



Barents HIV/Tuberculosis Programme

**31st meeting of JWGHS (videoconference)
19 November 2020**

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What is Barents HIV/Tuberculosis Programme?

- **Goal:** intensification of measures taken against HIV, tuberculosis, and associated infections in the Barents region on the basis of international cooperation
- **Objectives:**
 - To implement patient-oriented approaches aimed at ensuring adherence to therapy;
 - To promote competence building and education for healthcare and social workers on topics related to prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care;
 - To ensure a forum for discussions of best practices and new approaches in the HIV and TB sectors.

Composition of the Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/Tuberculosis Programme

- Finland
 - Henrikki Brummer-Korvenkontio (THL)
 - Mikko Vauhkonen (Filha ry)
- Norway
 - Einar Heldal (Norwegian Institute of Public Health) ?
 - LHL International as observer
- Sweden
 - Andreas Winroth, Norrland University Clinic
- Karelia Republic
 - Inna Rozhkova, Karelian AIDS Centre
 - Julia Kononenko ?
- Murmansk Region
 - Svetlana Presnova, Murmansk Regional TB Clinic
 - Nikolai Izotov, Murmansk Regional Centre for Specialised Health Services
- Arkhangelsk Region
 - Elena Popova, Arkhangelsk Regional AIDS Centre
 - Elena Nikishova, Northern State Medical University
- Komi Republic
 - Sergei Vodopjanov, Komi TB Clinic
 - Sergei Pogan, Komi AIDS Centre

Progress

- Two virtual meetings of the Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/TB Programme – 20 May and 16 June
- Core item on the agenda - current situation with prevention, testing and therapy under the COVID-19 pandemic conditions; and impact of the pandemic and restrictive measures on the international cooperation on HIV and TB in the Barents Region
- Online survey among members of the SC before the meeting on 16 June about implications of Covid-19 and restrictions on HIV and TB services
- Questions about what has continued or been remodelled well, what was affected greatest, possible positive and negative consequences for HIV and TB control and management, epidemiological prognosis

Progress

- Drug provision, patient consultations, and laboratory work were reformatted but did not suffer; but mass awareness and testing campaigns and actions; loss to follow-up; in-person primary consultations were hit
- Lockdowns and restrictions restrain key factors for transmission; wider use of telehealth technology; governmental and public attention to control of infectious diseases and hand hygiene
- Inadequate coverage with testing, follow-up and outreach and peer support services may lead to later explosion and late diagnosis; funding may drop; worsening of socio-economic situation may lead to TB escalation
- Most respondents think later growth of new cases is possible, but much depends on how long the restrictions are in place
- SC reconfirmed the relevance of the Programme's objectives but actions could consider Covid-19

Progress

- Many projects suspended and activities planned for spring 2020 were postponed to autumn
- Many key experts moved to Covid-19 response
- Norway (LHL International) continues cooperation on TB control with Murmansk Region and Arkhangelsk Region, and one application pending for Komi
- Finland (THL and Filha) has one ongoing inter-regional project on communicable disease control
- Meetings and trainings in video-conference format
- Option: studies, surveys, overviews, articles or publications – what does not require face-to-face meetings