Evaluation of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme 2007-2013

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## Contents

Executive Summary ......................................................................................................................... 4

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 10

2. Setting the scene: ENPI CBC ...................................................................................................... 11
   2.1. European transboundary co-operation ................................................................................. 11
   2.2. Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007-2013 Programme ........................................................................ 12

3. Evaluation framework and approach ....................................................................................... 14
   3.1. Overall aims and objectives ................................................................................................. 14
   3.2. Methodological approach ................................................................................................... 15

4. Overview of the Programme area ............................................................................................. 17
   4.1. Regional structure and environment ..................................................................................... 17
   4.2. Economic performance ....................................................................................................... 18
   4.3. Population development ...................................................................................................... 18
   4.4. Labour market .................................................................................................................... 20

5. Analysis of Programme performance ....................................................................................... 21
   5.1. The outputs and achieved objectives .................................................................................... 21
        technical assistance frame excluded .................................................................................... 21
   5.2. Programme management expectations versus actual performance .................................... 24
   5.3. Management of the Programme .......................................................................................... 27
        5.3.1. Financial and human resources ..................................................................................... 29
        5.3.2. Internal communication & external dissemination ........................................................... 32
        5.3.3. Project calls and selection phase ..................................................................................... 35
        5.3.4. Monitoring and control at the Programme level ............................................................... 40
   5.4 Conclusions and recommendations on Programme performance and management .......... 47

6. Managing the projects ................................................................................................................. 50
   6.1. Project calls and selection phase ......................................................................................... 50
   6.2. Project implementation ......................................................................................................... 52
   6.3. Case projects ....................................................................................................................... 55
   6.4. Conclusions and recommendations on project analysis .................................................... 71
Executive Summary

Introduction
The overall aim of the Kolarctic Programme is to reduce the peripherality of the countries’ border regions and problems related to the periphery as well as to promote multilateral cross-border cooperation. The Programme is helping the Programme regions to develop their cross-border economic, social and environmental potential, which shall be achieved by supporting innovative cross-border activities, accessibility, and sustainable development of natural resources, communities and cultural heritage. The Programme is divided into three priorities:

1. Economic and social development
2. Common challenges
3. People-to-people cooperation and identity building

This mid-term evaluation of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007-2013 Programme provides support for the implementation and management of the ongoing Programme and information for the formulation of the new Kolarctic CBC 2014-2020 Programme. The evaluation process has addressed the appropriateness of the institutional arrangements in place for the management, coordination and implementation of the Programme. The evaluation also examined whether the tasks have been allocated efficiently and in accordance with the relevant regulatory requirements and whether the various components of the system functioned efficiently during the programme implementation.

In line with the Terms of Reference, the assignment was implemented in two phases.

1. Evaluation of the Programme management, control and monitoring systems
2. Evaluation of the results and impacts of the projects financed under the Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007-2013 Programme

The evaluation report concentrates primarily on the first phase, since the second phase covers a limited analysis of eleven projects that were preselected by the Joint Managing Authority of the Programme. A systematic and thorough analysis of the entire project portfolio and its results and impacts requires a separate ex-post evaluation of the Programme.

The evaluation process was an interactive process between the Joint Managing Authority and the external evaluators. Quantitative (structured questionnaires) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) research methods were applied, and obtained data was analysed with the help of the triangulation method (i.e. cross-checking of findings on the basis of different sources of information). The customer-oriented approach was emphasised throughout the evaluation process.

Programme Outputs and Achieved Objectives
As a result of four calls for proposals, 51 projects were financed under the Programme, comprising 48 Standard Projects and three Large Scale Projects. At the time of the evaluation process, all projects had not yet been completed as 29 of 51 decided projects had received prolongation until the end of 2015. However, already at the end of September 2015 almost all planned Programme targets were exceeded. Respectively, the overwhelming majority of targets with regard to indicators at the priority level were also exceeded.
On the basis of reported indicators at the Programme and priority level, it is difficult to assess whether the reason for this (over)performance is that projects have been very successful in their implementation or that initial targets were set too low. In any case, the fulfilling and exceeding of the targets and expectations provide the ground for a positive impact of the Programme to regional and cross-border development. However, with regard to the impacts of the Programme it can be stated that peripherality and the problems it creates in the Kolarctic area is a result of the process of historical development, and it would be naive to expect that a five-year programme with quite limited resources can make a major change in this respect. It is obvious that the development of CBC is a factor contributing towards gradual alleviation of the peripherality syndrome.

