



THE BARENTS WORKING GROUPS
ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Name of the Working Group:

Joint Working Group in Health and Social Issues (JWGHS)

The current Chair and the Chairmanship period:

Norway and the Republic of Komi, 2018-2019

1. Priorities of the Chairmanship

With reference to the public health and related social situation in the Barents region, the JWGHS has identified the following main priority areas for cooperation, as stated in the *5th Framework Programme for Cooperation on Health and Related Social Issues in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2016-2019*:

- Prevention of non-communicable diseases, including reduction of lifestyle-related risk factors, environmental factors and new emerging risks;
- Prevention and control of communicable diseases;
- Strengthening of health systems and social services with relevance for health.

In 2018, the JWGHS oversaw three expert programmes. These are:

- Barents HIV/AIDS Programme, adopted in 2015
- Barents Programme on Children and Youth at Risk (CYAR), adopted in 2012
- Barents Programme on Tuberculosis, adopted in 2012

2. Meetings (meetings held, main topics and outcomes of the meetings)

The **JWGHS** met twice in 2018; 22-23 March in Kirkenes, Norway and 12-13 November in Syktyvkar, Komi.

There was a joint meeting of the steering committees of the **HIV/AIDS Programme** and the **TB Programme**, in Syktyvkar in September.

The working group for the drafting of the 6th (new) framework programme for cooperation on health and related social issues met in Oslo in September.

The steering committee of the **CYAR programme** did not meet in 2018.

3. Other activities (projects, events, programmes etc.)

A discussion paper outlining the ideas for a new expert programme: "**Rural health for Barents**" was drafted and adopted by the JWGHS. The work to establish a new Barents programme and steering committee in this field started.

The JWGHS welcomed the Norwegian minister of health's proposal to host a **Barents health and social ministers' meeting on the 12th of November 2019**.

Funding was offered by Sweden for a **needs assessment for the CYAR collaboration**. The JWGHS appointed the working group for drafting of the 6th framework programme as steering committee.

4. Results of the year (decisions, new initiatives, improvements)

As a result of the resolution prepared by the joint meeting of the steering groups of the HIV/AIDS programme and the TB programme in September, the JWGHS decided to merge the two programmes. This merger is part of the process with preparing the new framework programme.

5. Evaluation of the work (What went well, what needs improvement)

The JWGHS enjoys **strong support among the member countries and regions**, and the level of commitment to the collaboration is high.

2018 was a year of preparation for the completion of the new framework programme, the CYAR needs assessment and the restructuring of the expert collaboration under the JWGHS. All of which, according to plan will be presented in 2019.

6. Other