



Minutes of the 24th meeting of the Joint Working Group for Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS) of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in Oulu, Finland, 22-23 of March 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: Regional State Administrative Agency for Northern Finland, Oulu, Finland

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

Introduction of the participants

All in all 30 participants took part in the meeting, including four health ministers of the Russian part of the Barents region. Before welcome greetings co-chair of the meeting, *Mr. Pasi Korhonen* made a presentation of the health ministers and asked other participants to introduce themselves. Especially gratifying was that this time also the Komi Republic was represented in the meeting in the capacity of Minister of Public Health of the Republic of Komi *Mr. Dmitry Berezin*.

Welcome greetings by *Ms. Margit Päätaalo*, Director of the Regional State Administrative Agency for Northern Finland. Ms. Päätaalo warmly welcomed the participants to Oulu which is an administrative center of the Northern Ostrobothnia and the biggest city in the northernmost Scandinavia with a population of about 200 000 inhabitants. She also conveyed greetings of *Ms. Terttu Savolainen*, Director General of the Agency to the audience. Due to the last minute changes in time schedules, Ms. Savolainen was not able to join the meeting but she met the participants during a dinner in the evening. Ms. Päätaalo thanked the JWGHS for the opportunity to host this event in Oulu and wished all a successful meeting and enjoyable stay in the city. The opening words of Ms. Päätaalo and more information about counties of Northern Ostrobothnia and Kainuu can be found from *pdf-documents**.

Opening of the meeting, adoption of the agenda and adoption of minutes from 23rd meeting in Solovki, October 2016

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen opened the meeting and thanked Ms. Päätaalo and the local administration for hosting the meeting. Mr. Korhonen shortly went through the agenda of the meeting and proposed some small changes to it. On request of Minister Mr. Anton Karpunov presentation of the Arkhangelsk Region was shifted to the first day of the meeting, as Mr. Karpunov had to travel back to Arkhangelsk already on Thursday morning. With these changes, the agenda was adopted. Mr. Korhonen then gave the floor to *Mr. Anton Karpunov*, co-chair of the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting in Solovki were presented, no comments were made and the minutes were adopted.

Next *Ms. Marina Zyryanova*, Project manager of the Regional office for children, youth and family affairs (Bufetat), Northern Norway was asked to provide updated information on the **Barents Programme for Children and Youth at Risk (CYAR)**. Ms. Zyryanova informed the audience about most recent developments in child welfare in Norway e.g. the New Child Welfare Act proposal currently being under consideration and waiting for its approval this spring. By this new legislation, municipalities will have more responsibility in organizing child welfare services in the country. As a part of the National campaign for combating violence towards children a new ‘Barnehus’ (“Children House”) facility was recently opened in Finnmark County. Also, the new Health initiative has been introduced in the country. The Health initiative includes a proposal for improved simultaneous assistance from mental health and child welfare services for young people with mental health problems. Further, the speaker brought up the latest changes in the Russian legislation concerning domestic violence according to which beatings of spouses or children are defined as an administrative rather than a criminal offense. These changes might have consequences for the international cooperation on protection of the rights of the child and violence prevention based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The CYAR III status report and activity plan for 2017 were briefly presented. Currently, the programme is carried out with very limited resources. The Regional office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat Northern Norway) supports maintaining the programme’s visibility. Also evaluation of the programme “The Incredible Years” was supported by the Bufetat Northern Norway: an evaluation meeting was held in November 2016 in Petrozavodsk and an evaluation report has been produced. On March 15 2017, a new project application was submitted to Kolarctic CBC 2014-2020 programme with core activities on violence prevention and protection of the rights of the child. A big role in the project is assigned to closer cooperation with NGOs. Project partners come from Finland, Norway, the Archangelsk Region and the Republic of Komi. The next Steering Committee of the CYAR III will be organized on 8 June in Oulu. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

The presentation was followed by discussion. Representatives of the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services reminded that it is the Ministry of Children and Equality that is responsible for issues related to children and youth at risk. The Ministry of Children and Equality has decided to allocate 200 000 NOK for the continued coordination of the CYAR III programme in 2017. It was suggested that the Regional office for children, youth and family affairs (Bufetat) will directly contact the Ministry of Children and Equality to clarify the issue regarding final approval of the CYAR III programme.

