



## Minutes

### Physical and Mental Health among Youth in the Barents Region 1 September 2021

#### Summary and Introductions

The Barents youth conference on Physical and mental health among youth in the Barents region was organized online on 1 September 2021 together with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Chair Norway and the Barents Regional Council Chair Västerbotten. Participants agreed that the pandemic has had many effects on physical and mental health among youth in the Barents region. There is a need for dialogue between different stakeholders in mental health issues.

**Chair of the Joint Working Group on Youth Petter Kristiansen Arnesen** welcomed the participants to the Conference, which was organized as a part of the Chairmanship programs of Norway in BEAC and Västerbotten in BRC.

**State Secretary Audun Halvorsen** from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway expressed that Barents Region is a good place to live for the youth. The young people are the future and must be given a seat at the table.

**Vice Governor and Chair of the Barents Regional Council Lars Lustig** stated that the dynamics between regions and countries make the Barents Region unique. The strength of the Barents Region lies in the people of the region. An active youth policy is needed in the region.

**State secretary for the Ministry of Children and Families Ingvild Ofte Arntsen** took up that it is important to include young people in the discussion. Mental health is becoming increasingly important among young people.

**Chair of the Barents Regional Youth Council Daria Makhotina** took up that conversation on physical and mental health is needed. The questions concerning health issues have become even more topical during the pandemic. There is a concern among young people about how to face all the consequences of the pandemic.

**Ketil Lenert Hansen from UiT, The Arctic University of Norway** introduced research on "Young Sámi Identity and Mental Health". The pandemic has had many effects on mental health among the young Sámi people. The Sámi people are proud of their identity but facing challenges of two cultures. 75% of the youth in this study had experienced discrimination. Meeting other Sámi people on different occasions like in the festivals or the events is very important. Because of the pandemic there has not been events or other meeting possibilities during last year, and that has caused difficulties. The study took up several different stories about the identity of being a Sámi.

**Sibel Korkmaz from the Stockholm University** introduced a research on Inter Partner Violence (IPV) among Swedish youth. The study was made by using interviews and surveys concerning IPV. More than half of the sample respondents reported of some level of IPV. Among young people IPV is a social phenomenon, which is something that must be recognized also among young people.

**Valeriya Tsyvareva from the Youth House in Arkhangelsk Region** introduced research on the impact of covid-19 on youth's mental health in Arkhangelsk. Most people feel the impact of the pandemic very strongly. It causes stress, fear and concern about the future especially among young people. The research searched for answers to the questions on how to cope with the difficulties and how to live on. The research also brought up some recommendations on how to continue after and during pandemic: to find new hobbies, to develop self-organization or to accept the situation.

**Elina Marjamäki from Mieli Mental Health Finland** introduced the issues connected to the youth work and mental health. The best arenas to promote mental health are the places where young people spend time, and the best promoters are people who work with the young people. Mental health can be seen as a life skill, and it can be strengthened by various means like using daily routines and habits or developing emotional and interaction skills. Mieli Organization has produced educational material to be used when training youth workers promote mental health and prevent mental health problems.

**Tom Englén** introduced the Change the Game - idea which is a vision of a physical literacy community. The purpose of the Change the Game -idea is to contribute to long-term sustainable social development by improving physical literacy among all people in the society. The physical literacy activates everyone. When becoming more physically active, it also helps with mental health, supports participation and performance as well as individuality. Physical literacy needs cooperation and exchange of experiences between parents, coaches, educators and decision makers.

**CSO-Chair Gøril Johansen** concluded the discussion and expressed the need to continue the process. Both knowledge as well as youth issues are the priorities in the chairmanship programs of the BEAC and BRC.