



Annual report of the Joint Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS) for 2013

1. Introduction

For the period 2012 – 2013, the Chairmanship was shared between Norway and the Republic of Karelia. 2013 was the first year of implementation of the Barents TB-programme adopted in 2012. The JWGHS provided input to the Barents Action Plan for Climate Change. The 20th anniversary of the health collaboration in the Barents region was celebrated by choosing Kirkenes, Norway as the venue for the JWGHS spring meeting. The meeting was combined with a jubilee seminar opened by state secretary Robin Kåss from the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services. Over the 20 years that has passed since the signing of the first Kirkenes declaration, health and social issues has established itself as an important component of the Barents collaboration. This was reflected in the new Kirkenes declaration signed by the prime ministers' meeting in June 2013 where health collaboration is among the priorities.

2. Meetings during 2013

There were two meetings of the JWGHS during 2013. One in Kirkenes, Norway 19-20 March, and one in Petrozavodsk, Karelia 6 November. In addition there were several meetings of the Steering Committees of the specialised Barents programmes (mentioned in section 5).

3. Members of the JWGHS

Members of the Joint Working Group are Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Both the central government level and the Barents regions in all four countries are represented. 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 and a representative of the Indigenous People's Working Group take part in the work as needed.

4. Co-operation with the Northern Dimension Health Partnership (NDPHS)

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) is a member of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS).

Finland held the chairmanship of the NDPHS during 2013. It informed the JWGHS of the latest developments in the Partnership at each meeting. Norway on the other hand informed the Committee of Senior Representatives of the NDPHS on the recent developments in JWGHS.

In 2013, there were several occasions where the NDPHS and JWGHS had joint meetings or contributed to each other's events.

During the NDPHS 10th Partnership Annual Conference Side Event **“Combating HIV and TB through a joint regional action”** on 21 November in Helsinki, the long experience of Barents collaboration in combating with HIV and the objectives of the Barents TB Programme was presented at

The chair of the NDPHS expert group on alcohol and substance abuse (ASA EG) was invited to Kirkenes in March and to the meeting in Petrozavodsk to inform about the group’s activities and links to the JWGHS. The group held its separate meetings and participated in part of the JWGHS meeting.

5. The 4th Barents Collaboration Programme on Health and Related Social Issues 2012-2015 (The Barents Health Programme)

The collaboration programmes on health and related social issues in the Barents Region are worked out by the representatives of the JWGHS for 4 years at a time. The current programme is adopted for the period 2012 – 2015. The main priorities of the programme are:

- Prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases
- Reduction of lifestyle-related risk factors to improve health and the social situation of the Population
- Development of primary health care, public health and social services.

The objectives of the Barents Health Programme are broad, and three specialised programmes are operational under the 4th collaboration programme. These are the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme, the Barents TB Programme and the CYAR Programme.

The English and the Russian language versions of the programme can be downloaded from the web-page of the International Barents Secretariat (www.beac.st)

5. 1. The Barents HIV/AIDS Programme

The Barents HIV/AIDS Programme aims at strengthening the national capacity to respond to the HIV epidemic. The objective is to improve the situation among vulnerable groups. This programme was first established in 2005 and then prolonged for 2008 – 2011.

Chair of the Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme is Ms Evgenia Kotova, Deputy Minister of Health from the Republic of Komi. Finland finances the programme coordinator. In 2013 the financing was channelled through the project **“Promotion of good practices in the work against HIV and tuberculosis in the Barents region”**.

In 2013 the Steering Committee had one meeting, and organised a training seminar in St. Petersburg together with Barents Tuberculosis Programme Steering Committee:

Challenges and best practices in control of MDR TB and HIV+TB co-infection among vulnerable populations in Barents Region

Objectives of the seminar were:

1. To strengthen international and inter-regional co-operation in order to support the work to control MDR tuberculosis and reduce the spread of TB+HIV;
2. To increase the capacity of key professionals in Barents area and North Western Russia in combat of MDR TB among vulnerable populations.

- Target group and partners were:
 - ✓ Experts of the Federal Research Institute for Tuberculosis and Lung diseases, St. Petersburg
 - ✓ Head physicians of Tuberculosis dispensaries in Northwest Russia, especially Barents region
 - ✓ Head physicians of AIDS centres in Northwest Russia, especially Barents region
 - ✓ Authorities and leaders from penitentiary health care in the Barents Region
 - ✓ Representatives of Steering committees of the Barents TB Programme and Barents HIV/AIDS Programme.