After coffee break, *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**. In his presentation, Mr. Tsereteli looked at the tendencies of the TB situation over the past few years in the EU/EEA countries. In 2015 there were 60 195 TB cases registered in 30 EU/EEA countries with notification rate of 11.7 per 100 000 population (range 2.1 – 76.5). In this connection he remarked that the lowest notification rates can be seen in Finland and the highest in the Baltic States and Romania. As for the MDR TB cases, the situation is good in the Nordic countries, but yet again in Romania and the Baltic States, it is

very alarming. The situation with TB/HIV co-infection is the worst in Latvia but it is very worrying also in Estonia and Portugal. The basic tendencies of the TB situation in the Northwest Russia were also displayed by noting that TB notification rates are decreased in the region. The frequency of MDR, as well as the frequency of HIV-infection in new TB cases, has been leveled out in 2015 compared to the situation in 2012 - 2013. Mr. Tsereteli also informed that it is planned to prepare a special report on TB among asylum seekers who arrived in the Nordic countries during 2014-2015.

In addition to that speaker told that last November the new programme coordinator from the Russian side was elected, she is Dr. Svetlana Presnova from Murmansk. Mr. Tsereteli concluded his presentation by reminding the audience about the upcoming World Tuberculosis Day which is held on 24 of March. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Some comments followed the presentation. Norway informed that the Ministry of Health and Care Services has secured funding for the coordination of the Barents TB Programme also for 2017. In addition to that, Norway has allocated 2 million NOK for the project “Stop TB in Northwest Russia in our lifetime” for 2017.

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 highlighted some recent news and activities of the partnership based on information from PAC 12 (27-28 October 2016), Chairs and ITAs Meeting 22 (22 February 2017) and preliminary information for CSR 27:

- Iceland is back in the NDPHS
- Germany took over the G20 Presidency, conference of health ministries will be organized in May 2017 with focus on health crisis management and AMR
- NDPHS seminar at the 7th Annual EUSBSR Forum in November 2016 concerning disease and death burden on economy, and economic gains from good public health
- Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020: Russia has signed a financial agreement and became an eligible partner of the Programme; more information about the Russian National Sub-Committee of the Programme can be found here: www.rnsc.leontief-centre.ru and database of the Baltic Sea Region funding instruments here: <http://funding.balticsea-region.eu/>

Expert Group on Alcohol and substance abuse (ASA EG) has presented an idea on how to achieve a better cross-disciplinary cooperation among experts coming from different thematic fields – a mechanism that would allow the separate groups work together better – a large joint programme for NDPHS with the participation of all Expert Groups. The idea will be discussed during the next CSR meeting in early April 2017 in Gdynia, Poland.

Evaluation of the NDPHS will be carried out in 2018 (every 5 years), and CSR will start discussing options. Next, 13th PAC will be organized at ministerial level and held in Estonia, the PAC side event will be dedicated to alcohol policy. Workshop “eHealth and Data transfer across borders in the BSR” is planned to be organized either on 13th or 14th June 2017, during the 8th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to be held on these two days in

Berlin, Germany. In the conclusion of his presentation Mr. Titkov informed that new Director of the NDPHS Secretariat, Ms. Ulla Kaarin Nurm from Estonia, will start in August 2017.

The participants thanked the speaker for very interesting and comprehensive report on highlights of the NDPHS cooperation. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**) and the *NDPHS website*: <http://www.ndphs.org/>

Also, next item on the agenda was reported by *Mr. Dmitry Titkov*, temporary coordinator of the **Barents HIV/AIDS Programme**. This time Mr. Titkov skipped the HIV/AIDS epidemiological statistics, as Mr. Tsereteli already in his report gave a very comprehensive picture about TB and HIV in the Barents region. Then the reporter stated that cooperation within the frame of the HIV programme is not very active at the moment and needs a new impulse to continue the work. The matter of the programme coordination is still pending and negotiations between the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs are yet to be completed. At this point Mr. Titkov gave the participants brief information about the new Nordic Council of Ministers' Programme on Health Promotion and Prevention in NW Russia. The topic of the Programme is "Mobilizing Resources for Better Response: Immunodeficiency virus and associated infections (HIV&Co)". The purpose of the Programme is to develop and strengthen the Nordic-Russian co-operation on health and prevention of diseases with a cross-border impact on the Nordic Region and Northwest Russia. The National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland (THL) has been selected as the administrator of the Programme and will also appear in partnership with the Norwegian Public Health Institute and the Swedish Agency of Public Health. The Programme has no open call for proposals and operates on the direct invitation principle. The invitations were sent to regional health care authorities in seven regions in Northwest Russia that are closest to the Nordic countries: City of St Petersburg, Arkhangelsk Oblast, Kaliningrad Oblast, Leningrad Oblast, Murmansk Oblast, Pskov Oblast, and Republic of Karelia. Six regions joined the Programme, except the Leningrad oblast. The Programme's planning workshop and Kick-off took place on 20-21 March 2017 in St. Petersburg. The Programme will end in December 2018. The total budget of the Programme is 6 million DAK plus 30% in-kind co-financing from Russian partners.

