



4.1.2012

Minutes of the 13th meeting of the Joint Working Group for Health and related Social Issues (JWGHS) of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council

Date: 12.10.2011

Place: Syktyvkar, Komi Republic/Russia

Venue: Hotel Avalon

1. Opening of the meeting

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi, Ministerial Adviser at Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, acted as the chairperson of the meeting and declared the meeting open and greeted the participants.

On behalf of the Republic of Komi, Mr. Vyacheslav Kolesnikov, Acting Minister of Health of Komi Republic, welcomed the participants and wished them a fruitful meeting.

2. Introduction of the participants

The participants introduced themselves.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted with no comments.

4. Adoption of the report from the JWGHS meeting in St-Petersburg in March 2011

The report from the previous JWGHS meeting held in St-Petersburg in March 2011 was adopted.

5. Information about the latest developments of the Barents co-operation - Development of the chairmanship report 2010-2011/Reports of the Programmes

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi informed that a new Head of the International Barents Secretariat had been selected by the CSO. The current head of the Secretariat Mr. Ignatiev retires, and Mr. Ari Sirén, the new Head of the Secretariat, will start the work in the new position in January 2012. Mr. Sirén had previously worked as an attaché in the Finnish Embassy to Czech Republic. The deputy Head Ms. Anna Lund will continue till the end of July 2012.

He also informed that the 13th BEAC Ministerial session was taking place on the same day (12 October) in Kiruna (Sweden). One of the session's aims was to adopt the Joint Communiqué of the session. The JWGHS,

like the other BEAC working groups, was asked to write a contribution to the document. Afterwards, Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi read the paragraphs concerning the JWGHS*. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the work of the JWGHS.

The speaker reminded about the start of a new Barents programme - Barents Tuberculosis Programme. The Programme had already had its first meeting of the Steering Committee and the next meeting was due on 19 October in St-Petersburg.

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi added that a 2010-2011 chairmanship report was to be prepared by the co-chairs, i.e. Finland and Republic of Komi. Textual contributions were made by the sub-programmes into the report. Information update was needed from the "Children and Youth at Risk" Sub-Programme.

6. Report from the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme

The Chairperson of the meeting reminded the audience that the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme had been active since 2005. He remarked that the evaluation of the Programme had been conducted in autumn 2011.

Ms. Outi Karvonen, coordinator of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme started her presentation with informing the participants about the recent evaluation. The evaluation was carried out by Prof. Pauli Leinikki (Finland). So far, only preliminary results were available. The report was prepared in English and had to be translated into Russian. After that the document would be disseminated to relevant parties for comments.

In her presentation, Ms. Outi Karvonen made a concise description of the Programme's history, structure, and objectives. Then she presented the preliminary results of the recently made evaluation - main achievements, main problems, recommendations, and possible solutions.

Mr. Göran Carlsson, senior advisor from the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, asked whether the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme exercised cooperation with other regional bodies.

Ms. Outi Karvonen responded that regionally cooperation was mainly done with the NDPHS and namely it's Expert Group on HIV/AIDS and Associated Infections.

Mr. Dmitry Titkov from the International Affairs at the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare added that linkage with the NDPHS is exercised also through quality-labeling of Barents HIV/AIDS Programme's projects by the NDPHS.

Ms. Vibeke Gundersen, senior advisor from the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, asked whether the results of the evaluation would cause changes into the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme. Ms

* The full text of the Joint Communiqué both in English and Russian is available in the document archive of the BEAC at http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/document_database/Default.aspx

Karvonen responded that the results will be thoroughly discussed and conclusions done at the next meeting of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme's Steering Committee.

7. Report from the Barents Tuberculosis Programme

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi pointed out that many TB-related projects had been implemented in the Barents Region since the 1990s, but the infection yet persists. Unfortunately, Prof. Andrey Maryandyshev, Russian coordinator of the Barents TB Programme, was unable to attend the JWGHS meeting. Mr. Dmitry Titkov, International Affairs Unit at the National Institute for Health and Welfare, was asked to report about the Barents TB Programme.

