



“Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents region”
Co-operation Programme 2016 – 2019

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council

Joint Working Group on Health and related Social issues

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Abbreviations

- BEAC – Barents Euro-Arctic Council
- JWGHS – Joint Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues
- CYAR – referring to Children and Youth at Risk project/programme
- CBSS – Council of the Baltic Sea States
- EGCC – CBSS Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk
- NCM – Nordic Council of Ministers
- NDPHS – Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

1. CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT RISK (CYAR): INTRODUCTION

The cooperation programme “Children and Youth At Risk” has been initiated within the Joint Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS) of the Council of the Barents Euro-arctic region. The JWGHS is the political superstructure for health and social cooperation between the Barents countries and consists of representatives of the national and regional health authorities. The JWGHS brings together governments, regions, organizations and experts in health and related social issues with the aim to improve public health and social well-being of the people in the Barents Region. The JWGHS works closely with organizations such as the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Members of the JWGHS are Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Both the central government level and the Barents regions in all four countries are represented. The Indigenous People’s Working Group is represented by a member. The EU Commission, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being take part in the work as needed.

At the Luosto meeting of October 2005, the JWGHS made a decision in principle on developing a programme focused on *children and youth at risk* (CYAR). The initiation of a CYAR cooperation programme was a response to a concerning development for marginalized groups of the child population in the Barents region. The present CYAR programme succeeds the previous programmes CYAR I (2008 - 2011) and CYAR II (2012 - 2015), and is based on the established CYAR partnership and achieved results. The CYAR programme has proven to be highly relevant and requested in the Barents cooperation.

In order to increase activities and operationalize the CYAR framework programme, a CYAR support *project* was initiated by the JWGHS chair in 2009. The support project is managed by the CYAR Steering Committee, with core activities of training of professional staff through dissemination of best practices. The factor that the programme stakeholders were directly involved in the project management ensured deep commitment and anchoring of activities at regional level, and improved sustainability.

Through the CYAR partnership, a vast network of multi-sectoral professionals, administrators, researchers, NGOs and children’s ombudsmen have been developed, sharing information, experiences, plans and best practices in the Barents region. This is the main success criterium for obtaining the objectives of the upcoming CYAR III programme.

The present document has been developed by the CYAR Steering Committee in accordance with the 5-th Co-operation Programme on Health and Related Social Issues in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2016 – 2019; where a priority is “*Strengthening of health systems and social services with relevance for health*”, and furthermore stated that “*vulnerable groups in the population, such as children and youth (...) are the main targets of the programme*”.

The programme is based on input from all Barents partners on national and regional strategies regarding vulnerable children, as well as the evaluation and experiences from CYAR I and II. There is consensus that the most important and key-word in ongoing realization of the programme is ‘the best interest of the child’.

For the upcoming period the CYAR partners emphasize that special attention will be given to;

- improving positive parenting skills;
- improving systems for protection of children`s rights in collaboration with children`s ombudsmen;
- prevention of violence against children;
- sustainability of best practice competence building results from CYAR I and II;
- utilizing web-based technology and e-learning in best practice dissemination;
- alternative reactions to traditional punishment for children in conflict with the law, and restorative justice;
- prevention of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and young people.

2. DEFINITION OF THE GENERAL TARGET GROUP

“Children and youth at risk” is a broad description, and for the present programme the following definition was adopted; ‘*CYAR being children whose rights are not adequately respected and where the immediate adult world does not manage to secure the safety and/or the well-being of the child or young person*’. As stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, by children and youth we refer to the age group between 0–18 years old.

3. THE GOAL AND OUTCOMES

During the previous CYAR programmes 2008 – 2011 and 2012 - 2015, an extensive network of professionals, institutions, authorities with responsibility for children and youth was created. In the upcoming period, the CYAR programme will utilize this network in order to contribute to common knowledge, raise awareness among specialists and inspire to develop innovative approaches to common problems of marginalized children and families in the Barents region. The vision of the upcoming CYAR programme is:

“The Barents region is a safe and non-violent environment for growth and development of the child where a child receives the right help at the right time”

The CYAR programme will aim at protecting children`s rights, developing and improving the services for children and families, preventing violence against children. In this way CYAR will **continue** working towards improving the life conditions of the most vulnerable groups of children and families in the Barents region.

