Organisation
In the beginning of 2009 STAKES and National Institute for Public Health (KTL) were merged into a new organisation called National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). This new organization took over all responsibilities of former STAKES and KTL, including coordination of the Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme.

The implementation of Barents HIV/AIDS Programme was organized so that the responsible organization THL and the Programme Co-ordinator (PC) operating under THL were holding primary responsibility. The PC was also acting as a Secretary and Drafter to the Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme under the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues (SC). Members of the SC have been appointed from countries or regions in the Barents region. The SC reports to the WGHS through an annual report. (SC members are listed in the Annex 1.)

Development of the HIV situation in the Northwest Russia

According to the Northwest District AIDS Centre, St. Petersburg, The cumulative number of HIV-infected people in Northwest Russia was 74874 by December 31, 2009. Altogether, 9200 HIV-infected people have died, and thus amount of PLWHA is 65674.

Transmission routes in NW Russia during 2008 were the following: IDU – 64%, sexual contact – 35%, mother-to-child – 1%. By the end of 2009, cumulatively 6875 children have been born to HIV-positive mothers. MTCT rate is 8.7% in 2008 and 7.1 – 2009.
Registration of new HIV-cases and prevalence in the regions of Northwest Russia

<table>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Cases in 2005</th>
<th>Cases in 2006</th>
<th>Cases in 2007</th>
<th>Cases in 2008</th>
<th>Cases in 2009</th>
<th>Prevalence* per 100 000 1.1.2010</th>
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<td>6799</td>
<td>7233</td>
<td>7453</td>
<td>8026</td>
<td>483.9</td>
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</table>

Source: Northwest District AIDS Centre, St. Petersburg

*Cumulative number of cases minus deaths per 100,000 inhabitants

Activities in 2009

The Steering Committee had two meetings in 2009, in Luleå in April 16-17 and in St. Petersburg in September 22. Three study tours were organised. An evaluation of Norwegian HIV projects in Archangelsk took place in the end of 2008 - in the beginning of 2009.

At the Steering Committee meeting in Luleå ongoing activities, the situation on HIV/AIDS and latest trends of illicit drug use and HIV transmission in the Barents Region were discussed. The results of the Archangelsk evaluation were reported to the Steering Committee.

In connection with the Luleå meeting, site visits were organised to to the Norrbotten County Council to get acquainted with prevention of HIV in Norrbotten and to the Infection Clinic at Sunderby Hospital. Prevention strategies and the system for quality follow up of HIV/AIDS patients were discussed at the site visits.
The Luleå meeting was hosted by National Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden and partly sponsored by the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten.

The second Steering Committee meeting was organised in St. Petersburg in September 22. The Russian Barents regions plus St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region were well represented. For the first time also a representative from Nenets Autonomous District took part and their representative presented structure of work and HIV situation in the Nenets AD. The meeting included some specific themes, such as chronic viral hepatitis in Northwest Russia and HIV+TB co-infections. Most vivid discussion was raised after Dr. Panteleev's presentation on dual infections of HIV and TB in St. Petersburg.

The meeting included the regular "tour-de-table" concerning HIV situation in Russian Barents Regions, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

After the meeting some members of the SC took part in the 8th Nordic-Baltic Congress on Infectious Diseases (NBCID) in Saint Petersburg (September 23-26). The activities of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and NDPHS HIV/AIDS Expert Group were reported in the presentation on regional collaboration in HIV prevention around the Baltic Sea.

Evaluation of the Norwegian-Russian HIV projects in Archangelsk

Norwegian Directorate for Health hired an outside expert, professor emeritus Pauli Leinikki, to make an evaluation of Norwegian-Russian HIV projects implemented in the Archangelsk Region. According to the ToR the aim of the evaluation was to get recommendations for the following project period and to assess the current situation in Archangelsk in the light of potential new projects. The evaluation was implemented in December 2008 - January 2009.

The main findings of the evaluation were:
- The work is well organised
- The regional Archangelsk AIDS Centre has a strong leading position
- The international collaboration has contributed significantly in developing the current capacity
- Archangelsk has two strong universities, whose capacity should be even more used in the collaboration
- The epidemiological situation is significantly better in Archangelsk than in most other regions in Russia
- The good situation may however have led to a “blind eye” where the opportunity to identify outbreaks among risk groups at an early phase are being missed

According to the evaluator, the projects and activities to be continued or strengthened are:
- Collaboration with the school of public health: support and expansion of current activities, search for new areas of collaboration
- Support to training and empowering of primary care nurses and doctors
- Youth education: Peer education and training should be promoted and supported. A link to Pomor University should be established
- Social support and rehabilitation to vulnerable people such as IDU:s, ex-prisoners, CSW:s
Recommended new directions for activities are:
• Projects linking the universities more closely to relevant epidemiological and preventive work: epidemiological research projects, research on, and evaluation of interventions
• Targeted prevention activities amongst vulnerable groups: training visits, outreach activities
• Project coordinator training programme
• Training in medical scientific writing
• Enhancing linguistic skills

A project planning seminar by Logical Framework Approach was organised in June 3-5 in Narva, Estonia. The theme of the workshop was prevention of HIV and early diagnosis of tuberculosis among IDUs. This was a combined effort of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and HIV/AIDS Expert Group of NDPHS. Representatives of Russian Barents regions took part in the workshop, and the event was also used for training in project planning, as was recommended in the monitoring of the Programme as well as in the Archangelsk evaluation. Another Logframe workshop was organised in Murmansk in the beginning of June on the theme of HIV and tuberculosis.