The participants thanked the speaker for sharing this very topical information. Norway also commented that hopefully this new NCM cooperation programme will give a new impulse to the work of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme. More detailed information on the NCM's freshly launched Programme in English and in Russian can be found from *pdf-documents** and the *NCM website*: <http://www.norden.org/en/news-and-events/news/nordic-russian-co-operation-on-preventive-healthcare>

Next, the floor was given to *Ms. Sohvi Kangasluoma*, representative of the **International Barents Secretariat (IBS)**. Ms. Kangasluoma shortly informed on the IBS recent news. The IBS has developed a new Mandate Template and Guidelines for the Working Groups, the aim is to make the work of WGs easier and more coherent. The first information event for the Chairs of Working Groups will be organised on 27 April 2017 in Moscow and all chairs have been invited to the event. Also the new webpage on financial mechanisms relevant to the Barents cooperation has been created <http://www.barentscooperation.org/en/Funding> Currently IBS is updating its

communications: a new Communication plan is in preparation which focuses on more efficient use of social media with aim to increase knowledge of the Barents region. IBS also publishes regularly news of the current happenings of the Barents Working Groups in order to make the WGs' work more visible. If there is a need for an online platform for internal communication, the IBS can help at identifying suitable options. The JWGHS as well as all other WGs are welcome to contact actively staff members of the IBS. In the conclusion of her presentation, Ms. Kangasluoma informed about the new Action Plan on Climate Change for the Barents Cooperation which is presently under preparation and asked the JWGHS representatives for their possible contribution to the preparation work. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked Ms. Kangasluoma for her informative presentation and then gave the floor to *Mr. Anton Karpunov*. Minister Karpunov apologized for not being able to participate on the second day of the meeting and thanked for the possibility to give his report on the first day. Mr. Karpunov started his presentation by telling that on 23 September 2017 the **Archangelsk Region** will celebrate its 80th anniversary. The speaker pointed out some peculiar features of the Archangelsk Oblast such as density, water barriers, remote distances, low transport accessibility and inadequate coverage of the territory with mobile and internet connection. Then Mr. Karpunov briefly went through objectives of the State Programme on Health care development of the Arkhangelsk region for 2013 – 2020 by noting that the similar objectives set the course for development and reform programmes presently going on in the all Barents region countries. The speaker shortly reminded about priority areas of the nine international projects into which the Arkhangelsk Region Health Ministry is currently involved. Special attention has been drawn to programmes and 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.

One example Mr. Karpunov mentioned was the project “City program on prevention and registration of injuries in the city of Shenkursk 2014 – 2017”. On 15 February 2017, the town of Shenkursk received the WHO's international accreditation becoming the first city in Russia which received the status of a Safe Community and joined the International Safe Community Network established by the WHO in 1989. This project will be presented at the international forum “The Arctic – territory of dialogue” organized in Archangelsk on 29 – 30 March 2017. The forum has been organized since 2010 and it offers a convenient platform for interaction between the Nordic and all other countries of the Arctic region. Many high-level representatives are expected to participate in the forum including the President of Russia Vladimir Putin.

In addition Mr. Karpunov informed that a cooperation agreement for 2017 – 2020 between the Health Ministry of the Arkhangelsk Region and the Health Authority of Northern Norway will be signed in Arkhangelsk on 6 April 2017. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen noted that the Finnish side is keen to hear about outcomes of the coming Arctic Forum, as Finland will take over the Arctic Council chairmanship in the beginning of

May 2017. He thanked the speaker and opened the floor for remarks. Sweden was glad to hear of the WHO's acknowledgement to the city of Shenkursk received and congratulated the Arkhangelsk Region for its good work. Mr. Titkov asked if Russia is active in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network. Co-chair Mr. Karpunov thanked for this very relevant question and commented that cities of the Arkhangelsk Region are not yet participating in the network but cities in the Vologda Region are actively involved in it. The City of Shenkursk would be a good candidate to join also this network.