The long-term impact of successful realization of CYAR will be;

- a strengthened children's rights perspective in the programme region
- a contribution to the democratic development in the Barents region by increasing children and youth participation in service development and distribution
- a contribution to sustainable social and economic development in the Barents region by supporting a positive environment for children and youth, and a successful transition to adult life

4. MAIN OBJECTIVES FOR A LONG-TERM EFFORT ON CYAR

Objective 1. To strengthen the perspective of the rights of the individual child through the UN CRC and its operationalization in cross-sectoral service provision.

Objective 2. To increase efficiency and quality of services towards target groups through emphasizing a cross-sectoral approach and use of knowledge-based methods

Objective 3. To increase information exchange between stakeholders and support effective coordination of efforts in the realm of children and youth at risk in the Barents region

5. PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

The present activity plan is developed according to the programme's objectives and includes targeted activities.

Objective 1. To strengthen the perspective of the rights of the individual child through the UN CRC and its operationalization in cross-sectoral service provision.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by all the countries in the Barents region. However, the experiences of its implementation vary a lot throughout the Barents region. Within CYAR III, the partners will unite their efforts in order to realize the UN CRC in practice. It is important to inform specialists as well as a broad audience of children and adults on the contents of the UN CRC and to increase user involvement in the services provided by social, health, education and penitentiary institutions as well as regional administrations. In CYAR III, an effort will be done in order to inform children, parents and professional staff on different types of violence, and enhance competence on early recognition and prevention of violence.

The CYAR programme emphasizes cooperation with NGOs and youth organizations, as important sources of knowledge and competence on children and youth's well-being.

Activities:

A1: Maintain communication with regional and national ombudsmen and authorities on monitoring children's rights

A2: Facilitate annual Barents conferences on topics relevant for target groups, with participation of user organizations

A3: Enable and develop cooperation with public services, NGOs and youth organizations, for project coordination or collaboration

Objective 2. To increase efficiency and quality of services towards target groups through emphasizing a cross-sectoral approach and use of knowledge-based methods

A huge increase in use of knowledge-based competence on targeted groups of children and youth in the Barents region have been given through CYAR I and II. A main focus in the next period is sustainability and development of CYAR-implemented competence and methods. CYAR III will continue the efforts aimed at children in conflict with the law and successful rehabilitation by implementation of mediation in the juvenile justice system. Upon choosing new initiatives, cross-sectoral activities on violence prevention are to be endorsed.

Activities:

A1: Support activities aimed at sustainability and development of professional competence on CYAR-selected methods

A2: Support activities for utilization of innovative technologies and approaches aimed at target groups

A3: Update and make available information of best knowledge-based practices available in the Barents region

A4: Sustain and develop the well-established collaboration between child welfare services, education, mental health and juvenile justice system within the CYAR-network

Objective 3. To increase information exchange between stakeholders and support effective coordination of efforts in the realm of children and youth at risk in the Barents region

CYAR has proven to be a highly efficient body for information exchange and -dissemination on relevant topics regarding children and youth in the Barents region. This improves planning and coordination of activities across borders. Duplication is reduced and effective planning procedures are applied through regular communication, coordination meetings and developing an online resource for CYAR stakeholders. Within CYAR, information on existing services, regional planning, and available knowledge-based methods is produced and disseminated in the Barents region.

Activities:

A1: Maintain and develop contact and collaboration in the CYAR Steering Committee

A2: Continue cooperation with national authorities in order to align regional efforts to national and international strategies and actions

A3: Initiate and support international collaboration with organizations with similar target groups and objectives

A4: Sustain and continue developing the CYAR web-site, on www.beac.st/cyar

A5: Active use of mass media and social media for transparency and visibility purposes

6. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE CYAR PROGRAMME

All the CYAR activities are to be subject to the following principles.

