (youth councils, NGOs and similar).

Back-to-Back with the Board meeting there was also a meeting with the task force working group in relation to statutes-changes prior to December's BRYC Council meeting in 2023.

### Generation Barents



After the wondrous success of the first “Generation Barents“-conference in Bodø, BRYC was approached by the North Karelian Regional Council to cooperate on the next Generation Barents event, planned to be held back-to-back with the BEAC-meeting in Joensuu in October 2023. The event was filled with over 80 young people from all around the Barents region. The event was opened by Markus Hirvonen, Chair of the Barents Regional Council and Antti Virtanen, Desk Officer for Barents and Northern Dimension, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. BRYC was very happy to have such distinguished speakers to open the event. During the conference there would be 2 dialog panels. The first focusing on the elements of culture, education, political, environment and sport cooperation in the Barents region from a youth perspective. The second panel had its main focus on the attraction factors of the Barents region. Topics discussed were relevant university programs and how educational institutions could help local and international students succeed in an ever-changing labor market.

Presentations given at the conference elaborated a survey done in preparation of the event focusing on young people's views on working life and entrepreneurship, a presentation on future working life, trends and needed skills and a presentation on entrepreneurship with a unique opportunity to learn from the story of a young entrepreneur, Antti Uotila, CEO, Three Empty Cases Ltd.

Within the program on the conference the youth also got a unique view into the world of reindeer herding with a 30 minute dialog together with Nils-Gustu Kuhmunen a young reindeer herder and Barents Regional Youth Council Representative from Norrbotten, Sweden. The conference was summarized with reflections by the conference moderator Oskar Mannelin.

After the conference program was concluded, there was a need for teamwork activities organized by Kontiolahti Outdoor Theme. In this part of the program, the participants had fun with interactive activities, playful competitions, and teamwork.

### BEAC Meeting

The Barents Regional Youth council participated in the Barents Euro Arctic Council Meeting in Joensuu Finland on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October. During the meeting the moderator of the Generation Barents event, Oskar Mannelin, held a speech about the reflections and important discussions that were held during The Generation Barents

Event. This was followed by a presentation that was held by the vice chair of the board. BRYC's speech concluded by echoing the importance of youth being one of the main priorities for the successful continuation of fruitful cooperation for generations to come within the Barents region.

### BRC Meeting

BRYC participated in the BRC meeting giving an extensive presentation held by BRYC Vice Chair about BRYC's activities, projects and future prospects. BRYC gave advice on how to include youth in the new Barents framework including lessons about the importance of youth cooperation for the region in a multigenerational perspective. After the presentation BRYC Chair gave a short speech about the future of the cooperation and how the inclusion of youth will be important to address the challenges we all face in the north and fulfill the tremendous potential and opportunity held within the Barents region.

### **November 2023**

#### BRYC Board Meeting and Task Force meeting

During Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> of October the BRYC Board held a meeting in Oslo to reflect on the BEAC meeting in addition to starting the preparations for the BRYC Council Meeting in Umeå in December. The meeting was a back-to-back meeting with the task force working group in relation to statutes-changes prior to December's BRYC Council Meeting.

#### Meeting with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign affairs.

On Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup> of October the Chair of BRYC together with the Swedish BRYC Board representative conducted several meetings with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to talk about the future of Barents cooperation in relation to youth. Give valuable experiences about the importance of how youth cooperation should be conducted in an international format. The meeting was also valuable for BRYC in the sense of the organization getting some clearance and advice on how to move forward within a Nordic framework of the Barents cooperation.

### **December 2023**

During December BRYC conducted their second BRYC Council Meeting of the year, held in Umeå. The meeting gathered representatives from all the participating Nordic BRYC member regions. The meeting summarized the year as the year with the most activities in BRYC since its foundation in 2004.

14th December BRYC, by Chair Martin Gamst Johnsen attended the last CSO-meeting of the year. BRYC Chair informed the CSO-meeting about BRYC's recent council-meeting, activities held during 2023 and upcoming projects to come in 2024. By the end of the meeting the BEAC presidency was handed over from Finland to Sweden.

Martin Gamst Johnsen, BRYC Chair  
Skellefteå, 6th April 2024