At this point, meeting was followed by lunch and a **study visit** to the **OYS TestLab** in the Oulu University Hospital. More detailed information on the study visit can be seen from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

The meeting was continued on Thursday morning 23rd of March.

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen opened the second day of the meeting by reminding the participants of the Information Event for the Chairs of the Barents Working Groups which will be held on 27 April 2017 in Moscow. Coordinators of the JWGHS sub-groups were requested to provide three-four lines of information to Sirje and Nadezhda to be forwarded to co-chair Mr. Karpunov to ease his participation in this info event. This information was requested by 15.4.2017. At this point, Norway applauded the coming info event which is a good forum for collecting up-to-date information from the Barents Working Groups.

Then the floor was opened for information round on **recent developments from regional and national representatives:**

Mr. Ervand Khidishyan, Minister of Health of the **Republic of Karelia** started his report by stating that all the issues brought up in this meeting continue to be relevant and important for all the countries and the regions participating in the Barents JWGHS cooperation. All the efforts of the Health Ministry of the Republic of Karelia in 2016 have been aimed at maintaining and improving the health of citizens by addressing the following priority objectives:

- prevention of non-communicable chronic diseases and risk factors of their development, forming among the population motivation for a healthy lifestyle and creating conditions for health promotion;
- increasing the efficiency of medical care for patients with cardiovascular, oncological and respiratory diseases as well as diseases of the digestive system;
- implementation of measures to reduce mortality of the population from the main causes, especially among people of working age;
- more efficient utilization of public health resources;
- attracting and training of highly qualified medical specialists and their retaining in public health institutions, in the first place of particularly in-demand medical specialties;
- development of the general practitioner's institution in rural areas;
- further strengthening of the material and technical base of healthcare institutions.

Then a brief description of current HIV and TB situation in the region followed. The HIV incidence in 2016 fell slightly compared to the year 2015 (by 11.5%) and was 25.5 per 100 000 population. The incidence in January - February 2017 amounted to 4.1 per 100 000 people in

comparison with the corresponding period in 2016 when it was 3.0/100 000. The HIV situation in the region remains tense; the new cases are registered practically in all categories of the population including students, workers, employees, unemployed persons, persons in prison. The incidence of TB among resident population of the Republic of Karelia continued its decreasing also in 2016 and amounted 28.9 per 100 000 population. In the conclusion of his report, Mr. Khidishyan named some international projects recently completed in the region and announced that the Republic of Karelia is enthusiastic in participating in the new Nordic Council of Ministers' Programme on Health Promotion and Prevention in NW Russia.

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked the speaker for his informative report and gladly noted that the Karelian colleagues are again active in the Barents Region cooperation.

Next speaker *Mr. Valery Peretrukhin*, Minister of Health of the **Murmansk Region** started his speech by stating that not many significant events have taken place since the last meeting in Solovki. With regard to international cooperation of the Murmansk Region, the most actively it is carried out with the Norwegian partners in the framework of the bilateral agreements. 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" which is being implemented together with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) is nearing its completion; the final conference of the project will be held on 27 – 28 March 2017 in Kirkenes, Norway. Simultaneously, on 28th of March it is planned to sign the Russian – Norwegian cooperation Programme on health care for the period 2017 – 2020 between Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation and the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services. In the framework of the Memorandum of cooperation between the Health Ministry of the Murmansk Region and the Finnmark Hospital Trust and the cooperation agreement between the Pechenga central district hospital and the hospital of Finnmark an international conference "Topical issues on health care" was held on 22 – 23 November 2016 in Zapolarny. In total 28 health care professionals took part in the conference and exchanged experience in the following fields:

- emergency care and evacuation of patients across the border;
- management of patients in need of planned dialysis;
- prevention and control of antibiotic resistance;
- healthcare digitalization.

The 6th Medical Congress "The Northern Lights" was held on 1 – 2 March 2017 in the city of Murmansk. Its programme consisted of conferences and seminars for doctors of different specialties. Hopefully next time this Congress will also attract the attention of international partners.

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked Minister Peretrukhin for his presentation which was followed by a couple of comments. Mr. Tsereteli, acting also as ITA for ASA Expert Group of the NDPHS, expressed his appreciation towards research work done by Russian and Norwegian partners in the traffic injuries project. It would be very interesting to see results of the project and discuss if experiences gained from the project could be applied to other Northern Dimension countries.

Next floor was given to *Mr. Dmitry Berezin*, Minister of Public Health of the **Republic of Komi**.