Programme management expectations versus actual performance

The Programme’s relevance appears to be robust in relation to the needs and challenges of the Programme areas and people. The identification of the four objectives in the ENPI CBC Strategy paper followed an economic and social analysis of the border area and consultations with stakeholders, and took into account the Partner Country policy agendas and the past and on-going cooperation with the EU. A number of common problems were identified during the preparation phase of the Programme, i.e. the lack of SME cooperation and shortage of highly educated employees; underused natural and cultural heritage, difficulties in communication and transportation, peripheral status of the regional economy, depopulation, common environmental problems. The ROM report of 2013 notified that all these issues were also addressed and discussed during the programming process and transformed into the programme objectives and priorities. The Mid-term evaluation also confirms that the Kolarctic Programme has succeeded in such fields as the introduction of new modes of action and the attraction of new people into regional development activities. The Programme also played a clear role in regional development in its programming area.

It can be said on the basis of the Mid-term evaluation process the Kolarctic Programme was not only vital for the implementation of the cross-border initiatives, but it has also been the main source of funding for CBC in the Barents region. The success of the Programme was underlined in the evaluation process although it has not managed to reduce peripherality and associated problems in the Barents region. A clear majority of the operations financed by the Programme would not have been realised without it. The Mid-term evaluation also confirms that the Programme is characterised by strategic outlook and it has not encountered problems in its interaction with regional authorities, and national and supranational authorities.

Management of the Programme

Overall, CBC on the external borders of the European Union is now closer to practices on the internal borders of the EU. Nevertheless, there is still a common perception that bureaucracy, particularly as regards project implementation, is excessive in the external cross-border co-operation programmes, for which mostly EU-legislation is blamed. The set of rules limits the JMA’s possibilities to engage in an active dialogue with applicants about applications, topics, possible duplication of activities, and does not allow flexible spending at the end of the programming period. Therefore, the challenge for the JMA and other programme bodies is thus to apply a customer-oriented approach - to put the customer before the administrative principles and engage proactively with project applicants and other stakeholders, within the tight constraints set by the Practical Guidelines and EU legislation.

The Mid-term evaluation revealed some concerns among the JMA personnel about the workloads at the unit. Due to the design of the programme and as a result of the significant delay in its launch, some workload peaks and subsequent delays in dealing with the financial aspects of the projects were unavoidable, but did
not represent a problem. Generally, the overwhelming majority stakeholders of the programme appear to be very satisfied with and praised the general, day-to-day organisation of the programme and its activities carried out by the Operational Unit. High workload and preparations of the accepted projects in the JMA were not transmitted and made visible to the other Programme bodies and stakeholders. Particularly the majority of the JMC members pointed out that all meetings were prepared efficiently and that communication between the JMA and JMC worked well. Also the RAG members frequently mentioned that meetings were organized efficiently and that they were generally pleased with the guidance provided by the JMA. Some criticism were directed towards the firmer commitment of Internal Audit Service in ensuring that procedures have been correctly applied within the JMA.

The role of Branch Offices differs somewhat between the countries involved in the Programme. Norwegian Branch Office is responsible for Norwegian equivalent funding and acts as an independent payment authority. Co-ordination between the work of the JMA and the rather independent Norwegian Branch Office is thus of importance, particularly with regard to consistency of information given to potential projects applicants about the opportunities and practicalities of the programme and financial co-ordination as regards project funding. On the whole, the role of the Branch Offices was regarded important in the Programme implementation and distributing information about the funding possibilities of the Programme. It was noted that re-establishment of Arkhangelsk Branch Office was necessary initiative for the upcoming programme, because the vast geographical area covered solely by Murmansk Branch Office was considerable in the Russian side.

Results of the Mid-term evaluation indicate that the communication between various Programme bodies has worked well. In achieving this, the JMA employed quite a wide range of communication activities during the ENPI programme to spread information about impending calls and opportunities also for potential applicants. However, it was also underlined during the evaluation process that the communication with the external audience (also potential project applicants) could be strengthened and carried out more effectively if the Operational Unit of JMA had more human resources to engage in this task. The quality of dissemination activities with regard to the utilisation of project results, visibility and effective programme implementation was generally been seen in a positive light. However, there were also expectations for stronger result-oriented dissemination activities, for example by providing mid-term reporting on achieved results and details about implementation and activities of current and ongoing projects.

