

# The beginning

**MONICA TENNBERG** *Chief Editor of the first issue*

This is the first issue of a new academic journal about the Barents Region and its development. The name of the region comes from Willem Barents, a Dutch explorer who sought a sea way to Chinese riches via the Arctic Ocean in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Murmanskoye Sea, known today as the Barents Sea, was later renamed after him. Today the Arctic is again at the heart of international interest mostly because of its abundant natural resources. The establishment of *Barents Studies* is part of a growing international interest in the Arctic. It is important to provide research-based information about the region and its development to various stakeholders both within and outside the region.

*Barents Studies* is the result of current regional research cooperation in the Barents Region. Barents cooperation in education and research, once known as a Sleeping Beauty of regional cooperation, has now become more active (Kalinina 2013). There is a strong basis for education and research in the Barents Region thanks to many universities, colleges and other educational institutes. There are many fora and publications dedicated to the region that provide general information about the region, such as Barentsinfo, BarentsObserver, BarentSaga and Barents Mediasphere, but fewer avenues for the publication of research-based knowledge about the region and its development. *Barents Studies* aims to fill this gap.

The establishment of this journal has been made possible thanks to the funding of a two-year project by the EU Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme. The general aim of the journal is to present and discuss development in the Barents Region from the point of view of sustainable development. The regional focus of the journal is the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, which covers the northernmost counties of Sweden, Norway, Finland and Northwest Russia as well as the Barents Sea. The name of the journal, *Barents Studies: Peoples, Economies and Politics*, gives an idea of its focal point. The aim of the journal is to publish topical articles, research communications, book reviews and other research-related material dealing with the social, economic and political dimensions of development in the region. The environmental aspect of sustainability is included in all of these themes as natural resources and changes in the environment are the basis of all

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activities in the region in one way or another. The partners in the project will continue to publish the journal after the two-year project period 2013-2014.

The first issue of this journal is truly a mix of peoples, economies and politics about and from the region. The first article, by Professor Tuija Hautala-Hirvioja of the University of Lapland, introduces the early Sámi artists Johan Turi, Nils Nilsson Skum and John Savio and the representations of the North in their work. At the same time, the author tells the story of the development of Sami art in the Nordic countries. Pia Skaffari and Sanna Väyrynen, researchers from the University of Lapland, tackle the issue of prostitution in the Barents Region in the second article. They analyse prostitution in the region as a social issue by exploring the subjective experiences of Russian women involved in this practice. The third article, by several writers from the Barents Region, considers recent economic and political developments from the perspective of local communities across the region. The article discusses how ideas about sustainability and neoliberal governance meet in recent community development. In the first issue of this journal, we are also pleased to introduce four “academically young” researchers from different parts of the region and their research interests, as well as book reviews that are of regional relevance.

We hope to continue and develop the journal along the lines presented above. You are cordially invited to contribute to future issues of *Barents Studies*. By working together and crossing academic disciplines, borders and cultures across the region, we can make this journal a viable forum of information about the Barents Region.

Please visit our website: [www.barentsinfo.org/barentsstudies](http://www.barentsinfo.org/barentsstudies) for more information.

## REFERENCE

Kalinina, M., 2013. An opening statement at the BEAC joint working group on education and research workshop in Bryssels, Belgium. 18 November 2013.