A study tour to Finland was organised for experts from Archangelsk, Severodvinsk and Leningrad Region in May 13-15. The objective of the study tour was to present the Finnish low-threshold support services for drug users, sexual health education for youth, as well as primary health care system.

The second study tour was organised to Finland and Sweden in November 22-29. It was organised for experts from the Archangelsk Region in the frames of the project "Social partnership against drug addiction, HIV/AIDS in Northwest Russia", financed by NCM.

One more study tour was organised from Kaliningrad to Finland. Finnish low threshold services and activities of the Murmansk LTSC project were presented to the group. This was a joint effort of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and HIV/AIDS Expert Group of NDPHS. The study tour was organised in the frames of the NCM project "Promoting testing for and treatment of communicable diseases among vulnerable groups in the Kaliningrad Region".

A poster on the activities of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and HIV/AIDS Expert Group of NDPHS was presented at the Eastern Europe and Central Asia AIDS Conference in Moscow (28-30 October).

Constant contacts were kept with the HIV/AIDS Expert Group of NDPHS, as can be seen in many activities above. The Barents activities were reported at the meetings of the Expert Group of NDPHS, and vice versa.

Projects
In the end of 2009, totally 12 projects were ongoing, 6 proposals under consideration and 16 projects completed within the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme:
### List of projects being implemented (as of December 2009)

#### ONGOING FINNISH – RUSSIAN PROJECTS


2. **"Further development of low threshold services in Murmansk and Kantalahti"** (2008-2010). Continuation of the Pilot project of the above mentioned programme. Coordination: THL (Finland) and Murmansk Regional AIDS Centre. Approximate budget EUR 300,000 (3 years). Financier: Finland.


5. **TB/HIV collaboration in Murmansk. Project planning phase 2009.** Coordination FILHA, Finland. Financier: Finland

("Psychological and social support to HIV infected women in Leningrad Oblast 2007–2009". Coordination: THL, Finland and Leningrad Oblast AIDS Centre. Approximate budget EUR 300,000 (3 years). Financier: Finland. - Leningrad oblast is not officially Barents region)

#### ONGOING NORWEGIAN – RUSSIAN PROJECTS

1. **“Cross action between STI Clinic in Archangelsk and Olafia Clinic in Oslo”**. Coordination: Norway. Approximate budget for 2009: NOK 300,000. Financier: Norway (B504).

2. **Vera". Development of international network of interaction between organisations dealing with women and adolescents, involved in commercial sex business and trafficking victims.** Coordination: NGO Stellit, Russia (Pro Sentret, Norway). (No grants given for 2009.)

3. **"Youth peer education in Archangelsk related to HIV, STI and communication skills.** Coordination: Pertinax Group, Norway, three partners in Archangelsk Region. Financier: Norway (B808; NOK 125,000 granted in 2009).


5. **Educational project "New View" in the sphere of the HIV/AIDS and drug addiction prevention, organization of voluntary group for the specialists, working with teenagers and young people, students of higher and special educational institutions.** Coordination: Norwegian Sami Mission, partner "New Beginning", Murmansk Region. (Project B816; Grant 250 000 NOK in 2008; granted NOK 200,000 in 2009).
6. “HIV and co-infections in Murmansk region, seminar”. Coordination: University Hospital of Northern Norway. Project region: Murmansk Oblast, Russia.

NCM PROJECTS


**List of projects under consideration (in December 2009)**

1. TB/HIV collaboration in Murmansk. Project proposal by FILHA. Applied from Finland
2. Development of low threshold services in Leningrad Region. Project proposal by THL. (not officially Barents region). Applied from Finland.
5. "Face the problem". Training of specialists and volunteers in HIV, STI and drug use prevention in the Archangelsk Region. Project idea. Waiting for further development.

**List of completed projects**

9. “Territory of Life. Mobile unit work for prevention of HIV in Murmansk Region"
10. HIV/STI and Drug preventive efforts in Murmansk, Archangelsk and Karelia”. Coordination: Sweden - Noaks Ark Barents. Approximate budget – SEK 980 000
11. "Only for you". The ConTact Bus- Murmansk Region (B606). Coordination: Norway and Murmansk Regional AIDS Centre. Approximate Budget 34 700 USD
13. Youth peer education in Murmansk related to HIV, STI and communication skills (B710). Coordination: Pertinax Group, Norway, partner Murmansk Regional AIDS Centre. Approximate budget NOK 90,000. Financier: Norway. (Grant given in 2007, no grant received in 2008).
16. "HIV: to be aware means to live”. Coordination: Norwegian Church Aid and NGO Rassvet, Archangelsk Region. Approximate budget: 250 000 NOK.
Annex 1

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MEMBERS IN DECEMBER, 2009

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