



February 2010

## **Indigenous Entrepreneurship**

The Indigenous Entrepreneurship project was initiated by the Norwegian Barents Secretariat with funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. It has the full support of the Working Group of the Indigenous Peoples of BEAC and is in full compliance with the Action Plan of Indigenous Peoples 2009-2012, adopted by the Working Group in January 2009.

### **Goal of project**

The project aims to develop entrepreneurship among indigenous people in the Barents region. The participating entrepreneurs should have businesses or business ideas closely related to indigenous culture and traditions. Possible businesses could be reindeer herding, handicraft, fishing and hunting, but also new businesses as tourism, modern design, photography etc. By strengthening entrepreneurship among the indigenous peoples, they will become more involved in the development of the region and the indigenous communities will be strengthened.

Concrete goals of the project are to gather 80 indigenous entrepreneurs to take part of a business development program, resulting in positive development in 30 related businesses, and having 10 cross-border cooperation activities established.

### **Project activities**

The project is scheduled to start in April 2010 and it will end in September 2011. It will gather 60 to 80 indigenous youth, 20 from each country (Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia). During the project the participants will be provided with tools and expert help to develop their businesses in a development program – making effective business and financing plans, business management, etc. The participants will work on individual and group-based assignments with support from the project course leaders and staff. A lot of efforts are to be put into offering each participant personal business management coaching, providing a good arena for them to develop their businesses. Three conferences will be arranged to give the participants an opportunity to develop cross-border cooperation and providing structure to the business development program.

The first conference is going to be arranged in the beginning of the project, marking the start of the development program. Participants will be given assignments related to their businesses ideas, which they will work on between the conferences. They will be supported

by business developers that will help them with the assignments. The second conference will be arranged halfway through the project. At this conference the participants will be presenting their assignments and get feedback on their progress. Relevant seminars and workshops will be held and new development plans will be worked out for the participants to work with till the last conference. After the second conference they will also have support from business developers if needed. Cross-border cooperation is also encouraged by providing travel funds for cooperation trips. The third and last conference will be focused on what the participating entrepreneurs can do further on to keep their businesses developing. The goal is to provide them with the necessary tools to keep their businesses flourishing after the project is ended.

### **Project organization**

The project is formally a cooperation between the Saami Association of Sweden (SSR), the Norwegian Saami Association (NSR), the Saami Council and the Saami Association of Finland (SSG), the International Barents Secretariat and the Saami Association of Murmansk Oblast (OOSMO). Contacts are established with the Nenets organization Yasavey, the Komi organization Komi Voiter, with the Veps people via the Working Group of Indigenous Peoples of BEAC, and with representatives from the Canadian Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The goal is to have a wide representation of indigenous peoples from the region in the Indigenous Entrepreneurship project, both as participants but also in the project management.

### **Project financing**

The project budget is approximately 1 million euro. Main financiers will be Interreg IVA Nord (EU), Nordic Council of Ministers, Norwegian Barents Secretariat and the International Barents Secretariat. Several regional governments and the Saami parliaments of Norway and Sweden have also granted funding to the project. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian Department of Indian and Northern Affairs are also contributing to the project.

## **Possible fields of cooperation with the Arctic Council**

The Indigenous Entrepreneurship (IE) project covers the whole Barents region and will include all of the indigenous peoples of this region. Since this region is partially overlapping the arctic, cooperation with the Arctic Council is certainly relevant for the project.

Naturally, the IE project would be - and is in some cases already - cooperating with the different indigenous peoples' structures of the AC – the permanent participants and the Indigenous Peoples Secretariat of the AC. Such cooperation would bring direct input to the project in the form of best practices from the work of indigenous peoples within AC, a wide network for recruitment of relevant experts and also recruitment of potential participants.

In this respect, the AC as a whole most likely has a lot of experience on capacity building and entrepreneurship development projects in the arctic that could be of good use for the IE project. The success of the IE project is depending heavily on the effectiveness of the business development program and the people working with it. Therefore it is crucial to find the right people to this project.

Another area of possible cooperation is with the Arctic Portal web solution. The IE project will need to establish a way of staying in contact with participants in the wide Barents region, and by using the already well-established Arctic Portal the project would be better included in the arctic internet community. This would also lead a new group of users to the Arctic Portal and its contents.

For more information about the Indigenous Peoples project, please contact Lars Miguel Utsi, Indigenous Peoples' Adviser, at the International Barents Secretariat.

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