



Minutes of the 23rd meeting of the Joint Working Group for Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS) of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Solovki archipelago, 6 – 7 of October 2016

*= please consult website for documents and pdf versions of power point presentations:

http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/document_database/wg_documents.aspx?ID=7

Venue: Hotel Solovetskaya Sloboda, Solovki archipelago, Arkhangelsk Region, Russia

Chairs: Ministry of Health of the Arkhangelsk Region (Anton A. Karpunov) and Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland (Pasi Korhonen)

Introduction of the participants

The 24 participants introduced themselves.

Welcome greetings by *Ms. Elena Ambroche*, Head of the Local Administration of the Municipal unit “Rural Settlement Solovetskoye”. Ms. Ambroche warmly welcomed the participants to Solovki, a true pearl of the Russian north and a unique site on the history of civilization inscribed on the World Heritage list of UNESCO. Ms. Ambroche thanked the JWGHS for choosing Solovki Islands as the venue for this event and wished all a fruitful meeting.

Opening of the meeting

Mr. Anton Karpunov, Minister of Health of the Arkhangelsk Region, acting as co-chair, opened the meeting and thanked Ms. Ambroche and the local administration of Solovki for hosting the meeting. Mr. Karpunov then gave the floor to *Mr. Pasi Korhonen*, Director of International Affairs of the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, co-chair of the meeting. Mr. Korhonen expressed his gratitude to co-chair Mr. Karpunov and his team for the good cooperation during the current chairmanship of Finland and Arkhangelsk Region in the JWGHS. He also gave his thanks to Ms. Ambroche and other hosts for their hospitality and efforts in organizing the meeting.

Adoption of the agenda and adoption of minutes from 22nd meeting in Rovaniemi, April 2015

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov shortly went through the agenda of the meeting. The agenda was adopted. No comments to the minutes of the previous meeting were made and the minutes were adopted.

Next *Mr. Dmitry Titkov*, International Technical Advisor for the NDPHS Expert Group on HIV, TB and Associated Infections (AI), was asked to provide information shortly about the **latest developments of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being**. Estonia is currently the Chair country of the partnership while Latvia is acting as a Co-Chair. All seven expert groups (EGs) are now established and functioning according to their annual work plans adopted by the Committee of Senior Representatives (CSR). The EG draft Work Plans for 2017 have to be submitted to the NDPHS Secretariat on the 6th October. Mr. Titkov shortly went through some recent NDPHS events such as the Regional Policy-to-Project-to-Policy or the PPP Conference held on 28th

April in Copenhagen. The Conference brought together 35 policy and decision-makers, project implementers as well as representatives of academia and funding organisations. The key message from the PPP Conference was that experts need to keep in mind the importance of tailoring their projects to the politically agreed regional priorities, as well as to ensure that relevant project results be brought to the attention of policy and decision-makers. Back to back with the PPP Conference the 26th CSR Meeting was organised on 29th April. In the end of the summer the 21st Meeting of Chairs and ITAs was organized on 25th August in Moscow where the NDPHS Secretariat informed that it had sent a diplomatic note to the Foreign Ministry of Belarus with a letter from the CSR Chair regarding Belarus' possible engagement with the NDPHS. So far, no response has been received. Russia stated that it was in contact with Belarus and was awaiting its official position.

Next Mr. Titkov informed the audience about project proposal "PA Health Support 2" submitted to the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 by NDPHS Secretariat and approved in summer 2016. The speaker noted that PA HEALTH is the second most successful EUSBSR PA in raising funds from the INTERREG Programme. Mr. Titkov concluded his presentation with information on upcoming major events of the NDPHS such as the next Partnership Annual Conference and its side event, which will be organised on 27-28 October in Sopot (Poland). The NDPHS workshop organised by the Secretariat will take place on 8-9 November. The workshop will be held during the 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Stockholm. Health economy and e-health are key topics of the workshop, with EGs asked to contribute to the event. New Director of the NDPHS Secretariat will be appointed in 2017.

Mr. Zaza Tsereteli of the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services added that two weeks ago the Russian side had announced to have allocated funds for the Baltic Sea Partnership and hence is an active partner in alcohol prevention project (Alcohol and Driving) in the Murmansk Region. The EG on Alcohol and substance abuse is implementing the project.