The seminar took place 15 November at the Consulate General of Finland in St. Petersburg, and there were 46 participants. Other collaborating partners were:

- Nordic Council of Ministers Information Office in St. Petersburg,
- Consulate General of Finland, St. Petersburg
- Drug Abuse Prevention Center, St. Petersburg,
- Barents Tuberculosis Programme, and
- NDPHS Expert Group on HIV/AIDS and Associated Infections.

The Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme **had one joint meeting with the Barents TB Programme Steering Committee in 2013** in Lappeenranta, Finland, on 12-13 December.

The two Steering Committees had separate meetings the first day and a joint session the next. The main themes were the HIV and TB situation in NW Russia, Norway and Finland, presentation of the NDPHS Statement on HIV and TB adopted at the Ministers' meeting in Helsinki, as well as plans for 2014. The separate HIV session discussed renewal of the HIV/AIDS Programme strategy which has been followed since 2005. Mapping of actual core problems was started with the participants from Russian Barents regions.

In order to improve communication and networking, a separate section for the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme was opened at the International Barents Secretariat's home page. The page is available at www.beac.st under the title "Working groups" → "JWGHS" → "The Barents HIV/AIDS Programme".

Further development of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme

During the joint meeting, the issues related to the development of the new HIV/AIDS Programme were discussed. Norway offered assistance in the development of new programme, allocating financial support for these purposes.

5.2. The Barents Tuberculosis Programme

The JWGHS' work on the Barents Tuberculosis Programme started as a follow-up of the Declaration of the Prime Ministers at their meeting at Kirkenes 2003. The declaration states that the Barents authorities are to gain full control of the tuberculosis situation in the region within 10 years, i.e. in 2013 at the latest.

After two years of preparation, the Barents TB Programme was presented at and approved by the JWGHS in November 2012. By that time it was clear that the aim of full control of the tuberculosis situation by 2013 had been too ambitious. After 2003, the element of resistant and multiresistant tuberculosis has become more and more present. The actual goal of the Barents Tuberculosis

Program is to take more active measures to prevent the spread of tuberculosis and HIV/TB co-infection in the Barents region through intensive international collaboration.

The following measures are recommended for this purpose:

- To establish and strengthen the mechanisms of collaboration and joint management between HIV programmes and TB-control programmes for delivering integrated TB and HIV services.
- To develop the guidelines, standards and standard infectious control programs for the Russian part of the Barents region. To improve the implementation of the existing plans for infection control
- To introduction earlier and more accurate diagnostics of TB and MDR TB
- To improve Capacities of facilities and Institutions
- To develop closer interaction between the civilian and penitentiary healthcare services.
- Further develop cooperation between the Russian Federation and Northern European countries in prevention and treatment of tuberculosis.

The Steering Committee had two meetings in 2013. First meeting was organized in April, in St. Petersburg, and second meeting was organized in Lappeenranta in December together with the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme Steering Committee. During the meeting in St. Petersburg the SC discussed following issues: Organization of Health Care systems for Prevention and Control of TB in the Countries of the Barents Region, Epidemiological situation in the NW Russia, and possible projects within Barents Region. The SC prioritised 3 main areas for the possible interventions and projects: **Introduction of Earlier, Timely and More Accurate Diagnostics of TB and MDR TB, Improved Capacities of Facilities and Institutions, Addressing the co-epidemics of TB and HIV.**

During the Second meeting of the SC, the main discussions were held around the project proposal "Stop tuberculosis in the North-West Russia in our lifetime". This proposal was prepared for the submission to the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, for the possible funding, under the Co-operation projects in the Health and Social Sector between Norway and Russia.

The application is defined as a program that will involve 6 projects in different phases of a 5 year plan:

- 1 - Conference on the experience of collaboration in TB Control in the Arkhangelsk Region 2 - Monitoring of the TB contacts in the penitentiary system who received food support with the funding from NDPHS/HOD in 2012.
- 3 - Training in Health Communication at the AIDS center, and the development of Booklet on TB/HIV.
- 4 - "Forewarned is forearmed" - Information campaign on TB and its symptoms
- 5 - Activities for children and their parents at the sanatory in Archangelsk.

6 - Skill training for TB patients at the TB Dispensary in Archangelsk – Patient empowerment.

Funding for the “Stop tuberculosis in the North-West Russia in our lifetime” was granted in March 2014.