The speaker briefly told about the Barents Tuberculosis Programme's history, purpose and objectives. In May 2011, the first meeting of the Steering Committee of the Programme was conducted, which approved the composition and functions of the Steering Committee and key provisions of the TB Programme. The next meeting of the Steering Committee would be conducted on 19 October 2011 in St-Petersburg to approve of the TB Programme as a document and discuss activities for 2012.

Ms. Vibeke Gundersen added that Norway appointed a new representative to the Steering Committee of the Barents TB Programme - Dr. Karin Rønning, senior medical advisor from the Norwegian institute of Public Health. Besides, Dr. Zaza Tsereteli will continue as the international coordinator at the Steering Committee.

Mr. Göran Carlsson remarked that one of the Sweden's priorities is control of tuberculosis and identification of markers of complicated forms of the infection. Since the appointed representative of Sweden would not be able to attend the meeting of the Barents TB Programme's Steering Committee, the consul on health and social affairs from the Swedish General Consulate to St-Petersburg would substitute.

Answering Mr. Carlsson's question about cooperation with regional bodies, it was noted that cooperation is exercised with the EG on Primary Health and Prison Health Systems (PPHS) of the NDPHS as well as EG on HIV/AIDS and Associated Infections. The ITA is shared between the EG PPHS and Barents TB Programme. Besides, the meeting would be attended by Ms. Tatyana Smolskaya, director of the Northwest Federal AIDS Centre, and representatives of the WHO European Regional Office.

8. Report from the framework programme "Children and Youth at Risk"

Mr. Pål Christian Bergstrøm, Director General of the Regional Office of the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs and chairperson of Sub-Programme "Children and Youth at Risk" reported about the progress of the Sub-Programme in 2011. The Sub-Programme goes in line with the 2008-2012 activity plan. The project funding through the NDPHS project pipeline for 2010-2012 amounts at 1 million Euros. The speaker reported about the progress by the main activity of the Sub-Programme. Karelia, Murmansk Region and Archangelsk Region are deeply involved in the implementation, yet Republic of Komi started its participation. A project proposal was submitted for grant support to the EU through the Kolarctic ENPI for CYAR II 2012-2014. The Sub-Programme successfully implements various methods and techniques of working with children and youth at risk and minor offenders, including Aggression

Replacement Therapy (ART), which could be implemented further throughout Russian facilities. The CYAR collaborates with regional bodies - a meeting were held with CBSS WGCC. Cooperation agreements and programmes were endorsed between Norway and Russian Ministry for Justice and Russian regions in the northwest. Mr. Pål Christian Bergstrøm concluded his presentation with recommendations and lessons learnt from the CYAR.

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi thanked Norway for the CYAR implementation and wished Finland was a more active partner.

This remark was seconded by Mr. Göran Carlsson, who expressed that the Sub-Programme goes ahead well. The Swedish representative, from the county of Norrbotten (the new chair of the Barents Regional Council), is adding to the efforts by Norway and Russia.

Mr. Ilya Semyashkin, director of the Social Development Agency of Republic of Komi, thanked Mr. Bergstrøm for involving Komi Republic into the CYAR, which very well met the local needs, and expressed hopes for further cooperation.

9. Information on recent developments of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS)

Ms. Minna Sinkkonen from the International Affairs Unit at the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare presented to the audience fresh information about the progress of the NDPHS.

The 18th CSR meeting conducted in Oslo in April 2011 asked the EGs to submit suggestions for revision of the NDPHS goals. The issue will be finalized at the next CSR meeting in late October in Brussels.

The NDHPS started a quality-labelling procedure for projects. So far, 7 projects have been awarded a label.