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov thanked the speaker for very informative overview on highlights of the NDPHS cooperation. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides**) and the **NDPHS website**: <http://www.ndphs.org/>

The next speaker *Ms. Marina Zyryanova*, Project manager of the Regional office for children, youth and family affairs (Bufetat), Northern Norway was asked to provide updated information on the **Barents Programme for Children and Youth at Risk (CYAR)**. Ms. Zyryanova started her presentation with recent developments in child welfare in (Northern) Norway by stating that the proposed reform of the child welfare services will significantly change division of responsibilities as more professional and economic responsibility would be transferred to the municipal child welfare services while the regional services would be engaged upon request. One of the new activities currently going on in Northern Norway is a pilot project on Integrated Treatment Model (ITM) and Family Integrated Transitions (FIT). The project aims at introducing new approaches in the municipal child care services: the ITM is developed for work at the institution and the FIT for work in the family in collaboration with the municipal services. Eight (8) municipalities in Northern Norway participate in the project. The work has started well and preliminary project results have been promising, but only the final results will show the real outcome.

Ms. Zyryanova informed the participants about seminar “What are children’s best interests?” which is planned to be held on 1-4 November in Tromsø. The seminar will be organised by the Barents Press which is a professional network of journalists in the region. The event will gather representatives of municipal and regional child welfare services, scientists, lawyers, representatives from the Russian consulate in Kirkenes, journalist – 13 of them from Russia, and also people with personal experience, both the Norwegian and the Russian speaking.

The CYAR III tentative activity plan for 2017 was presented. Implementation of the planned activities might be challenging as much depends on the funds available next year. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides* *).

After the presentation a discussion followed. Mr. Göran Carlsson, Senior Advisor from the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs informed that the Nordic Council of Ministers has initiated a new thematic programme on health promotion and prevention. Mr. Titkov added that this Open Call Programme provides funding for Nordic-Russian cooperation and networking projects. The application period is now open and will close on 31 October. More details can be found here:

<http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/ministers-for-co-operation-mr-sam/russia/apply-for-funding/the-open-call-programme-for-nordic-russian-co-operation/en>

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov noted that the Russian side is most interested in this opportunity for cooperation as we all share the same challenges. He thanked the speaker and audience for informative discussion.

At this point meeting was followed by a coffee break, an excursion to the Solovetsky Monastery and lunch.

After lunch *Mr. Zaza Tsereteli*, Coordinator of the Barents Tuberculosis Programme acting also as an International Technical Advisor (ITA) for the NDPHS Expert Group on Alcohol and Substance Abuse, was asked to report about recent activities of the **Barents Tuberculosis Programme**. Mr. Tsereteli informed that the Chairperson of the Steering Committee has changed and that Ms. Liudmila Archakova from the St. Peterburg Institute of Phthisiopulmonology became the new Chairman two weeks ago. Ms. Archakova is replacing Ms. Elmira Zilber, only appointed in January 2016, due to Ms. Zilber’s moving to Kaliningrad. The next SC meeting with participation of the WHO representatives will be organised on 18-19 November in St. Petersburg.

This time Mr. Tsereteli’s presentation concentrated more on TB tendencies concerning Norway, Sweden and Finland as in the last meeting focus was on situation in the Russian Federation. Detailed epidemiological statistics from the Nordic countries can be seen from the presentation (*pdf-slides* *).

Mr. Tsereteli brought forward the recent situation with immigration to the Nordic countries and its impact on TB situation and screening. In 2015 Norway received about 31 000 asylum seekers which was a 5-7 fold increase compared to previous decades. As prevailing regulations require TB screening of all asylum seekers the screening service system was overwhelmed until two new screening centres were established. The new acute reception centres were opened in 2015 on borders with Russia and Sweden. In addition to this, new screening recommendations for immigrants were put to place. As

many doctors did not have enough diagnostic skills to recognise TB cases, additional education for doctors in infectious diseases was carried out.

Sweden on the other hand received about 165 000 asylum seekers in 2015. In Sweden it is mandatory to report TB diagnosis to both the regional and the national level by using on-line system. Treating physicians as well as laboratories are obliged to report the TB cases. It is also mandatory to perform contact tracing. What comes to patients' obligations, they have to follow restrictions from physicians and cooperate in contact tracing to avoid further spread.