Meeting participants had also discussed the WHO post-2015 TB strategy, and possible involvement of Barents TB Programme in the implementation of this strategy

The experience of collaboration on TB issues in the Barents Region was presented at the European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) Stakeholder Meeting on tuberculosis and other mycobacterial infections, hosted by the Institute of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, in France, on 28-29 October 2013.

The Steering Committee of the Programme keeps a close contact with the NDPHS.

5.2. The Barents Programme for Children and Youth at Risk (CYAR)

The CYAR programme for 2008 – 2015 has the overall aim to assist the marginalized groups of children, youth and families in the Barents region through cooperative actions in general (creating frameworks for exchange of information and experience) and project activities in particular (building partnerships between public institutions at all levels and non-governmental organizations in the Barents region with responsibility for the well-being of youth and children).

The CYAR programme has **four key activity areas**:

1. Situation overview in the Barents region - through semi-annual regional reports, meetings of the CYAR Steering committee and other cooperation meetings, Barents seminars and conferences.
2. Annual expert conferences on issues related to children and youth at risk
3. Dissemination of knowledge-based methods of working with children and youth at risk. Several selected sub-programmes targeted at children and youth at risk are implemented:
 - Incredible Years (focusing on children with behaviour problems)
 - Family Group Conferences (empowering the family and the nearest network to solve problems)
 - Aggression Replacement Training (ART) and Family ART (focusing on children with behaviour problems)
 - What About Us? (focusing on special needs of parents of children with disabilities)
 - From Violence to Caring (online educational programme for specialists of different spheres focusing on early recognition and prevention of violence towards children)
 - Restorative justice – mediation councils (crime prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with law)
4. Exchange of information: update of the CYAR web-site and developing information materials.

ACTIVITIES IN 2013

1. Situation overview in the Barents region - through semi-annual regional reports, meetings of the CYAR Steering committee and other cooperation meetings, Barents seminars and conferences.

The CYAR programme is run by the Steering committee representing all members of the Barents region including the representative for indigenous people. The chair of the CYAR Steering Committee is Mr. Pål Christian Bergstrøm, Director General of the Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufetat) Northern Norway, Norway. In 2013, the CYAR

Steering committee had two meetings; on June 4th in Luleå (Sweden) and on November 26 in Arkhangelsk (Russia).

The CYAR partners hold regular meetings with organizations and representatives for the regional and national authorities relevant for the cooperation on children and youth at risk. Regular meetings with regional and republican ministries of health and social development, ministries of education, commissions on minors and protection of their rights, representatives of the penitentiary services of the project region have ensured good communication and understanding between the partners. In addition to regular, working meetings the CYAR representatives took part in the following collaboration meeting on monitoring children`s rights in the Barents region:

- November 12th, 2013, Kirkenes (Norway) - Meeting with Murmansk State Duma and Regional ombudsman. During this meeting a protocol on intentions for further cooperation within child care services was signed by BUFetat Northern Norway, the Murmansk Duma`s committee for education, science and culture, the County Governor of Finnmark and the Ombudsman of the Murmansk region.

2. Annual expert conferences on issues related to children and youth at risk

The annual CYAR expert conference took place on November 27th, 2013 in Arkhangelsk and was devoted to the problem of violence towards children. Speakers from Northwest Russia, Finland and Norway presented their experience on prevention and work with violence towards children to more than 100 specialists and experts in the relevant areas.

3. Competence building and knowledge sharing: Dissemination of knowledge-based methods of working with marginalized groups of children and youth.

The CYAR programme emphasizes that all efforts should aim at strengthening the public services, regional and national authorities and at stimulating inter-agency co-operation in the Barents Region in order to adequately assist and support children and youth at risk at the individual level. Competence building and knowledge-sharing are, therefore, the core of the CYAR activity. It includes:

- Information campaigns about treatment at institutions with positive results from both sides;
 - Knowledge sharing between the selected institutions responsible for similar target groups
 - Choice of knowledge-based and effective methods of professional work and treatment aiming at the CYAR target groups;
 - Implementation and competence building in the selected knowledge-based programmes "ART", "Family –ART", "Family Group Conferences", "What About Us?", Mediation - Restorative Justice (28 training courses and 25 follow-ups during 2013). This remains the main activity and in 2013 within the CYAR 238 specialists were trained for work with the implemented programmes and approximately 1350 children and parents are reported to have received help from trained specialists.
- Incredible Years (focusing on children with behaviour problems): 3 training courses were conducted in 2013 in Arkhangelsk region (15 participants), Murmansk region (14 participants) and Komi republic (20 participants). The courses were combined with follow-ups of the specialists who underwent training earlier. In addition 11 follow-ups provided according to the needs of the regions as a part of the quality ensuring process.
 - Family Group Conferences (empowering the family and the nearest network to solve problems): Two standard training courses were conducted in 2013 and eleven consulting seminars satisfied the needs of the regions in supervision in order to ensure high quality of work;
 - Aggression Replacement Training (ART) and Family ART (focusing on children with behaviour problems): In 2013, five training courses in ART and Family ART were conducted in the project regions. Altogether, 111 specialists were certified as ART