Russia agreed to act as the depositary of the Agreement on establishment of the NDPHS Secretariat, and the Agreement will be signed by several countries during the PAC in St. Petersburg on November 25, 2011.

Finland will take over NDPHS chairmanship for the years 2012-2013, with Germany as a vice-chair.

In the comments, Ms. Minna Sinkkonen explained the labelling procedures for projects: an EG can propose a project for labelling to the NDPHS Secretariat, and then the CSR makes a decision, or a project itself can submit a labelling application to the Secretariat.

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi noted that the NDPHS project pipeline is currently supported only by Norway. And the pipeline is to be maintained, as the funding situation may change, and more countries/organizations may join.

10. Information from regional and national representatives on current and future co-operation concerning health and social issues

Ms. Laila Dalhaug from the Norwegian Barents Secretariat informed that they finance approx. 15 small-scale Norwegian-Russian health projects annually. The project budgets are small, but they give important input for example to prepare bigger applications into the pipeline.

Mr. Igor Trekin, chief doctor of the Komi Republic TB Clinic, reported about the TB situation and trends in the Republic of Komi. The situation in general is characterized by positive changes, with incidence figures plummeting by 15% in 2010 as compared with 2009. Yet, MDR-TB is not taken under control and therefore grows. The TB response is organized in line with WHO guidelines. The development priorities are microbial microscopy, diagnostics and therapies.

Mr. Sergei Pogan, chief doctor of the Komi Republic AIDS Centre, added that the HIV figures are lower than in Russia and Northwest Russia on average. The dominant transmission route is drug-injecting. The infection prevails in the age group from 30 to 40 years.

Ms. Tatiana Rusinova, chief of health services management at Archangelsk Regional Healthcare and Social Development Ministry, remarked that all regional healthcare development programmes in Russia are bent to consider regional specific features. The new federal programme on modernization of health care includes improving of infrastructure, IT procurement for health care facilities and improving of outpatient care (increase of salaries for personnel connected with introduction of new standards). For the Archangelsk Region the uppermost needs are accessibility of healthcare in rural areas, qualified personnel supply, and mobile healthcare services. A lot of attention is nowadays drawn to cardio-vascular diseases and cancers. The Region runs now about 20 international projects on various health issues. The most active international partner is Norway.

Mr. Andrei Mikhailov, chief of health services management at the Karelian Ministry for Health and Social Development, also referred to Russia's large-scale healthcare modernization programme. He added that the Republic of Karelia does not at the moment have any special regional HIV or TB programmes. These issues are covered in the regional programme of socially-related diseases, which has measures but hardly resources to implement them. The local efforts yet allow impacting the TB and HIV situation. The TB incidence is on increase. One of the primary tasks is to strengthen early TB detection in the primary healthcare. The HIV situation is stable with slight growth in absolute figures. The infection is "ageing". The problems with HIV detection is closely connected with the staffing problem. International cooperation is not as intense as before, yet cooperation programmes are developing, and Karelia is open for cooperation.

Mr. Arnt Uchermann, special advisor to the Health Authority of Northern Norway informed the audience about the forthcoming conference to take place in Tromsø on 11-12 November. The conference will be dedicated to history and experiences of cooperation between Northern Norway and Northwest Russian regions in the social and healthcare sector in the last 12 years. The conference is expected to gather about 60-70 participants. Mr. Arnt Uchermann welcomed the participants of the meeting to the conference.

Mr. Göran Carlsson expressed Sweden's support to the new JWGHS Cooperation Programme 2012-2015. He pointed out that Sweden offers support to the Programme's three sub-programmes (CYAR, TB, and HIVAIDS). HIV and MDR-TB response is seen by the Swedish Foreign Minister as a priority in the Barents social and healthcare cooperation. Besides, the issue of promoting health, social wellbeing and rights of

children and youth is becoming increasingly important. Cooperation among regional structures is seen as a key to success (JWGHS/NDPHS/CBSS/AC). The Swedish region of Norrbotten takes over the chairmanship in the Barents Regional Council. The level of Swedish regional contribution to collaboration in the area of our WG may be affected by this new role.