In the beginning of his speech Minister Berezin thanked the co-chairs and the hosts for very well organized meeting and expressed how glad he was to attend this event. In his presentation, Mr. Berezin displayed the basic information of the Komi Republic including its demographic indicators and a short overview of the medical care system. Additionally, he gave information on national level health care projects presently taking place in Komi. Then activities to combat tuberculosis were presented. As a result of systemic actions taken at the federal and regional levels, TB incidence rate in the Republic of Komi has decreased by more than 30% and the mortality rate has decreased more than 1.7 times over the past five years. Thanks to inter-agency cooperation between TB service of the region and the medical service of the penitentiary system, the impact of the penitentiary system on the total TB incidence of the population of Komi has decreased. Thus, within five years, the proportion of the penitentiary sector in the total number of new TB cases fell by half from 20% to the national average of 9%. Starting from 2011 material and technical supply of TB facilities of the Republic has been improved considerably. Treatment of MDR TB requires lots of resources. Over the past ten years, almost half a billion rubles (including 268 million rubles through the Federal programmes) have been allocated for purchasing medicines for the treatment of tuberculosis in the region. Invaluable assistance has also been provided by the Fund “Russian public health” and charity organizations. In the conclusion of his presentation, Mr. Berezin underlined the importance of human resources development as well as scientific research activities which are being done in the Komi Republic. More detailed information can be found from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

The presentation was followed by discussion. The participants were especially impressed by good work done and results achieved in combating TB in Komi. Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked Mr. Berezin for his comprehensive and interesting presentation and the participants for their active discussion.

Norway Ms. Hilde Sundrehagen and Ms. Vibeke Gundersen from the Ministry of Health and Care Services gave a brief update on the last developments. Last autumn the Norwegian Minister of Health and Care Services took part in the state visit to Finland in Oulu. The programme of the visit was excellent and everyone, including the King and Queen, has expressed their gratitude to the hosts and the organisers. Ms. Sundrehagen expressed her gratitude to the representatives of the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the City of Oulu that her colleagues, as well as the King and Queen, were so well met during the visit. Then brief information was given concerning the Norwegian present chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The next ministerial meeting will be organized in Oslo on the 30th of March 2017. The Ministry of Health and Care Services participates in the following three projects under the NCM chairmanship:

- 1) Nordic scientific research collaboration for better health
- 2) Nordic information campaign for antimicrobial resistance
- 3) The priority project “Attractive Nordic Cities”

On 28 March 2017 Norway and Russia will sign a bilateral health collaboration programme for the next four years. The programme will be signed by State secretary Ms. Anne Grete Erlandsen and Deputy Minister Mr. Igor Kagramanyan in Kirkenes. At the same time results of the project “Surveillance of alcohol and traffic-related injuries in Murmansk Oblast and Finnmark County” will be presented. Norway and Komi are preparing to take over the JWGHs chairmanship from Finland and the Arkhangelsk Region for the period 2018 – 2019. We know that 2018 – 2019 will

be a busy period, with the 25th anniversary of the Barents collaboration in 2018, also a new Barents programme has to be prepared. The priorities of the new programme should be mapped out and thus an input of all the Barents cooperation parties will be needed. Norway emphasized the importance of involvement of regional level actors into the collaboration and noted that the Russian regions have always had a strong representation in the JWGHS which is one of the things that makes this collaboration so relevant.

Northern Norway Health Authority *Mr. Oddvar Larsen* gave a short update on the last developments concerning the Northern counties of Norway. This year the Norwegian Parliament determined changes in municipal structure: the number of municipalities will decrease from 428 to 358/363 and 19 counties will be converted into 10 regions. The debate in the North is whether there should be one or two regions instead of the present three counties. These ongoing administrative changes will have an impact on organization and availability of future services. Regarding international cooperation, Mr. Larsen informed that on the first week in April representatives of the Helse Nord RHF and the University Hospital of Troms will visit Arkhangelsk and sign a new cooperation agreement between the Helse Nord RHF and the Arkhangelsk Region Health Ministry. Also, many years' cooperation with the Murmansk Region has been rewarding for the both sides. A team of the Helse Nord experts will participate in the next Barents Rescue exercise which will take place this September in Petrozavodsk. Mr. Larsen concluded his report by stating that there is also a good working relationship developed between the Helse Nord and the Northern Regions of Finland and Sweden (e.g. agreement on ambulance services across the borders from 2011 and a new overall cooperation agreement from 2015).