trainers. To ensure high quality of the work of the specialists already working with ART 6 follow-ups were provided.

- What About Us? (focusing on special needs of parents of children with disabilities): One standard training course took place in Syktyvkar (Komi) for 16 specialists.
- From Violence to Caring (online educational programme for specialists of different spheres focusing on early recognition and prevention of violence towards children): Eight online courses were conducted where approximately 90 specialists took part.
- Restorative justice – mediation councils (crime prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with law): As a result of competence building activities within CYAR, at the moment there are 15 candidates to master trainers in mediation in Arkhangelsk and 8 new mediators under training in Murmansk. During 2013, there were two training courses conducted for the candidates to master trainers in mediation in the Arkhangelsk region (Part I: Theory for master trainers candidates from Arkhangelsk) and the new trainers in mediation in the Murmansk region (Part II: Practice for master trainers candidates from Arkhangelsk).

○ A special focus is made on certification of master trainers and mentors in the mentioned programmes. This process will qualify specialists in the CYAR programme region to train new trainers and ensure the sustainability of the project. To achieve this goal, in 2013 two ART master trainer seminars were organized in Petrozavodsk (Russia) on 16 - 18.04 and 5 - 7.11. During these seminars, the 18 master trainers received advanced training in both theory and practice of ART. They practiced presenting pieces of lectures, conducted group work, discussed challenges and gave each other feedback. These activities are a very important milestone in the implementation of ART in Northwest Russia.

During 2013, 15 master trainers in mediation and one mentor in the Incredible Years have been undergoing the certification.

In addition to the projects run in CYAR, the Steering Committee coordinates also Russian-Norwegian interagency cooperation on prevention of crime among children, rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with law in the Barents region. Within the CYAR programme the work is in progress on implementing restorative justice, or mediation, in the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions (Russian Federation) according to the regional protocols on co-operation on minor offenders between Norway and Archangelsk region and Norway and Murmansk region. This cooperation is embedded in the Cooperation Programme between the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Justice and Public security and the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation for 2013 – 2015. Two meetings of the project groups took place in 2013 where the partners exchanged relevant news, presented the results of the work done and planned activities for the next period. The project groups from Arkhangelsk and Murmansk also took part in a seminar in Bergen where they visited the juvenile department of the Bergen prison and Bergen youth centre where the MultiFunc method is implemented.

4. Exchange of information: update of the CYAR web-site and developing information materials.

An important part of the CYAR is information work on the situation of the target groups in the project area by means of:

- Regular updates of the web-site www.beac.st/cyar (CYAR newsletters, documents from the SC meetings, the SC contact information, other relevant information)
- the CYAR booklet and brochure (the last update was done in autumn 2013)
- active and focused information work by the CYAR partners to inform the relevant groups of population, authorities, institutions about the CYAR programme as well as promote its positive results.

In 2013, the CYAR Programme Secretariat presented the results to the following stakeholders:

- the JWGHS, November 6, 2013 (Petrozavodsk, Russia);

- the Joint Managing Authority Kolarctic ENPI CBC

and at the following conferences and seminars:

- «Family Group Conference as an innovative method for working with families in crisis situations - experience the cooperative program “Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents region 2008-2015” (Tromsø, June 11-12th, 2013)
- «Communication and cultural differences in cross border cooperation” at the Barents health conference (Kirkenes, September, 12-13th 2013)
- «Child Welfare in Russia – cooperation across borders” at the Peoples health conference (Tromsø, November 6th, 2013)
- «Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents region 2008-2015 – experience from implementation of methods with knowledge-based effect towards families in difficult life situations (Tromsø, November 20th, 2013)
- «Importance of prevention programmes «Children and Youth at Risk» - Petrozavodsk, November 8th, 2013
- Seminar by the Norwegian-Russian society in Tromsø «Child Care services – myths and facts» Tromsø, October 12th, 2013