**Project Selection**

Four Calls of Proposals were organised in the Kolarctic Programme. As a result of these four Calls of Proposals, 51 projects were financed within the Programme, including 48 Standard Projects and three Large Scale Projects. With regard to the selection process, the Mid-term evaluation found that the EMOS submission system was working well and general guidelines for applicants were considered to be understandable and helpful; the advice given by JMA was also regarded positively. It was also stated that the approval of the projects were made on the basis of compromise between the participating countries, although political bargaining was naturally part of the decision-making process.

Open calls were regarded more desirable than thematic calls and applicants seemed to be quite satisfied with the way the advice was received from the JMA during the project calls. The time and resources spent on project preparation in relation to the value and benefit of potential projects received a somewhat more critical reception. However, it was also noticed that the preparation of application form, including the usability of the manual for applicants, was dependent on the experience of the applicant. Experienced
applicants were in a better position than the newcomers. In addition, experienced applicants often had existing networks or relationships with potential partners, which makes the application phase easier for them in that sense. It was, for example, suggested that the JMA could do more in bringing in new partners to the process and put them in touch with each other in order to provide better access and lower thresholds for novices.

The application selection procedure was considered in positive manner as a whole. It was generally regarded that documentation, equality, open calls for proposals and administrative checks were implemented mainly well. On the other hand, it was also underlined that the project selection procedure was too complicated and lengthy as well as involving too many levels of decision-making. Especially time consumed for decision-making (from three to five months) was estimated too long. Problematic was also the fact that it took about a year from submitting the project application until the signing of the grant contract. This means that application process is stretching also after the project approval before projects commence in practice. Particularly the JSC level was seen as unnecessary.

The Regional Assessment Group members were of the opinion that the selection criteria worked well on the basis of so-called evaluation grid. It was also important that the Regional Assessment Group members go through all projects in the call in order to receive broader perspective of other countries. Generally, the evaluation grid was described as transparent and systematic tool to assess project applications and it included all the essential perspectives. According to the RAG members, the project applications scoring the highest points in their assessments were mostly selected by JSC and JMC in the end, but some exceptions were also noticed. It is hard to say what was behind these cases. In this context, it could be argued that the JMC project selection procedure could be made more transparent, including more information provided for RAG members and applicants about the reasoning behind decisions on project selection.

**Monitoring and Control of the Programme**

Overall, the JMA received positive feedback as regards the electronic monitoring system EMOS and IT-systems of the Programme. The follow-up system that was in place with regard to the projects as a whole and the appropriateness of instructions from the JMA was weighed positively in the Mid-term evaluation. Monitoring and the control of the Programme received somewhat negative valuation in relation to the processing time of narrative reports and narrative reporting in general. It is obvious that the members of the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Joint Selection Committee, the Regional Assessment Groups and the Branch Offices, do not have an overall overview of the Programme management with regard to monitoring and control. The is mostly due to the fact that the above-mentioned Programme bodies do not have project-specific responsibilities, and rely in their operations only on the information received from the JMA, whose task is to inform these bodies of all activities related to the Programme. This can be interpreted in the way that the JMA could pay attention to increased and better provision of information to the different bodies of the Programme.

The general feeling among the interviewed persons within the Joint Monitoring Group was that the JMA was dedicated to advance and develop monitoring arrangements in the Programme. Joint Monitoring Group members did not see it as necessary to become more involved in the overall monitoring activities of the Programme. Also, a clear majority of members of the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Joint Selection Committee, and the Regional Assessment Groups considered the Programme management as customer-oriented. The financial reporting and payments of the Programme were in any case judged to be well
managed in the Programme. There were some critical voices towards the statement that the participating countries have equal possibilities to influence the running of the Programme.

The involvement of JMC members and their opportunities to react to different monitoring or strategic questions within the Programme implementation relied heavily on JMA's responsiveness and willingness to provide the necessary information. There were some wishes to receive more information from the JMA about the Programme, but none of the JMC members were unsatisfied for the information delivery of the JMA. Generally there were no major differences in responses between the participating countries in relation to overall monitoring of the Programme.

