



Minutes of the 25th meeting of the Joint Working Group for Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS) of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in Malye Korely (Arkhangelsk Region), Russia, 20-21 of September 2017

*= please consult website for documents and pdf versions of power point presentations:
http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/document_database/wg_documents.aspx?ID=7

Venue: Malye Karely tourist centre, Arkhangelsk Region, Russia

Chairs: Ministry of Health of the Arkhangelsk Region (Anton A. Karpunov) and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland (Pasi Korhonen)

Before opening the meeting an agreement on bilateral cooperation between the Regional Health Authority of Northern Norway (Helse Nord RHF) and the Ministry of Health of the Arkhangelsk Region was signed by Mr. Oddvar Larsen, Deputy Director of the Helse Nord RHF and Mr. Anton Karpunov, Minister of Health of the Arkhangelsk Region. The agreement period is 2017 – 2020.

Opening of the meeting, welcome greetings and introduction of the participants

Host co-chair of the meeting, *Mr. Anton Karpunov* opened the meeting and warmly welcomed all the JWGHS representatives to Malye Korely village which is famous for its open-air museum, featuring the traditional wooden architecture of Arkhangelsk area. Co-chair of the meeting *Mr. Pasi Korhonen* expressed his gratitude to his colleague, co-chair Mr. Karpunov and his team for the smooth and fruitful cooperation during the current chairmanship of Finland and Arkhangelsk Region in the JWGHS. All in all 28 participants took part in the meeting, including three health ministers of the Russian part of the Barents region.

Adoption of the agenda and minutes from 24th meeting in Oulu, March 2017

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov shortly went through the agenda of the meeting and proposed some small changes to it. As a representative of the **Barents Programme for Children and Youth at Risk (CYAR)** was not able to participate in the meeting this time, the meeting decided to ask the CYAR SC to submit a written report with updates on its activities to the JWGHS. The Norwegian representative was asked to convey the request to the Ministry of Children and Equality. With these changes, the agenda was adopted. After that minutes of the previous meeting in Oulu were presented, no comments were made and the minutes were adopted.

Next *Mr. Dmitry Titkov*, International Technical Advisor for the NDPHS Expert Group on HIV, TB and Associated Infections (AI), was asked to provide short information about the **latest developments of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being**. After a short reminder of what the NDPHS stands for Mr. Titkov presented some recent news and activities of the partnership as follows:

- New Director of the NDPHS Secretariat, Ms. Ülla-Kaarin Nurm (ECDC, Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs, PRAXIS Centre for Socio-Economic Research) started her job as of 1st of September 2017
- Workshop “eHealth and Data transfer across borders in the BSR” was organized on 14 June 2017 in Berlin, Germany, as part of the 8th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
- Parliamentary Forum of the ND, last time held in 2013, will be held in Brussels in October 2017 at the premises of the European Parliament
- Next Chairs and ITAs Meeting will take place on 2 October 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia
- Next CSR Meeting is scheduled for 17 October 2017 and will take place in Bonn, Germany
- 13th PAC will be organized at ministerial level and held on 9 February 2018 in Estonia, the PAC side event will be dedicated to health consequences of harmful use of alcohol in ND area
- To enhance a cross-disciplinary cooperation among experts coming from different thematic fields joint meetings of NDPHS Expert Groups have been organized and this practice has become common.

Evaluation of the NDPHS performance, originally planned for 2018 will obviously be postponed with one year (2019). The present NDPHS Strategy holds till 2020 but its current Action Plan is ending in 2017 and needs to be updated for the next three years (2018 – 2020). Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**) and the *NDPHS website*: <http://www.ndphs.org/>

The presentation was followed by discussion. Mr. Zaza Tsereteli, ITA for the NDPHS EG on Alcohol and Substance Abuse (ASA) informed that the ASA is initiating a new project on prevention of alcohol abuse among young people: negotiations with the Health Ministry of the Russian Federation are in progress and it is planned that from the Russian side the Kaliningrad region will take part in the project. At the same time, depending on the funds, participation of other regions, interested to join the project can be also discussed.