- **Knowledge-based methods** are to be selected for the core of the CYAR activity, competence building across borders. The selected interventions should aim at one or several CYAR target groups and be supported by solid research on efficacy and positive results

- **Cross-sectoral approach**

The first CYAR period had a special focus directed towards *the social sector* and its influence on the living conditions of children and youth. During the second programme period CYAR has aimed at establishing frames for long-term cross-sector cooperation between authorities with responsibilities for the well-being of children and families, such as educational institutions, mental health agencies, juvenile justice systems and penitentiary services. In the present programme the importance of obtaining a cross-sectoral perspective is forwarded. The priority is in accordance with the new strategy of the Northern Dimension Partnership on Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS).

- All activities within the CYAR programme 2016 – 2019 shall take into account **gender differences**, i.e. the different circumstances facing boys and girls in the region. This principle is also coherent with NDPHS' Overall objective and cross-cutting themes.

- **User involvement** - Children and young people themselves shall as far as possible be involved both in implementation of the CYAR programme, and in subsequent projects. In accordance with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the child has the right to participate in any decision affecting themselves. This principle is also coherent with NDPHS Overall objective and cross-cutting themes.

- The **NGOs** have had an important role in implementing CYAR activities. They are a necessary source of information concerning the situation for children and young people. NGOs based in local communities should be relied upon for project cooperation and for giving input into the assessment of how children and young people could best be assisted. NGOs can point to gaps in services and allow project designs to target areas where public services struggle to recognize patterns creating risk.
- Although emphasizing a cross-sectoral approach, child welfare **activities** and involvement of the public child welfare sector in project designs should be targeted.
- **Coordination of twin programmes** and similar efforts with organizations with similar target groups, such as CBSS' EGCC and others.
- Increased use of **innovative approaches and technologies**. CYAR partners have solid experience in use of the telemedicine-developed technology and e-learning. CYAR III will further support utilization of such technologies in the child welfare sector.

7. IMPLEMENTATION AND RUNNING OF THE CYAR PROGRAMME

The CYAR programme is run by the CYAR Steering committee (SC), consisting of representatives from regional authorities in the Barents region with responsibilities for children and youth's well-being. In addition, a representative of the indigenous people has one seat. Norway presides the SC and Murmansk oblast is Co-chair.

The CYAR Steering committee reports to the JWGHS, which has established the CYAR Steering committee and approved the CYAR Programme. The SC has the overall responsibility for programme implementation, and serves as the link between programme stakeholders and actors in the field. The Steering committee meets twice a year to plan and evaluate progress. The cornerstone in the management of the CYAR programme is high-level anchoring among the partners. The CYAR 2016 – 2019 preserves the SC structure developed through CYAR I and II.

As there were challenges to initiate new actions in accordance with the framework objectives in the launching of CYAR I, the 'CYAR support project' was adopted in 2010 to boost the efforts. The support project contains several topic-differentiated subprojects for operationalization of CYAR objectives. The SC acts as project owners, and a project management is established under the Norwegian chairmanship, anchored at The Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family affairs, Northern Norway (Bufetat). The main donors for CYAR-related activities in the previous periods were

the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services and the EU Kolarctic ENPI programme, where the CYAR support project received substantial funding for the period of 2011-2015.

The division of CYAR activities between a framework programme with an overall and coordinative perspective, and a SC-subordinated project for time-limited and targeted actions has proven a success factor for the positive results achieved. It is the SCs joint and decisive recommendation that this organizational model is sustained in the next period.

8. COOPERATION AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER INITIATIVES

The important co-operation structures for running a CYAR programme are:

- Joint Working Group on Education and Research (JWGER)
- The Barents HIV/AIDS-programme;
- Joint Working Group on Youth (JWGY);
- the Barents Regional Youth Council;
- CBSS Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (EGCC);
- Working Group of Indigenous Peoples (WGIP);
- Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), NCM regional offices;
- UN organizations including but not limited to WHO, UNICEF programme in the Russian Federation aiming at strengthening the child protection services;

Attempts to engage other stakeholders, international and local NGOs active in the Barents region, including youth organizations, will be done.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Monitoring and continuous assessment of the programme realization are conducted by means of reports from partners to the Steering committee, and the SCs reports to the JWGHs.