

E-health technology for better health care in the Barents region

Barents e-health expert meeting 8 December 2020 hosted by Chair of the Barents Euro Arctic Council Norway and Chair of Barents Regional Council Västerbotten

Remarks by Bjorn Inge Moe – Chair Troms and Finnmark County Government

Dear distinguished participants,

The polar night is embracing us, and the sun has already some time ago shed its last rays in twenty twenty, marking the end of a very special year for all of us. Who would have thought that questions surrounding health and health services would bring with it regulations and limitations on personal freedom, not seen since the outbreak of the second world war.

Health being a priority for both the national Norwegian Chairmanship and Vasterbotten Regional Chairmanship, has proven to be extremely timely. I would also like to thank Murmansk for taking the initiative to launch a dialogue on Covid among regions of the Barents co-operation.

The Barents region, is the region with by far the most people in an Arctic context. It is also the region with developed societies. The region is however still very sparsely populated, with large distances. In geographic terms the Barents region equals the combined area of France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, with approximately 5 million people.

With such distances, and bearing in mind that many use traditional livelihood, e-health is a crucial contributor to the continued settlement here in the north. The university hospital of North Norway has co-operated with different Barents regions already for a long time.

The co-operation has been very useful as it has allowed for the healing of patients on site and to better and faster evaluate the need for evacuation. A very good example of the usefulness of cross border co-operation. Together we are stronger, together we are better able to develop our respective societies. I am sure that Sergei who will speak after me, will testify to that. Another good example would be that video consultations undoubtedly is very useful in a pandemic context.

However, and using telemedicine as an example, such co-operation demands infrastructure. Here we still have a way to go in ensuring inruptable connections.

On an end note, let me thank you, the organizers, for organizing this meeting, I look very much forward to learn how we can move the e-health co-operation forward, ensuring the livelihood in the European part of the Arctic.

Thank you