The Financial Unit of the JMA is crucial for the overall monitoring of the Programme, but its activities in this respect were somewhat separated from the monitoring tasks of the Operational Unit of the JMA. Although the regulatory aspects have been functioning well from point of view of both units, it seems that connections between Financial Unit and Operational Unit in terms of the production of monitoring data could be stronger. It was also obvious that the link between the financial and narrative reports of the projects were relatively weak as there was only limited cross-checking carried out between them. The Financial Unit should have a possibility to gather feedback from projects. This kind of feedback process might be a useful tool for the Financial Unit, since many project partners were rather unexperienced in EU-projects and especially financial reporting procedures.

The JMA has designed and introduced an IPQM (Internal Project Qualitative Monitoring) system for monitoring purposes of the projects. IPQM is intended to act as a warning mechanism that allows the JMA and the project partners to follow the project implementation and to alert a project to potential malfunctions and failures. The idea of IPQM is to discover possible problems before they develop critical for the project implementation. The IPQM system has worked properly and project implementers have been relatively satisfied with the introduced system. However, the interviewees at the JMA underlined also that IPQM is additional tool to the official narrative reports and financial reports from the projects. Introduction of the IPQM system has made it possible to assess the effectiveness and efficiency as well as relevance of the Programme operations not only at the project level but also on the Programme level as a whole.

The Customer-oriented approach has been introduced by the JMA to improve their overall service provided towards project applicants, project implementers and other stakeholders relevant for the implementation of the Programme. The customer-oriented approach represents a vital part of the overall strategy and working processes at the JMA. This, in principle, means that the JMA does not intend to act solely as an administrator of the Programme, but rather works flexibly and proactively in promoting the Programme. The purpose is not to control project activities, but to monitor and to provide assistance if required; in the form of above described IPQM-system, for instance. In case of Kolarctic, the customer-oriented approach is an implicit strategy that is put into practice, rather than an explicit strategy that is not.

Managing the Projects
A limited analysis of eleven projects was processed in the Mid-term evaluation on the basis of data from the EMOS system, a structured survey and a series of semi-structured interviews with project representatives, who included lead partners, partners and main beneficiaries. The project representatives were largely satisfied with organization of information seminars and workshops for applicants and project partners. The only major shortcoming was insufficient funding for the Arkhangelsk branch office. The application form was considered as clear and simple to use and general guidelines for applicants were considered understandable and helpful. The project selection criteria were also seen as clear enough. On the whole, the application
selection procedure was seen as working well and explicitness and transparency of selection procedures was appraised. However, it was also suggested that one level of decision-making should be removed from the application process in order to make project selection more straightforward and efficient.

There were no major shortcomings in respect of the Programme’s guiding regulations for project participants, administrative procedures, transfers of money from JMA to partners, and cooperation between lead partners and partners. Despite of some difficulties in relation to payments and processing financial reporting the JMA and project implementers had a good interaction. Generally, Programme administrative procedures and guiding regulations were assessed positively and they also were estimated to have a positive influence on the contents of the projects. Projects seemed to have greatly stimulated multilateral cross-border cooperation and managed to reduce peripherality of this region, thus making a substantial contribution towards achieving these aims. In fewer cases, it was noted that the projects reduced the problems, caused by the region’s peripherality. Still in a majority of cases the projects were assessed to have succeeded in this respect.

As we consider the achieved objectives in the projects, a clear majority of the projects announced that they have reached the set objectives. Reasons for not reaching the objectives were connected to such issues as too complicated project structure as well as delays with transfers of payments to the projects. We have to bear in mind that negative aspects did not refer to overall objectives of the projects but rather to some particular issues in project implementation. Most of the chosen eleven projects would not have been implemented without Kolarctic’s funding. Some smaller-scale initiatives could be implemented on account of other sources, but in respect of funding for cross-border activities the Programme has been absolutely indispensable.

In respect of the operational environment, the projects did not encounter many problems. Geopolitical situation did not affect projects negatively and projects seemed to have reflected the needs of the regions in the Kolarctic Programme area.