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen who is also a member of the CSR noted that all the partnership expert groups have been very active and their work productive nowadays.

Then *Mr. Zaza Tsereteli*, Coordinator of the Barents Tuberculosis Programme acting also as an International Technical Advisor (ITA) for the NDPHS Expert Group on Alcohol and Substance Abuse, was asked to report on recent activities of the **Barents Tuberculosis Programme**. Mr. Tsereteli started his report by thanking Minister Mr. A. Karpunov for hosting the last Steering Committee meeting of the Barents TB Programme organized on 15 May 2017 in Arkhangelsk. All regions were represented in the meeting. Topics discussed during the meeting concerned TB control in primary care and how the system works in the Barents region countries. Also the situation with TB/HIV co-infection in the region was brought up for discussion. At this point Mr. Tsereteli suggested organizing next meeting of the Barents TB Programme SC jointly with the Barents HIV Programme Steering Committee in Komi. Mr. Tsereteli noted that it would be more beneficial for the TB programme if its SC chairperson would be a representative from the

Barents Region and representatives from St. Petersburg would be invited to the SC meetings. Mr. Tsereteli proposed two solutions for this. Firstly, the region chairing the JWGHS would at the same time be chairing the TB programme's SC, and secondly, it could be the Arkhangelsk region as they are currently implementing the single largest TB project. Experiences from this project will be utilized in the larger scope of the Barents region.

The suggestion for combined SC meetings was well received and widely supported by all meeting participants. Mr. Dmitry Titkov, Coordinator of the Barents HIV Programme was requested to forward this proposal for the information of the HIV Programme chairman Mr. Nikolai Belyakov and other members of the programme's SC. In addition to that the idea of merging these two thematic groups was brought up for discussion. At this time Sweden repeated their proposal to merge these two thematic programmes.

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov stated that the Arkhangelsk region is willing to chair the Barents TB programme. This was welcomed by the delegates. Since the change of chair for the TB Programme Steering Committee had not been previously announced on the agenda, the meeting decided that Arkhangelsk would be formally endorsed as new chair of the TB Programme SC through the adoption of the meeting minutes.

The both co-chairs and the both programme coordinators supported the idea of joint meetings of the TB SC and HIV/AIDS SC.

It was decided that merging the programmes would be discussed further at the next JWGHS meeting. In the meantime, coordinators of both programmes will inform both SC chairs on progress.

At this point, Mr. Göran Carlsson made a remark regarding coordination of the CYAR Programme. Sweden is exploring opportunities for providing resources for the continued and strengthened work of the CYAR programme. This is of high importance to Sweden as it will be chairing the BEAC from 18 October 2017 for two years and an important Swedish focus are will be on child and youth welfare issues.

The both co-chairs supported the proposal and thanked Sweden for their initiative. The meeting asked the Norwegian representative to convey the information of possible Swedish funding for CYAR activities to the ministry of Children and Equality and encourage them to contact Sweden in order to discuss the issue.

After coffee break the floor was given to *Mr. Dmitry Titkov*, temporary coordinator of the **Barents HIV/AIDS Programme**. Mr. Titkov took a concise review of the HIV/AIDS epidemiological situation in the Barents region by stating that it is rather stable in the Nordic countries, while in the Russian Federation the situation remains tense. As for the Northwest Russia, in general, incidence tends to stabilize but prevalence is on rise, and mainly due to St. Petersburg (55%) and Leningrad Region. Most of the new HIV cases are being recorded among 30-40 year old and older people. One of the leading causes of the epidemic is under-diagnosis of the disease at early stage, especially at the primary HIV infection (PHI) stage. Then the reporter

briefly mentioned some HIV projects currently going on in the Barents region. Also, the latest activities of NCM Health Programme in NW Russia (Mobilising Resources for Better Response – HIV&Co) were presented. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**), and more detailed information on the NCM's Health Programme and its activities can be found here www.thl.fi/norruhealth

