

Event: 10th JMC Meeting of the Kolarctic CBC 2014–2020 Programme

Date: 17th December 2020 (10:00 – 14:00 Finnish time)

Location: Online, using conference tool Microsoft Teams.

Language: The meeting was held in English.

PARTICIPANTS OF THE MEETING

Members and deputy members

Finland

Tuulia Väliheikki, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment

Jatta Jämsen, Ministry for Foreign Affairs (joined 12:43)

Leniitta Soini Billstam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (joined 10:20)

Leena Ruokanen, Lapland Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment

Timo Rautajoki, Lapland Chamber of Commerce

Norway

Lisbeth Nylund, Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

Snøfrid Emterud, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (10:15 – 11:43 and 13:00 →)

Ivar Prestbakmo, Troms and Finnmark County Council

Tarjei Jensen Bech, Troms and Finnmark County Council

Kari Anne Bøkestad Andreassen, Nordland County Council

Russia

Vsevolod Vovchenko, Ministry of Economic Development

Alla Agapova, Ministry of Economic Development

Denis Moskalenko, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Ilya Ostapchuk, Murmansk Region

Sergey Kungurtsev, Nenets Autonomous District

Elena Demidova, Arkhangelsk Region

Maria Kropacheva, Arkhangelsk Region (joined 13:50)

Sweden

Isabella Palomba Rydén, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

Bror Martin Karlsson, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Nils-Olov Lindfors, Region Norrbotten (joined 10:40)

Malin Ylinenpää, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Luleå office

Karin Börjesson, County Administrative Board of Norrbotten

Other participants

Simona Pohlova, EC, DG REGIO
Maria Astakhova, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
Iveta Puzo, TESIM
Riikka Oittinen, MA
Laura Mäki, MA
Katri Niska-Honkonen, MA
Svetlana Peltoperä, MA
Maiju Jolma-Taylor, MA (joined 12:45)
Marjaana Lahdenranta, Secretary of the Meeting, MA
Marita Thelin, Swedish BO
Linda Mosand, Norwegian BO
Jan M. Solstad, Norwegian BO
Olga Klisheva, Russian BO in Arkhangelsk
Kari Rouvinen, Audit Authority (joined 13:35 for agenda point 6)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Thursday, 17.12.2020

1. Opening of the meeting, approval of the agenda of the meeting

The Chair of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) Mr Vsevolod Vovchenko opened the meeting **at 10:00** Finnish time. The participants of the meeting and the changes to the list of JMC Members and Deputy Members were notified.

Decision

Participants of the meeting were notified and quorum was established. The changes in the list of JMC Members and Deputy Members were noted.

It was agreed that in the Agenda point 6. Any other business the Audit Authority (AA) will give an overview on the ongoing project sample checks and system audit. Meeting agenda was approved with this addition.

2. State of Play of the Kolarctic CBC 2014–2020 Programme

Riikka Oittinen (Programme Manager, MA) presented the status of contracting and launching micro projects approved in the 4th Call for Proposals (**Annex 1**).

Some micro-projects have intentionally delayed their start, waiting for the Covid-19 related lockdown to be over. A micro-project KO 5008 "EXcavator Pro in Ecological ResToration" has expressed a wish to postpone the project start until September 2021. The JMC considered late start acceptable, in case the projects will have enough time for implementation.

An approved, but not yet contracted micro-project KO 5109 "International School for Eco-Volunteers" has faced problems in its start. It has participants from three countries, and the participants from Finland and Norway are withdrawing their participation in the project.

Riikka Oittinen presented the updates to the list of Addendums made to the Grant Contracts (**Annex 2**). So far two Addendums are made to extend the project's implementation period, other Addendums are made for other reasons.

Katri Niska-Honkonen, (Financial Manager, MA) presented the financial state of play of the Programme, including commitments, payments to the projects, and the status of the Technical Assistance (TA) budget (**Annex 3**).

The presentation also included information on the new practice of European banks to charge negative interest from their clients. Starting from January 2021, the bank where the Regional Council of Lapland has its accounts, will charge a 0,5% interest from the customers so that for example a deposit of 5 M EUR will cause a 2000 EUR cost per month. On the Kolarctic CBC related accounts of the Regional Council of Lapland there is now ca. 12,5 M EUR. The cost is eligible in the TA, and it will put a pressure on the TA budget. The Regional Council of Lapland is working on a solution to minimize the effects of this new practice of the bank. The Managing Authority will approach the Russian National Authority with a letter concerning the effect of the negative interest to the Russian national co-financing.

Laura Mäki (CBC Expert, MA), gave a presentation on monitoring results (**Annex 4**). The MA is continuing a review of the indicators and their interpretation, so that towards the end of the programme the indicator information is increasingly appropriate.

The MA, in cooperation with the Russian Branch Office, has carried out a survey on the effects of Covid-19 to the Kolarctic CBC projects. Laura Mäki presented the results of the survey (**Annex 5**). A question arised if there are partners who have withdrawn from projects because of the COVID-19, but in Kolarctic CBC projects there are none.

Joonas Holopainen (CBC Coordinator, MA) is carrying out a Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) for projects. Riikka Oittinen presented the basic information and status of the ROM exercise (**Annex 6**). Riikka Oittinen also stated that since the MA is approaching the projects e.g. via ROM exercise and the COVID-19 survey, the MA does not plan to implement a mid-term evaluation of the Programme. This is also justified by the fact that there are no Calls for Proposals left, so there would be no chance to react to results of a mid-term evaluation.