Sweden financially supports the position of a financing advisor at the International Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes. The potential of Ms Irina Nazarova's services should be made known to groups with project interests within and outside the Barents Region.

Mr. Göran Carlsson thanked Finland and Komi Republic for the good chairmanship in the JWGHS and wished success to Norway and Karelia Republic.

Ms. Vibeke Gundersen, senior advisor from the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, informed that Norway had announced funding through the NDPHS project pipeline for Norwegian-Russian projects in the social and healthcare sector. The deadline for applications would be on 17 October. She reminded that Norway takes over the chairmanship in the Barents Euro Arctic Council as well, which is open for synergies. A special emphasis will be placed on coordination among different regional structures and bodies.

Ms. Else Andersen, assistant Director General of the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, reiterated that Norway's interest is coordination of cooperation among various structures with special focus on preventive activities and primary care-specialist care interaction, where the ultimate goal would be preventing from falling ill.

Ms Outi Karvonen wondered if a partner from a third country joins a Norwegian-Russian project, should it bring its own money. Ms. Outi Karvonen's question was connected to a concrete proposal of conducting a conference on MDR TB problems in St-Petersburg. The conference could be organized within a partnership of countries.

Ms. Vibeke Gundersen commented that the primary focus of a project funded by the programme should be on the Russian – Norwegian collaboration.

11. Presentation of the new Co-operation Programme on Health and related Social Issues in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region for 2012-2015

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi reminded that the new structure of the Cooperation Programme was discussed in autumn 2010, feedback and opinions collected, and then again discussed at the previous meeting of the JWGHS in March 2011. The counterparts were asked to consider their financial and human resources when proposing activities for the new Cooperation Programme. Yet, space should be left for further cooperation possibilities. Following intense correspondence by email in April-May a draft of the Cooperation Programme was designed, with considerable input from Norway. The new Programme was constructed on the basis of the previous Programme but made more concise.

The 2012-2015 Cooperation Programme was then overlooked chapter by chapter with comments from Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi and questions from the participants. The Cooperation Programme contains three sub-

programmes: Barents HIV/AIDS Programme, Children and Youth at Risk, and Barents TB Programme. As an annex, the Programme has a document called "Recommendations and lessons learnt". As two sub-programmes - Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and the Children and Youth at Risk Sub-Programme had collected much information and experiences, such were summarized in a short paper. The final version of the "Recommendations and lessons learnt" will be distributed a bit later, as it will take into account the recent evaluation of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme. This paper may be useful later in developing new programmes.

The Cooperation Programme was approved unanimously.

12. Handover of the JWGHS chairmanship to Norway/Republic of Karelia

Ms. Else Andersen noted that the new Cooperation Programme is a very good starting point for the chairmanship by Norway and Karelia.

Ms. Vibeke Gundersen said that preliminary discussions between Norway and the Republic of Karelia had already been held about the chairmanship. The first meeting of the JWGHS in 2012 will be hosted by Norway, and the time and place will be advised later.

13. Any other business

With relation to the 2003 Kirkenes Declaration of Prime Ministers and its statement about stabilization of the TB situation in the Barents Region by the year 2013, a question was raised about writing a special report for the 2013 meeting of Prime Ministers about the TB situation, response measures undertaken and achievements made in the Barents Region in the last decade (2003-2011). Besides, it is important to outline needs and recommendations for future in terms of controlling the TB situation. Such report should have impact both from specialists and politicians. The question about the report would be taken up at the next meeting of the Barents TB Programme's Steering Committee on 19.10.2011. It is advisable to have the draft of the report prepared by the next JWGHS meeting.

14. Next meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by Norway. The time and place will be communicated separately.

15. Closing of the meeting

Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi declared the meeting closed.