



## **Report of the Joint Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS) for 2010–2011**

### **1. Chairmanship**

The Chairmanship was shared between Finland and the Republic of Komi during 2010–2011. (Mr. Olli Kuukasjärvi, Ministerial adviser of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, and Mr. Mikhail Murashko, Minister of Health and Social Development of Komi Republic / Ms Evgenia Kotova, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development of Komi Republic).

### **2. Meetings during 2010–2011**

The JWGHS had one meeting during 2010 and two meetings in 2011. In 2010 the meeting was held on 22 September 2010 in Syktyvkar, Komi Republic, in 2011 the meetings were on 3 March 2011 in St. Petersburg (Consulate General of Finland) and on 12 October 2011 in Syktyvkar.

### **3. Members of the JWGHS**

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

### **4. Activities**

Activities have been based on the Barents Co-operation Programme 2008-2011. The scope and priorities of the programme have been

- the prevention and combat of communicable diseases
- prevention of lifestyle-related health and social problems, and support to children and youth at risk, and
- development of primary healthcare, public health and social services.

The Barents Co-operation Programme has worked through three programmes during the reporting period. The Working Group has also during 2011 prepared the new Cooperation Programme on Health and Social Issues for 2012 – 2015. The three programmes under the cooperation programme and their activities will be described as follows.

## 5. Programme on HIV/AIDS in the Barents Region

The Barents HIV/AIDS Programme aims at strengthening the national capacity to respond to the HIV epidemic. The objectives are to improve the situation among vulnerable groups.

This programme was first established in 2005 and then prolonged for 2008 – 2011. Chair is Ms Evgenia Kotova, Deputy Minister of Health from the Republic of Komi. Finland finances the programme coordinator.

An evaluation of the Programme was carried out in June–September 2011 by professor Pauli Leinikki. In his report he described the main achievements of the Programme as follows:

- Access to most at risk populations has been established in sites where low threshold centres and outreach work have been implemented, with an impact on the spread of the disease and corresponding social and medical consequences.
- Civil society and NGOs have been involved.
- Training of experts has modified attitudes more favourable towards vulnerable populations and given tools to work with them.
- The need for coordinating activities has been met.
- Planning processes for programs and projects have been improved (LFA, training).

The evaluator gives the following recommendations:

- In the field of the development of technical capacity:
  - a. Platform for international collaboration should be maintained and developed further. Here, coordination and regular meetings of the steering committee are the most important tools. Also the link with the Northern Dimension Partnership should be maintained. Activities should include high level training in the forms of seminars, exchange visits and collaboration in working with media and involving NGOs.
  - b. Development of data exchange between sectors.
  - c. Projects supporting independent academic research and networking of academic institutions should be promoted.
  - d. Dialogue concerning legal and economic issues should be continued and promoted.
  - e. Training on project and programme planning (e.g. by Logical Framework Approach) should be continued.
- Concerning prevention and surveillance:
  - f. Support to easy access low-threshold centres and outreach activities should be extended to meet the challenges that the widening epidemic will pose in the near future.
  - g. Support to peer training and voluntary work should be continued and promoted.
  - h. Promotion of anonymous testing with easy access and quick results should be promoted. Linking such activities with research should be encouraged to find the optimal algorithms and best access to at-risk populations.

Recommendations are given also to learn from each other in implementation of anti-retroviral drug therapy, as well as to develop projects in order to remove discrimination and stigma of HIV-infected people. It is emphasized that inter-sectoral coordination is becoming more and more important and that the Steering Committee of the Programme has an important role in promoting

it.

The Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme had two meetings in 2010: the first in April in Ivalo, Finnish Lapland; the second in Murmansk in November 2010 in connection with the closing seminar of the pilot project of the Programme which developed low threshold services for drug users in order to prevent HIV in Murmansk Region.

The Steering Committee met in May 2011 in Petrozavodsk in order to discuss the current situation of HIV as well as of co-infection of HIV and tuberculosis. The second meeting of the Steering Committee is planned to take place in Syktyvkar in November 2011.

At present there are 12 ongoing projects under the umbrella of the Barents HIV/AIDS programme, and 5 projects under consideration. All these projects are also considered to be under the umbrella of the NDPHS Expert Group on HIV/AIDS and Associated Infections.

The Steering Committee of the Programme keeps a close contact with the NDPHS and with the new Barents Tuberculosis Programme.

## **6. Tuberculosis Programme; follow-up of the Kirkenes declaration 2003**

The JWGHS has continued its 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.

In order to coordinate the efforts against tuberculosis in the region, planning of the Barents Tuberculosis programme was implemented during 2010. It was considered important that the work should be done in co-operation with the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) and its relevant Expert Groups; already ongoing international co-operation should be taken into account. The first planning meeting was organised in April in Archangelsk in collaboration with the Prison Health Expert Group of NDPHS. This was followed by a planning workshop using Logical Framework Approach in Leningrad Region, June 2010.

