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THE FINNISH CHAIRMANSHIP IN THE BARENTS EURO-ARCTIC COUNCIL 2013-2015

Finland took over the chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) from Norway on 29 October 2013. The overriding goal of the BEAC is to promote stability and sustainable development in the Barents region, i.e. in the Northern parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. The two-year chairmanship rotates between the states of the Barents region. Other members of the BEAC are Denmark, Iceland and the EU.

Working for dynamic, inclusive and sustainable regional development

As the BEAC-chairman, Finland will build on the work of previous chairs in promoting sustainable development and human well-being. Over its chairmanship Finland will pursue these goals by paying special attention to the following sectors:

- *Economic cooperation* will be intensified with special emphasis on promotion of sustainable mining and knowledge of clean technology. Well-functioning transport connections are crucial to the development of the mining sector, local industries and tourism. Finland will continue the work on the Joint Barents Transport Plan aiming at a joint vision of the development needs of the Barents transport system.
- *Environment and climate change* are important cross-sector themes. Finland pays special attention to the environmental sustainability of all economic and industrial activities and will start implementation of the Barents Action Plan on Climate Change. The work on the environmental hot spots and on the Barents Protected Areas Network will continue.
- *Youth cooperation* aims at enhancing youth participation and social inclusion, access to education and employment. Promotion of the mobility of young people and the role of NGOs are of high importance.
- The Finnish Chairmanship gives its full support also to other sectors, such as tourism, cultural cooperation, education, health and social well-being and emergency and rescue cooperation.

Enhancing the cooperation of regional actors

As the BEAC-chairman, Finland will keep close contacts with the Barents Regional Council and the Indigenous Peoples' Working Group as well as with other regional actors.

Finland is also committed to strengthening coherence and cooperation between BEAC and other regional councils — the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Nordic Council of Ministers — as well as with the Northern Dimension. Finland will organize in 2014 a meeting at Deputy

Ministers' level between the countries chairing the regional councils and the Northern Dimension partners. The partly parallel BEAC- and CBSS-chairmanships provide an opportunity to boost synergies in the promotion of common objectives.