In 2015 Finland, like most of the European countries, received a record amount of asylum seekers. In total 32 476 were registered in 2015, while the number has been around 3 500 asylum seekers per year during the previous years. In 2015 were registered in total 271 TB cases in the country (incidence 5,0/100 000), which was 11 cases more than in 2014.

However, Mr. Tsereteli noted that the influx of asylum seekers as such has not yet had effect on current TB situation but health care services of these three countries were not prepared to receive so many people. At this point Mr. Göran Carlsson commented that only statistics of 2016 can shed some light to changes in TB tendencies.

Mr. Titkov brought out a comment concerning people with TB and HIV and deportation. In Norway, Sweden and Finland asylum seekers diagnosed with TB or/and HIV are not being deported but given proper medical treatment provided by government. However in Russia people with these diagnoses are subject to deportation.

The next speaker *Mr. Dmitry Titkov*, temporary coordinator of the **Barents HIV/AIDS Program** gave a brief overview on the latest developments of the programme. The current situation with HIV/AIDS in the Barents region is rather stable due to better prevention among MSM and changes in the migrant profile. Countries of the region are closed to or already achieved the 90-90-90 target. Situation with HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation remains tense compared with rather good TB situation. All in all, the number of people living with HIV in Russia continues to increase and the number living with undiagnosed HIV remains high. The millionth HIV case was registered in late January 2016. The situation in the Northwest Russia follows Russia's overall trends, and the situation in 2015 got much worse if compared with 2014. For many years the HIV incidence rates in the NW Russia were higher than in Russia on average, yet the situation started changing some six years ago, and now the HIV incidence in the NW Russia is much below the average rate. More details can be seen from the presentation (*pdf-slides* *)

As for the situation with the Barents HIV Programme, it has been not very active so far. Meeting with the Chair, Prof. Nikolai Belyakov is planned for 17-18 October in St. Petersburg. It is planned that a letter from the Chair of the Barents HIV Programme will be sent to countries/regions to reconfirm or nominate members to the Steering Committee. Co-chair Mr. Korhonen emphasized the need of establishing the SC as soon as possible to proceed with other organizational matters of the programme. The matter of the programme coordination is yet to be decided and negotiations with the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs are under way.

At this point Mr. Carlsson stated that Sweden supports more close cooperation between the Barents TB and HIV programmes and wishes to bring out the possibility to join these two programmes. Mr. Carlsson's statement was followed by lively discussion. To conclude the discussion Mr. Titkov commented that now is not the time to make decision on this matter.

Brief information on recent developments from regional and national representatives:

Mr. Pasi Korhonen from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of **Finland** informed the participants on the Government's strategic priorities and key projects related to the Health, Social Services and Regional Government Reform presently going on in the country. The Government's draft proposal on the reform is being circulated for comments until 9 November 2016. After that the Government will finalise its proposal and submit it to Parliament. There are five key projects set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The key projects are to be implemented during 2016-2019 with total budget of EUR 130 M. More detailed description of the Government's key projects can be found from the presentation (*pdf-slides**).

Ms. Raija Fors representing the Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI) for Northern Finland shortly informed the participants on recent developments in the region. The AVI operates in the Northern part of Finland including Northern Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and Southern Lapland with total population of 485 000 inhabitants and an area of 61 000 km² (12% of total area of Finland). Ms. Fors highlighted future division of responsibilities between municipalities, counties and state taking place in the beginning of 2019. Ms. Fors also mentioned the eight years Kainuu administration experiment which has created a good ground for the present reform process. This experiment has already brought tightly together primary and specialized health care and social services. Further information can be seen from the presentation (*pdf-slides**). In the conclusion of her presentation Ms. Fors warmly welcomed the participants to the next JWGHS meeting in Oulu.

