

4th meeting of the Programming Committee (PC) of Kolarctic 2021-2027 Programme

Date and time: Wednesday, 17 February 2021, 10.00 – 14.00 (Finnish time)

Location: Teams meeting hosted by the Kolarctic CBC 2014-2020 MA

Language: English

Delivery to the Members and Deputy Members of the Committee

(X= present):

(X) Tuulia Väliheikki	(-) Helinä Yli-Knuutila
(X) Jatta Jämsen	(-) Leniitta Soini-Billstam
(X) Päivi Ekdahl (left after topic 7)	(-) Mervi Nikander Mika Riipi
(-) Timo Jokelainen	(-) Jaakko Ylinampa
(X) Lisbeth Nylund	(X) Jan Edøy
(X) Snøfrid Emterud	(-) Marte Lauvhjell
(X) Natalia Z. Karlsen	(X) Silje Dalehaug
(X) Gunnhild Aasmoe	(X) Eilen W B Zakariassen
(X) Vsevolod Vovchenko	(-) Alla Agapova
(X) Igor Kapyrin (from topic 2)	(X) Denis Moskalenko
(X) Ilya Ostapchuk	(-) Olga Yumatova
(X) Sergey Kungurtsev	(-) Natalia Lysak
(-) Elena Demidova	(X) Maria Kropacheva
(X) Isabella Palomba Rydén	(-) Maria M Eriksson
(-) Bror Martin Karlsson	(-) Kasper Andersson
(X) Ylva Sardén	
(X) Susanne Friberg	(-) Anna Degerman

Kolarctic CBC 2014-2020 Managing Authority:

(x) Riikka Oittinen
(x) Marjaana Lahdenranta
(x) Laura Mäki
(x) Joonas Holopainen
(x) Maiju Jolma-Taylor
(x) Katri Niska-Honkonen
(x) Svetlana Peltoperä

Kolarctic CBC 2014-2020 Branch Offices:

(x) Julia Korshunova
(x) Olga Klisheva
(x) Linda Mosand
(x) Jan Martin Solstad
(x) Marita Thelin

European Commission:

(x) Simona Pohlova
(x) Filip Chybalski

TESIM:

(x) Iveta Puzo

Other observers:

(x) Maria Astakhova – Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

(x) Gisle Eriksen – Troms and Finnmark County Council – Secretariat for Norwegian Regional High North Forum

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

1. Opening of the meeting, identification of those present, approval of the agenda of the meeting

The Chair Lisbeth Nylund opened the meeting at 10.02 Finnish time. The heads of the delegations presented the meeting participants from each country and the changes in the list of the Members and Deputy Members of the Kolarctic 2021-2027 Programming Committee (PC) were presented.

Decision:

Participants of the meeting were notified and the quorum was established. Changes in the list of members and deputy members of the Kolarctic 2021-2027 PC were noted. Meeting agenda was approved.

2. State of play of the programming process

Simona Pohlova (EC) gave an overview of the preparation of EU Regulation and the Financing Agreement between the European Commission and the Russian Federation, and an update on the financial framework process.

The legal framework was politically agreed in December 2020, and now the Commission and Member States are fine-tuning the annexes of the Interreg Regulations. It is expected that the package should entry into force before the summer break, as the European Parliament is voting on it in June, or July latest. The ERDF allocations for each Member State have now been confirmed for both cross-border and transnational cooperation, and communicated to the Member States. The Member States are asked to communicate to the Commission their decisions by 5 March 2021 on distribution of funding between different programmes, as well as to confirm the programmes' geographies, as proposed by the programming committees. The partner countries will be shortly asked, too, to confirm the proposed geography for the programmes they participate in, and, as for the Russian Federation, about their intentions to provide their own financial contribution to the future programmes. The preliminary table of contents of the Financing Agreement has been on the commenting round and feedback has been gathered.

Denis Moskalenko (RU MFA) stressed the need to start the negotiation process of the Financing Agreement as soon as possible as well as the interest of the Russian Federation to work on it article by article starting with the most important aspects.

Maiju Jolma-Taylor (MA) presented the results of the open survey and gave an overview on the stakeholder consultations held so far (**Annex 1**). The online survey gathered views from 290 respondents. The Task Force of the Kolarctic 2021-2027 programming made a decision in December 2020 to conduct the stakeholder consultations separately in each country. The format of the consultation was not jointly decided, each region was free to execute them as deemed most relevant. However, the Task Force used similar set of questions to collect the feedback. In North Norway, a webinar together with the Interreg Aurora and Northern Periphery and Arctic Programmes were held. In Norrbotten, stakeholder interviews were conducted. A series of sector specific online discussions were run in Lapland. In Russian regions written contributions were requested from main stakeholders followed by joint webinar.

Riikka Oittinen (MA) gave an overview on the status of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). One offer was received in the tendering for the SEA for Finland, Sweden and Norway by a Swedish company Anthesis Envenco AB. The MA together with other programmes involved has assessed the competence of the company to conduct the SEA, and the procurement decision is made. Negotiations have started with the service provider. The PC members are welcome to participate the kick-off meeting of the SEA, or give written input for the kick-off, or during the process. The tendering process for the SEA for the Russian programme area continues as the only offer received left Kolarctic with certain hesitation on the offerer's competence concerning Kolarctic Programme area in Russia.

Vsevolod Vovchenko (RU NA) inquired whether the deadline of the SEA report could be postponed. According to Simona Pohlova (EC), the official handover of the Programme document should include the final SEA report, but the Commission is willing to have a preliminary look at the draft programme even if the SEA process is not finalised.

Decision:

Information was noted and discussed by the PC. The discussion will continue in the next meeting.