Then the meeting was continued with information round on **recent developments from regional and national representatives**. First, the floor was given to *Mr. Valery Peretrukhin*, Minister of Health of the **Murmansk Region**. With regard to international cooperation of the Murmansk Region, it is most actively carried out with the Norwegian partners in the framework of the bilateral agreements. The final conference of the joint project “Registration of traffic injuries associated with alcohol and narcotic consumption in the Murmansk Region and Finnmark, development of proposals for risk reduction” took place on 27 – 28 March 2017 in Kirkenes. The project survey resulted in interesting findings which are supposed to be exploited in preparing guidelines on prevention of traffic injuries in the Barents Region. It has been also discussed among representatives of the NDPHS Expert Group on Alcohol and Substance Abuse (ASA) if experiences gained from the project could be applied to other Northern Dimension countries. On 13-15 June 2017 a delegation of physicians on infectious diseases from hospitals of Northern Norway visited Murmansk. The aim of the visit was to exchange knowledge and experience in the field of diagnostics, treatment and prevention of tuberculosis. Also, possibility to organize visit for nurses of the Murmansk Regional TB Clinic to the Kirkenes hospital was discussed. The visit is planned to take place in June 2018 at the same time as bilateral conference for medical staff of the TB care services. Next joint conference in the framework of the Memorandum of cooperation between the Health Ministry of the Murmansk Region and the Finnmark Hospital Trust will be organized on 9 – 10 November 2017 in Kirkenes. At present cooperation with Finland is being implemented within the framework of the NCM's Health Programme coordinated by the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare, THL. The next Inter-regional conference of the Programme will take place on 28-29 September 2017 in Murmansk.

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov thanked Minister Peretrukhin for his informative report and gave the floor to *Mr. Dmitry Berezin*, Minister of Public Health of the **Republic of Komi**. In the beginning of his speech Minister Berezin gave vote of thanks to the co-chairs and the hosts for very well organized meeting and expressed how glad he was to attend this event. Mr. Berezin stated that presently international cooperation in the Komi Republic is rather modest compared to the Murmansk and the Arkhangelsk regions. This situation is to be hopefully improved in the near future during the coming JWGHS chairmanship period in 2018-2019. Then a brief information on current TB situation in Komi was presented. As a result of successful treatment measures and well functioning TB control system and thanks to inter-agency cooperation between TB service of the region and the medical service of the penitentiary system, the epidemiological situation of tuberculosis in Komi has improved a lot over past decade. Mr. Berezin also underlined the importance of continuous medical education of health care professionals (in primary and specialized care) and other specialists who are taking care of TB patients. Importance of work with vulnerable populations and other risk groups was also emphasized by the speaker. More detailed information can be found from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Then the floor was given to *Mr. Anton Karpunov*, Minister of Health of **Arkhangelsk Region**. In his opening remarks Minister Karpunov highlighted the significance of international cooperation being a good additional resource in achievement of goals of the State Programme on Health care development of the Arkhangelsk region. The speaker shortly reminded about priority areas of the 11 international projects which are currently going on in the region. Special attention has been drawn to projects related to TB, prevention of HIV and STDs as well as on improving mental health care. Also, projects on training and competence building of medical staff have produced good tools supporting continuous education of health care professionals. The speaker also reported that before opening the meeting an agreement on bilateral cooperation between the Regional Health Authority of Northern Norway (Helse Nord RHF) and the Ministry of Health of the Arkhangelsk Region was signed by Mr. Oddvar Larsen, Deputy Director of the Helse Nord RHF and Mr. Anton Karpunov, Minister of Health of the Arkhangelsk Region. The agreement period is 2017 – 2020. This new agreement will provide good opportunity to further continue cooperation and open new possibilities e.g. in arctic health and health technology. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked Mr. Karpunov for his informative report and added that Finland is highly interested in issues concerning occupational health and safety in the Arctic. These topics are on high agenda of the current Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

At this point, meeting was followed by lunch and a visit to the open-air museum of wooden architecture “Malye Korely”.