Ms. Kristiina Poikajärvi from the Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI) for Lapland gave a brief update on the situation in Lapland. Activities under the Ministry's key projects have had a good start also in Lapland. Especially good progress has been made with the programme focusing on child and family services as well as the programme on development of services for older people. Such topics as smoking among people with mental and dependency problems as well as promotion of sexual health of young people and families are challenging for Lapland. Ms. Poikajärvi also emphasised the importance of taking into account the needs of the Saami population in the whole reform process. More information can be found from the presentation (*pdf-slides**)

The information round continued after coffee break and floor was given to *Mr. Kjetil Leon Bordvik* from the Royal Ministry of Health and Care Services. Mr. Bordvik told briefly about recent developments in **Norway**. Ageing and longevity present challenges and opportunities for Norwegian Society and its health care system. If the current way of operating the health care system continues there is a need for 40% more health personnel in the future. This means that every third high school student has to enter the health care workforce which is unreasonable. The Norwegian Government is meeting these challenges with a comprehensive health reform and has prepared four white papers:

- 1) White paper on primary care with focus on home care and patient's choice. There is a need to emphasise early interventions to prevent costly hospital treatment.

- 2) White paper on hospitals emphasising accessibility and clear division of labour between the hospitals.
- 3) White paper on pharmaceuticals emphasising access, lower cost and better prioritization.
- 4) White paper on public health. Broad health promotion measures at the population level are necessary to keep the population healthy. The white paper is emphasising mental health and active ageing. Senior citizens can contribute to the economy if they are healthy and wanted.

Mr. Bordvik concluded his presentation by telling that Norway is looking forward to its presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Thematic priorities for the NCM collaboration projects include anti-microbial resistance, regional use of health data registries for research, and healthy and sustainable cities.

The next speaker, *Mr. Andrej Grjibovski* from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, also representing the Royal Ministry of Health and Care Services, informed the audience about upcoming international conference which will take place on 28-29 November 2016 in Oslo. The main topic of the conference is health in all strategies which includes cooperation in the Barents region and cross-border cooperation. Participants invited will be project managers and experts involved in collaboration with Russia. Also Norwegian experts and other representatives participating in the NDPHS Partnership and the Barents Programme cooperation are expected to take part in the conference.

Mr. Grjibovski also informed that the last application period for international projects planned for 2017 has closed on 1 October 2016. All in all, in 2016 the Ministry received 22 project applications with a sum of NOK 12.8 M to be financed. However, only NOK 5.0 M is available for the projects' funding. Final decision on projects' financing will be made by end of November. The next application round is planned to be open in January- February 2017.

As an example of ongoing Russian-Norwegian collaboration, Mr. Grjibovski mentioned the project "Registration of road traffic injuries associated with alcohol and narcotic consumption in the Murmansk region and Finnmark, development of proposals for risk reduction". The project survey is being implemented and data collection is underway. Preliminary results from the survey will hopefully be presented at the 24th JWGHS meeting.

Sweden Information was firstly shared by *Mr. Göran Carlsson* from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Mr. Carlsson listed the main themes topical for the Swedish Government, namely:

- Gender equality
- Equity in health
- Immigrant children without parents
- Proposal for regional restructuring
- Antimicrobial resistance
- Mental health as a major problem
- Human resources in the health system

Nowadays the Swedish Government pays a special attention to gender equality in all policy areas and calls for responsibility of all ministries. The Minister of Health and Social Affairs, who is also the Minister for Gender Equality, is responsible for coordination, development and follow-up of gender mainstreaming. In his report Mr. Carlsson also reminded the audience that presently in the country live 35 000 migrant children without parents, which is more than in any other European country except Turkey. At this point the speaker was asked a question How to proceed with migrant children who are falsifying their age? In response Mr. Carlsson stated that in these cases a particular X-ray examination is being performed. While speaking about the regional restructuring, Mr. Carlsson informed that

instead of the existing 21 regions there might be just six (6) in the future. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides* *).

Norrbottn (Sweden) Ms. *Ulla Isaksson* from the County Council of Norrbotten gave an update on recent developments in the County. Ms. Isaksson informed the participants about visit of County Council Commissioner Mr. Glenn Berggård to the Ministry of Health of the Murmansk region in June. During the visit the bilateral collaboration agreement between the Ministry and the Norrbotten County Council was discussed. The parties agreed on three priority areas for collaboration: e-health and telemedicine, prevention of unhealthy lifestyles and communicable diseases, especially antibiotic resistance. The parties are currently considering their contribution to the collaboration and will continue their negotiations in November.

