

International collaboration for meeting the challenges of huge and cascading disasters

Some crisis have an international impact. How is it possible to enhance collaboration between nations in huge and cascading disasters? We will present Barents Rescue (BR) as an inspiration for our Student Barents Rescue (SBR) and thereafter show examples from a student pilot with an international scenario.

The Barents Agreement was signed in 2008 by the governments of Finland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and Sweden. The agreement includes cross border collaboration in the following areas: emergency prevention, preparedness and response, and the ability to extend cooperation to facilitate the provision of mutual assistance in the event of natural or man-made disasters or other emergency situations. The Barents Rescue is a recurring civil international crisis management exercise, which was initiated and conducted in Sweden for the first time in 2001. The purpose of the Barents Rescue exercises is to increase the disaster response capabilities in the Barents Region through enhanced cooperation.

The Student Barents Rescue (SBR) exercise was initiated and conducted in Norway for the first time in 2020. It is a collaboration between UiT – the Arctic University of Norway and Nord University, with intentions for further cooperation and participation from other universities in Finland, the Russian Federation, and Sweden (2021 Sept).

The student pilot exercise 2020 UiT: The Arctic University of Norway and Nord University with participation from the Northern Arctic Federal University (NARFU), conducted a pilot SBR exercise for Bachelor's and Master's students in February 2020. The students participated in the discussion-based exercise via a hybrid approach. **Three study programs** from UiT and Nord University met physically in Bodø while the students from NARFU participated digitally. The SBR exercise topic was about a large forest fire spreading across national borders, which had the potential to reach an atom reactor in Russia. A mentor from the regional fire- and rescue service in Bodø participated and assisted the students during the discussions. A mentor from the regional fire- and rescue service in Arkhangelsk facilitated students' discussions in Russia. The purpose of the exercise was to familiarize the students with international cooperation mechanisms concerning emergency prevention, preparedness, and response (EPPR) within the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. This was done via establishing an understanding for the students regarding the different management tasks, complexities during escalating cross-border emergencies.

Aud Solveig Nilsen, Linda Stakkeland

Links

[Barentsinfo.org - general information portal to the Barents region - Barentsinfo](https://barentsinfo.org)