The overall objectives of the programme were defined to be

- The economic burden on the society is decreased
- Improved demographic situation
- Reduced amount of preventable deaths
- The burden of TB/HIV reduced
- Tolerant relationship to people with TB and HIV+TB
- Spread of MDR /XDR TB stopped

The purpose of the programme is strengthening the fight against TB and TB+HIV in the Barents Region through Barents cooperation.

Expected results corresponding to the working areas/components of the programme are as follows:

1. Increased exchange of experiences and collaboration between the countries of Barents Region
2. Strengthened prevention of TB and TB/HIV / co-infection cases

3. Effective Infection control measures up to the minimum acceptable level
4. Early / timely and accurate diagnosis of TB and MDR-TB
5. Improved effectiveness of TB and TB/HIV treatment
6. Improved capacity of service providers
7. Active involvement of the society and governments in stopping TB
8. Functioning TB policies and collaboration between TB and HIV/AIDS programmes, including penitentiary system

The JWGHS meeting approved the Tuberculosis Programme in September 2010 and decided to create a steering committee for it. The first Steering Committee meeting was organised in May 2011 in St. Petersburg. Dr. Alevtina Grishko from the Federal Research Institute for Tuberculosis and Lung diseases (St. Petersburg) was elected the chairperson. Prof. Andrey Maryandyshev from Northern State Medical University, Archangelsk, was chosen to be the Coordinator of the Russian side and Executive Secretary of the Steering Committee. Dr. Zaza Tsereteli, International Technical Advisor of the Expert Group on Primary Health and Prison Health Systems, was to be the other Coordinator. The second meeting of the Steering Committee took place on 19 October, 2011.

## **7. Programme on Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents Region (CYAR)**

The CYAR programme for 2008 - 2012 aims at strengthening the competence among the regional and local social administrations and at stimulating inter-agency co-operation in the Barents Region, in order to assist children and youth at risk. Programme has had four key activity areas:

1. Situation review in the Barents region - through annual regional reports and Barents meetings
2. Annual conference of experts on issues related to children and youth at risk
3. Dissemination of knowledge about methods of working with children and youth at risk. Four selected subprogrammes targeted at children and youth at risk are implemented:
  - Incredible years (focusing on children with behaviour problems)
  - Family group conferences
  - Aggression replacement training (ART) and Family ART
  - Restorative justice - intermediary committees (for minor offenders)
4. Exchange of information; design of a web-site for CYAR and International Barents Secretariat.

The chair of the CYAR Steering Committee is Mr. Pål Christian Bergstrøm, Director of Bufetat (Children, Youth & Family Department) Region Nord, Norway. For the years 2008-2012 the CYAR programme has been allocated approximately 1 million euro through the NDPHS/Norway.

The Steering Committee had two meetings in 2010, in April 2010 in Syktyvkar and November 2010 in Petrozavodsk. In 2011 the Steering Committee has met in May in Tromsø and in December in Murmansk. In addition to the projects funded by CYAR the Steering Committee coordinates also a large bulk of other related (Norwegian-Russian) work in the Barents region.

Over large number of seminars, workshops or meetings addressing, in particular, the four themes outlined in the activity area 3 were organised in 2010-11. Meetings with NDPHS EG on prison health have been held: a decision on regular participation in the NDPHS prison health EG meetings for sharing knowledge and information on related issues as been made. Representatives of the CYAR Programme attended a meeting of the expert group for Cooperation on Children at Risk of the CBSS held in Berlin in September 2011.

The Ministries of Justice of Russia and Norway have signed a co-operation programme for 2010-2012 in the field of children and youth at risk in the regions of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Karelia and Komi. A separate protocol on co-operation between Norway and Archangelsk Oblast on minor offenders has been signed for 2010-2012 in September 2010. A multi-agency Norwegian-Murmansk project partnership 2010-12 has also been continued by a jointly signed protocol in November 2010. One of the key objectives in this work is to implement restorative justice or court ruled mediation in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, Russian Federation.

In September 2011 a conference on alternative sanctions for criminal youth was organised in Oslo. Meetings with the Russian Ombudsman for Children Mr. Pavel Astahov have been arranged, and his evaluation on CYAR work is very positive.

The main activity in 2011 was the implementation of the CYAR Programme Support Project 2010-2012. This consists of dissemination of four selected evidence-based methods for children and youth at risk, with competence building in all Russian regions under the direct supervision of the SC. CYAR has also prepared the continuation of the programme during the upcoming Cooperation Programme period 2012-15. Applications to various funding programmes (NDPHS, ENPI Kolarctic) in order to continue and enlarge the CYAR programme activities have been made.

### **Co-operation with the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being**

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council is a Partner of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS). The Barents co-operation programme in the field of health and social issues is adapted to the NDPHS priorities. Finland as the co-chair of the NDPHS has made presentations on recent developments in the NDPHS in all three Barents meetings during the chairmanship. The participants of the Committee of Senior Representatives of the NDPHDS have been informed on the recent developments in JWGHS on continuous basis.