Ms. Isaksson reminded the audience that one year ago (September 2015) the Chief Executives responsible for healthcare in Northern Norway, Sweden and Finland signed an agreement on long-term strategic cross-border cooperation. A joint secretariat has been established at the County Council of Norrbotten and the work is in progress. In the future, it will be important to coordinate some of the work with the JWGHS to avoid overlapping activities and create synergy. Further information is available from the presentation notes (*pdf-document* *).

Ms. *Annika Nordström* from the County of **Västerbotten** (Sweden) briefly informed about recent activities in the County. The work is being done within the following priority areas:

- Children at risk: the aim is to support children by building alliances between social services, schools and primary health care
- Education – alcohol and drugs: giving education for persons working within social services and healthcare (“driving licence”)
- Agreements – abuse and addiction: agreement between municipalities and the county council, concerns cooperation and responsibility and is regulated by law (since June 2013)
- Infectious diseases: it has been planned to start next spring a needle exchange programme for persons with intravenous addiction of narcotics in order to reduce the risk for infections (HIV, hepatitis)
- “Digital agenda” in Västerbotten: the aim is to expand the use of digital technology in order to ease access to services in the county

More detailed information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides* *).

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov thanked the presenters and introduced the next speaker, Ms. *Vera Yashkovich*, the Chief physician of the **Arkhangelsk** psycho-neurological dispensary. In her presentation Ms. Yashkovich displayed information about one of the most significant projects (Improvement of mental health services in Arkhangelsk region by integration of primary and specialized mental health services – model development, implementation and evaluation) presently going on in the Arkhangelsk region. The Health Ministry of Arkhangelsk region is implementing the project in partnership with the University Hospital of Åsgård (Tromsø, Northern Norway). The aim of the project is to improve the provision of services for patients with mental health problems. The “Pomor model” developed in the project is based on delivery of psychiatric services in collaboration by general practitioners and psychiatrists. Piloting of the model is in progress in eight districts and will further be put into operation in all districts and municipalities of the Arkhangelsk region. The model also includes the more efficient use of information and communication technologies as well as establishment of a network infrastructure in the specialized health care unit (dispensary) and the local studios in the primary health

care units (polyclinics) for work in remote areas. Professional training of GPs is an integral part of the project activities. Further information is available from the presentation (*pdf-slides* *).

Next the floor was given to *Mr. Valery Peretrukhin*, Minister of Health of the **Murmansk Region**. Mr. Peretrukhin gave a brief overview on the latest activities implemented within the framework of bilateral cooperation agreements with partner countries of the Barents region. The speaker placed high value on active collaboration of Norwegian partners with the Health Ministry of the Murmansk region. He also expressed his optimism regarding more active collaboration with Swedish and Finnish partners. In the conclusion of his presentation Mr. Peretrukhin welcomed the participants to the forthcoming Medical Congress “Northern Lights” to be held on 1-2 March 2017 in Murmansk.

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov thanked the presenters, declared the presentation session of the meeting closed and gave the floor to co-chair Mr. Korhonen. Mr. Korhonen thanked the hosts for the wonderful organization of the meeting and welcomed the participants to Oulu as the **next meeting** will be hosted by Finland. Two alternatives were proposed for the meeting dates: 22-23.3.2017 or 29-30.3.2017. The proposed timing will be discussed further with the Russian side and the actual dates will be confirmed later.

Any other business

Mr. Dmitry Titkov informed the participants about upcoming Barents Cooperation Forum to be held on 8 December 2016 in Helsinki, <http://www.barentsforum.com/barentsforum> The Forum offers the latest information on the activities and funding opportunities within the Region. The Forum will also serve as a platform for creating strategic partnerships. In addition to that, Mr. Titkov reminded the audience about the Communication Development Project implemented by the IBS. The final report of the project prepared by Rebecka Snefugli Sondell has recently been published and can be found at http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/BEAC_Communication_Project_2016_Full_report_final.pdf

Closing the meeting

Co-chair Mr. Karpunov thanked the participants for their active work and declared the first day of the meeting closed.

During the **dinner on the 6th of October** the JWGHS was joined by Ms. Elena Ambroche, Head of the Local Administration of the Municipal unit “Rural Settlement Solovetskoye”.

Next day, **7th of October** a study visit to Solovki District Hospital and Health Centre was organised. The study visit was followed by sightseeing tour on the island with excursions to Sekirnaya Mountain and Saint-Voznesensky Monastery.