Each Branch Office of the Programme presented an overview on the Branch Offices' work.

Marita Thelin, Advisor, BO Sweden told about some personnel changes in the Swedish BO. The BO has given tailor-made consultations to potential applicants, coordinated the work of the Regional Assessment Group (RAG) in Sweden, and followed the work of the ongoing projects. Recently it has participated in the work related to the preparation of the next programme period, including e.g. stakeholder consultations in Sweden.

Jan M. Solstad, Programme Coordinator, BO Norway presented first the basic information about the location and role of the Norwegian BO. The work of the Norwegian BO has consisted of the same elements as that of the Swedish BO. The Norwegian BO has participated in various cooperation networks and events, and Mr Solstad gave an overview of them. During the 4th Call for Proposals, the BO arranged an information event in Bodö.

Olga Klisheva, Coordinator for the Arkhangelsk region and Nenets Autonomous District told that the work of the Russian BO has been similar to the BO:s presented earlier. This year, the Russian BO has participated in some events and meetings of the ongoing projects held online, and e.g. wrote one more "Project of the Month" –article to the kolarctic.info website. The Russian BO has maintained the Russian language version of the kolarctic.info

website. The preparations of the next programme period have brought the Russian BO the task of collecting data of their region, to be used for the territorial analysis.

Decision:

The information was noted by the JMC.

The JMC stated that the request from micro-project KO 5008 to postpone their project start until autumn 2021 is well justified. This applies to cases where the delay is necessary for the good implementation of the project, and there is sufficient time left for project implementation.

The JMC decided that a change of Finnish and Norwegian partners in project KO 5109 "International School for Eco-Volunteers" has such effects on the project that it requires approval of the JMC.

It was decided that the MA updates the given presentation with the information on the projects' spending level and annexes the updated presentation to the meeting Minutes. In the next JMC meeting, the project level information will also be shared.

Denis Moskalenko and Simona Pohlova briefly clarified the situation of the modification of the Financing Agreement, according to the modifications made to the Implementing Regulation, to mitigate the effects of the pandemic to the implementation of the projects and the Programme.

3. Presentation and preliminary discussion of the Annual Report 2019-2020

The MA and the BO:s have prepared a draft for annual report 2019-2020. Riikka Oittinen gave a presentation on the Technical Part of the Annual Report (**Annex 7**), and Katri Niska-Honkonen gave a presentation on the Financial Part of the Annual Report (**Annex 8**). The MA and BOs will finalize the Annual Report 2019-2020 (Technical Part and Financial Part) according to the JMC comments, and it will be approved by the JMC in a Written Procedure in January 2021 and submitted with its Annexes to the European Commission by February 15, 2021.

Decision:

The JMC approved the draft for Annual Report to be finalized, with some corrections which were proposed and approved during the discussion:

- Page 37-38 the number of project partners from Nenets Autonomous district will be checked and corrected.
- Pages 30, 31 and 50: The Norwegian NA in cooperation with the Norwegian BO will send to the MA a proposal for a new formulation of the texts.

Written procedure for the approval of the document will be launched in the second half of January 2021.

4. Update information on the Arctic Cooperation.

Riikka Oittinen gave an overview on The Arctic Cooperation. The Arctic Programmes have begun to work on a concept paper on the experience gained from the cooperation and the added value it brings. The JMC gave generally positive comments to the paper.

Decision:

Information was noted by the JMC. The JMC proposed to notice in the Concept the added value brought by the fact that it's cooperation between different types of programmes, and to include other Arctic networks, such as Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation and the Northern Dimension.

5. Update information on the Programming Process

Riikka Oittinen gave an overview presentation on the stage of the programming process and expected timetables (**Annex 9**). Simona Pohlova shared information on the status of the preparation of the EU regulation and the Financing Agreement between European Union and the Russian Federation.

Decision:

The information was noted by the JMC

6. Any other business

The Audit Authority of the programme is carrying out a sample check of the projects, and a system audit in Finland, Sweden and Russia. Kari Rouvinen representing the Audit Authority, gave an overview of the current situation of the procedure.

Decision:

The information from the AA was notified by the JMC.

7. Next meeting

Next meeting will be held on the 3rd June, 2021. The assumption is that it is online, but a face to face meeting will be welcome if the situation allows. In 2021, it will be Norway's turn to chair the JMC.

8. Closing of the meeting

The chair closed the meeting at 14:02 Finnish time.

Vsevolod Vovchenko
Chair of the JMC

Marjaana Lahdenranta
Secretary of the meeting

List of Annexes:

- Annex 1** Contracting situation 17.12.2020 (Riikka)
- Annex 2** Addendums made to the Grant Contracts (situation of 17.12.2020; Riikka)
- Annex 3** Financial state of play of the Programme (Katri)
- Annex 4** Monitoring and evaluation results (Laura)
- Annex 5** Survey on the effects on COVID-19 (Laura)
- Annex 6** ROM exercise for projects (Riikka)
- Annex 7** Presentation on the Technical Part of the Annual Report 2019-2020 (Riikka)
- Annex 8** Presentation on the Financial Part of the Annual Report 2019-2020 (Katri)
- Annex 9** Kolarctic 2021-2027 programming process (Riikka)