After the museum tour the meeting was continued and next the floor was given to *Ms. Galina Matveeva* representing the Ministry of Health and Social Development of **Republic of Karelia**. Ms. Matveeva started her report by stating that Karelia is committed to the Barents Region cooperation and has always been an active partner in the framework of the JWGHS. She also reminded that the JWGHS chairmanship was last held by Karelia in 2013-2014 together with Norway. Then a brief description of current HIV and TB situation in the region followed. The HIV situation in Karelia remains tense; the incidence rate as per 1 September 2017 (8 months) was 17.8 per 100 000 population which is 5.9% more compared to the same period in 2016 (16.8/ 100 000). The TB situation instead has improved during the last eight years. According to preliminary statistics for the first 8 months in 2017 the TB incidence among resident population of the Karelia Republic has decreased by 20% compared to the same period in 2016. However, situation with the MRD TB cases has worsened in the region, e.g. the primary MDR in 2016 increased by 1.3 times if compared to 2011 and number of TB/HIV co-infection among newly diagnosed TB cases has increased by 3 times (correspondingly 2011 – 2016). More detailed information can be found from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Norway *Ms. Vibeke Gundersen* from the Ministry of Health and Care Services gave a brief update on the last developments. One week ago the parliamentary (the Storting) elections took place in the country. The same Health Minister will continue, also the Prime Minister is the same, whereas a new Foreign Minister will be appointed. In March 2017 in Kirkenes Norway and Russia signed a bilateral health collaboration programme for the next four years. The actions plan of the programme is currently under preparation and a new application round for

Norwegian-Russian projects is open until 1 October 2017. Norway is now preparing for the next JWGHS chairmanship with Komi and is in dialogue with the other member countries and regions in order to find out what ambitions they have for the Barents collaboration for the next period and what they can contribute.

Northern Norway Health Authority *Mr. Oddvar Larsen* thanked Minister Karpunov for signing a new collaboration agreement with the Helse Nord RHF. This agreement is going to bring good relations and collaboration between hospitals of the Arkhangelsk region and the Northern Norway new steps forward. Mr. Larsen thanked also the Karelian partners for their efforts in arranging and hosting the Barents Rescue 2017 in the beginning of September. Then the reporter briefly told about coming activities in the region such as workshop on cooperation between Nordic countries which will take place on 26 September 2017 in Luleå, Sweden. November the 1st the Health Minister of the Murmansk region Mr. Valery Peretrushin is going to pay a visit to Kirkenes and sign a new agreement related to the main contract on ambulance services across the borders. More information can be found from the report (*pdf-document**).

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked Mr. Larsen for his informative report and welcomed the participants to coffee break.

After coffee break next information was shared by *Mr. Göran Carlsson* from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of **Sweden**. The next parliamentary elections are approaching and will be held one year ahead. Health topics are regarded to be important election issues. Committee on Primary Health Care has prepared its first report which was released this May. According to the report, problems in the Swedish primary care concern e.g. long waiting times. A proposal for a maximum of three-day waiting time for medical assessment has been criticized harshly. Mr. Carlsson also shortly informed about the next steps in work on gender equality; parliamentary approval for Government agency for Gender equality is expected to take effect by 2018. Also, several Parliamentary Committees to be appointed in 2018. The work of the committees will concentrate on various areas, including health and social issues such as long-term sick leave management and increase of individuals' life-long work years. The reporter also mentioned that there is no political momentum on the cancelled proposal for merger of Swedish regions; last autumn the situation was quite optimistic but now the issue is not very high on the political agenda. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Reports of the regional representatives of **Västerbotten** (Sweden) were provided in written. These reports can be found in *pdf-documents**.