3. Presentation of the draft Territorial Analysis

Maiju Jolma-Taylor (MA) gave a presentation on the first chapter of the draft Territorial Analysis, concentrating on the general characteristics of the Programme area (**Annex 2**). The Task Force members have collected inputs from each region for the Territorial Analysis. As the MA has not been able to compile the material and feedback received from the Task Force for the Territorial Analysis earlier, the PC Members have not had sufficient time to get acquainted with the material for comments.

Decision:

The PC decided to give feedback and comments to the draft Territorial Analysis in a Written Procedure. The first full draft Territorial Analysis is earlier agreed to be delivered to the PC by the end of February, which in the light of this decision will mean launching the Written Procedure.

4. Decision on including into the programme the possibility to finance Large Infrastructure projects (LIPs)

The PC discussed inclusion of LIPs in the programme, on the basis of the background material prepared by the MA. The background material contained information on the nature, role, opportunities and impacts of LIPs, as well as lessons learned from previous LIPs (**Annex 3**).

Vsevolod Vovchenko welcomed the opportunity to have LIPs in the forthcoming programme period 2021-2027, as they have had great significance during previous programmes. Russian regions had collected few concrete suggestions for the future LIPs.

Tuulia Väliheikki (FI NA) told that discussions and consultations on LIPs have been held with different authorities in Finland. Very needed and important LIPs related to road and border-crossing infrastructure have been implemented in the last two previous programme periods. Need for the investment projects is recognised, but investments could also be implemented without LIP component.

Isabella Palomba Rydén (SE NA) stated the result of the internal discussion held in Sweden. The LIP component is seen more suitable to two country programmes and as there are investment possibilities within regular projects, there is no need to include LIPs in the upcoming programme.

Jan Edøy (NO NA) told that Norway is not in favour of including LIPs in the Kolarctic 2021-2027 programme document.

Simona Pohlova reminded that investments related to the border-crossing management and infrastructure should fall under ISO 2 *Safer and secure Europe and its neighbourhood*, which has a ceiling of 5% from the EU share of the programme funding. Ms Pohlova also re-capped that indicative list of LIPs should be submitted together with the Financing Agreement, thus the discussion on whether LIPs are included or not in the programme should take place at the earliest possible time.

The PC discussed the possibility of a preliminary decision to not to include LIPs to the programme, and leave the option open to revise the need on later stage.

Decision:

Preliminary views on LIPs were discussed and no common standing was found. It was decided that the preliminary decision not to include/ to include LIPs in the programme will be made in the next ordinary PC meeting. This gives the PC Members time to assess how investment components in regular projects could have mutual benefits, and how already identified areas of infrastructure development could be feasible in regular projects.

5. Decision on the Policy Objectives (PO) and Interreg Specific Objectives (ISO) to be selected for the programme

The list of the Political Objectives (PO) and two Interreg Specific Objectives (ISO) offered by the European Commission, together with possible cooperation actions under each objective, as outlined in the European Commission's orientation paper on Interreg NEXT between Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia, was presented to the PC. PO2 A *greener low-carbon Europe* is going to be mandatory for all programmes, for which, together with a maximum of two other POs, shall be allocated as minimum 60% of ERDF financing altogether. For external border programmes ISOs are not mandatory, though highly recommended by the Commission. The maximum ERDF allocation for ISO1 is 20% and for ISO2 5%.

Laura Mäki (MA) made a presentation on the updated arctic strategies (**Annex 4**).

The PC had the first round of discussion on the POs and their selection. PO1 was seen as a possibility for Norway, Russia and Sweden. PO2 is the mandatory objective which will in any case be selected. PO3 was seen as interesting for Russia. Sweden and Norway recognised the opportunities under PO4. ISO1 was lifted to discussion by Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Decision:

It was decided that the discussion on the Policy Objective selection will continue in the additional meeting which will be scheduled for March.

6. Overview on the Arctic Cooperation

Riikka Oittinen gave an overview on the stage of the Arctic Cooperation. The Programmes meet on two-week basis, and share information related to the programming process. Later this spring, the meetings will be focusing for example on coordination of ISO1 among the Arctic Programmes.

Decision:

Information was noted by the PC.

7. Coordination of the preparation with other programmes

Riikka Oittinen reported on the coordination measures that have been taken between different programmes and with support of TESIM and Interact. Kolarctic, Karelia and SEFR programmes have a Coordination Group consisting of the national level representatives of the PCs, and the Managing Authorities. In the latest meeting of the Group, liabilities of the participating countries, management structures of the programmes and communication and visibility alignments were preliminarily discussed. Coordination and cooperation has widened to Interreg Central-Baltic Programme, with which cooperation on SEA process, and discussions on Monitoring System for the new programme have taken place. Interact and TESIM have already held many relevant events to support the programming process, and later this spring

there are several additional events planned for the topics relevant for further programming.

Decision:

Information was noted by the PC.

8. Any other business

Discussion on the need to update the preliminary timetable for programming was held.


9. Next meeting

The next meeting will be an additional meeting scheduled by the MA for the most convenient time for as many PC members as possible in March.

10. Closing of the meeting

The chair closed the meeting at 14.19 (Finnish time).

Lisbeth Nylund
Lisbeth Nylund
Chair of the meeting
Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation



Maiju Jolma-Taylor
Secretary of the meeting
Kolarctic CBC 2014–2020 MA

List of Annexes:

- Annex 1** Results of the open survey and the stakeholder consultations (Maiju Jolma-Taylor)
- Annex 2** Presentation on the draft Territorial Analysis – general characteristics chapter (Maiju Jolma-Taylor)
- Annex 3** LIP background document
- Annex 4** Overview of the updates in the Arctic policies and strategies (Laura Mäki)