Sweden Information was shared by *Mr. Göran Carlsson* from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Mr. Carlsson shortly described the next steps in work on gender equality which remains a horizontal priority for the Swedish Government. The Government agency for gender equality is going to be established and funding for 2017 – 2020 for implementation of the Action Plan to prevent and combat male violence against women has been confirmed. Then brief information on current activities of the Committee on Primary Health Care was given. Interesting news was that just before Christmas the proposal for regional restructuring, mentioned at the Solovki meeting had to be withdrawn from the Parliament because of insufficient political support. A solution to satisfy all parties is still being actively sought. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

The information presented raised questions. Especially the Finnish colleagues were interested in what are the next steps the Swedish Government is planning to take in order to solve the problem. Mr. Carlsson commented that there is an active discussion going on in media according to which the proposal will be shelved for some time.

Norrbotten (Sweden) *Mr. Anders Nystedt* from the Department of Communicable Diseases Control of Norrbotten started his report by reminding the participants about earlier international cooperation activities performed in the field of infectious diseases. One example on this is a long-term multilateral project called “Endeavors to combat the spread of tuberculosis within the penal institutions in NW Russia 1999 – 2006”. Nowadays a lot of work is being done with migrants in Norrbotten where in 2015 roughly 10 000 and in 2016 about 6 000 persons from

Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan applied for asylum. Some statistical data on notifiable diseases among refugees and asylum seekers in Norrbotten for the period 2000 – 2016 was displayed. Mr. Nystedt also mentioned that since 2002 he has been actively involved in activities of two working groups, namely the Barents TB Programme WG and the Arctic Council SDWG. As of February 2017, a new network, the Arctic Communicable Diseases Control Network has been functioning. More detailed information can be found from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Västerbotten (Sweden) Information was first shared by *Ms. Anita Helgesson* who works as a Strategic Manager on Health and Social Care in the Regional Council of Västerbotten. Ms. Helgesson told about a new overall Strategy for health initiated by the congressional mission of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL). Also, work of Commission of Mental Health and its priorities for 2017 were mentioned – the work is the collaboration between the County Council and the County’s 15 municipalities, and it is operationally managed by FoU Welfare in the Region of Västerbotten. On 1 January 2019, a new regional municipality will be formed in Västerbotten. The new Region municipality will take over current functions and consistent responsibility for the regional development. Report was continued by *Ms. Annika Nordström*, Research Manager of the Regional council of Västerbotten. Ms. Nordström just added that many issues related to children are highly prioritized in Sweden right now. She also mentioned about collaboration challenges in frame of the Barents CYAR Programme by noting that it is unfortunate that this time Sweden could not sign a partnership for the Kolarctic CBC application. However, there is an intention to find a suitable and stable solution to this situation. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Mr. Pasi Korhonen from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of **Finland** reported that Finland will take over the Arctic Council chairmanship in the beginning of May 2017. The Finnish Chairmanship will focus on the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Agenda 2030 sustainable development goals as part of Arctic cooperation. The programme for the Chairmanship has been prepared in coordination with actors representing the entire state administration and different interest groups, such as the indigenous peoples. The wellbeing of the people living in the Arctic is dependent on the three pillars of sustainable development, namely an economic, environmental and social development. Then the following Key priorities for the Finnish Chairmanship were mentioned:

- Mental wellness
- Occupational safety and health
- Gender equality
- OneHealth (human-animal-environment interlinkage; better preparedness and response for zoonotic diseases)

In addition to that, Mr. Korhonen informed that Finland will undergo a Joint External Evaluation of International Health Regulations (IHR) implementation. The evaluation will be carried out next week, on 27 – 31 March 2017. The process is led by the WHO. It is a voluntary peer-to-peer review of technical capacity area conducted by an international expert mission. Reported information can be seen from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Due to lack of time, information from the Finnish regional representatives was not presented in the meeting. However, the presentation of *Ms. Margit Päätaalo* (Regional State Administrative Agency for Northern Finland) can be downloaded from the BEAC website (*pdf-slides**).

Any other business, next meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by the Arkhangelsk Region. The dates proposed by co-chair Mr. Karpunov, 20-21.9.2017 need to be discussed further with the Finnish side and the actual dates will be confirmed later.

Closing the meeting

Co-chair Mr. Korhonen thanked the speakers for their very informative presentations and all the participants for their active work. He also expressed his gratitude to the hosts for wonderful organization of the meeting. After that, he declared the meeting closed.