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked Mr. Carlsson for the topical information and noted that the Swedish challenges in reforming are very similar to what happens in other Barents region countries.

Then co-chair Mr. Karpunov took the reins and gave the floor to *Mr. Pasi Korhonen* representing the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of **Finland**. Mr. Korhonen first listed the priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council for 2017 – 2019 namely:

- health safety
- mental health work
- occupational health and safety
- gender equality

Regarding the health safety issues, the Arctic Council will under the Finnish Chairmanship work towards securing the health of people, animals and the environment in the Arctic region. The project ‘One Arctic – One Health’ studies how animal health and infectious diseases are diagnosed and monitored. It also reviews existing measures to tackle situations where diseases are transmitted from animals to humans in the Arctic regions. The project will prepare a report on the current state of veterinary diagnostic laboratories and carry out a pilot project. The purpose is to create a multidisciplinary OneHealth knowledge network around the North Pole that would share information locally, regionally and between Arctic regions. Finland will also continue the collaboration to prevent suicides in the Arctic region. A concrete example of this work is a suicide prevention project in Northern Lapland implemented as part of the Government’s key project on health and wellbeing promotion. More information can be found from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

In addition to that, Mr. Korhonen told briefly about the basic income experiment which is being conducted in the country in 2017-2018. The goal of the experiment is to evaluate whether a basic income could help to simplify the social security system and build into it stronger incentives for work. The experiment is implemented by Kela, the Finnish Social Insurance Institution. More details about the basic income experiment can be seen at <http://www.kela.fi/web/en/basic-income-experiment-2017-2018>

Then the floor was given to *Ms. Tuula Kääriäinen*, a new member of the JWGHS team representing the Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI) for **Eastern Finland**. In her presentation, Ms. Kääriäinen displayed the basic information of the North Karelia which is the Easternmost region in Finland. Short overview of demographic indicators and renewal of social welfare and health care in the region was presented. The reporter also gave a brief information on ongoing and past bilateral cooperation projects with Russia. More detailed information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Co-chairs Mr. Korhonen and Mr. Karpunov thanked the speaker for her informative report and warmly welcomed Ms. Kääriäinen to the JWGHS team.

This part of agenda was concluded with remarks from representatives of the Regional State Administrative Agencies for **Lapland** and **Northern Finland** *Ms. Kristiina Poikajärvi* and *Ms. Raija Fors*. The speakers shortly informed about the current work going on in the regions in the Government Key Project under the title ‘Health and wellbeing will be fostered and inequalities reduced’. The project is directed at application of good practices into permanent use and establishment of permanent structures for inter-ministerial cooperation in the promotion of health and wellbeing. At the moment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health carries out regional rounds in order to support cross-sectoral preparatory work with municipalities and counties. Meetings with representatives of the Northern Finland and Lapland will take place on

26.9.2017 in Oulu and 26.10.2017 in Rovaniemi. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked the speakers for this interesting and very topical information. He also thanked all the participants for their active work and expressed his gratitude to the hosts for wonderful organization of the meeting. Special thanks were given to colleague co-chair Mr. Karpunov and the whole Arkhangelsk team for very good and efficient cooperation during the chairmanship. In reply to this Mr. Karpunov and his team cordially thanked the Finnish chairmanship colleagues for very smooth and awarding cooperation.

Before closing the meeting a short ceremony was held to delegate the JWGHS chairmanship to Norway and the Komi Republic.

Any other business, next meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by Norway and organized in Kirkenes in March 2018 (week 12). The exact dates of the meeting will be informed later.

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov declared the first day of the meeting closed and welcomed the participants to dinner.

Next day, **21st of September** two site visits were organised. The first visit (at 9.30-11.00) was made to the specialized children's home for children with disabilities of central nervous system and mental disorders. The second visit (at 11.30-12.30) familiarized the participants with work of the diagnostic center for women's health "White Rose".