It has to be bear in mind that selection of projects in the Mid-term evaluation comprised of 11 projects from the Programme’s portfolio. It therefore does not include observations connected to the overall setting of the projects according to the Programme’s priorities or indicators. We may state that the studied projects did not detect any major difficulties with the Programme administration and where difficulties did arise the project partners regularly received assistance from the JMA. Overall, it is obvious that there is strong trust between the project partners and the JMA in the Programme. The projects had strong contribution to the Programme as well as to programme area. It was also apparent that the evaluators were not able to estimated overall impacts of the projects. This has to be completed in a separate ex-post evaluation process in order to understand wider socio-economic impacts of the projects.
1. Introduction

This external (mid-term) evaluation provides an evaluation of the Kolarctic European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programme activities, in particular for the first half of the 2007-2013 period. The Joint Monitoring Committee of the Programme decided on the 12th of September 2013 to commission such an evaluation in order to improve implementation of the current Kolarctic 2007-2013 Programme, to aid the preparation of the Final Report and to contribute to the preparation of the new Kolarctic Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. A project consortium consisting of Spatia – Centre for Regional Research at the Karelian Institute (Joensuu, Finland), TK-Eval (Kuopio, Finland) and Norut – Northern Research Institute (Tromsø, Norway) was selected to examine the management structure and processes (including all programming bodies and a number of selected projects) in order to provide an independent assessment of functioning of the Programme. The evaluation team includes Petri Kahila (responsible evaluator), Matti Fritsch, Dmitry Zimin, Tommi Ålander, Keimo Sillanpää, Toril Ringholm and Jan-Åge Riseth. The sources of information utilised by the project consortium included written documents and reports, statistical information, a questionnaire and, importantly, interviews with representatives of the Joint Managing Authority, Branch offices, the Joint Monitoring Committee, Regional Assessment Groups and with selected project leaders, partners and beneficiaries.
2. Setting the scene: ENPI CBC

2.1. European transboundary co-operation

The ENPI is the key financial instrument for implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). ENPI CBC is an integral part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which includes elements as diverse as integration without membership, co-operation based on shared values, free trade, as well as better security. The ENP states that it aims to “avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union”. In practice, funding from the ENPI programme is granted to transnational CBC projects that are in line with the strategy and priorities of the Programme and include partners from the programming area. Although Russia decided against becoming a partner in the ENP, due to its perception of being reverted to an ordinary rather than equal partner in the ENP, it has concluded a special co-operation programme with the EU under the so-called EU-Russian Common Spaces agreement. In practice, Russia is also part of the ENPI funding instrument, which makes organisations and actors from the participating regions in that country eligible for funding from the ENPI instrument. In contrast to earlier Interreg/TACIS funding arrangements, ENPI funds can hence be used on either side of the EU’s external border. It is important to note that Russia, with the inception of the ENPI Programme, also for the first time started to contribute its own financing to the cross-border co-operation Programme with European Union partners. This represented an important watershed in cross-border co-operation between the EU and Russia, paving the way for real mutuality and partnership. As a non-member of the European Union, Norway also contributes funding that is equivalent to EU-funding as well as national co-funding for activities/projects with Norwegian participation.

The ENPI instrument is a specific type of co-operation in the way that it receives funding from both external and internal headings of the EU budget. Essentially, through its connection with the ENP and Common Spaces, ENPI is an external policy instrument. However, a significant share of its funding comes from internal EU Cohesion Policy funds, of which territorial co-operation has, during the 2007-2013 programming period, been one of three objectives. Overall, the management and organizational structure of cross-border co-operation programmes on the external border of the EU has also over time and through successive reforms been approximated to practices on the internal borders of the European Union. Such reforms were, for example, the joint selection of projects, common financing arrangements for both sides of the border and a regionally-based programme design. CBC programming on the external borders of the EU has thus progressed significantly since the time of uneasy co-ordination between the TACIS and Interreg instruments during the 1990s, and the aspiration to simplify and streamline external CBC programming appears to continue with the reforms being made as part of the upcoming ENI 2014-2020 Programme. Cross-border co-operation is particular topical in the current geopolitical climate. Kolarctic projects have not been directly affected by the economic sanctions against Russia and by Russia’s reciprocal sanctions. However, some projects might be confronted by indirect effects, and geopolitical developments may have a major impact on future CBC Programmes.

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1 Transboundary co-operation is defined as “[f]orms of cooperation across national borders between cities, regions, national governments and other agencies or organisations at various geographical scales to pursue policy objectives and projects in fields as varied as transport, cultural and economic cooperation, environmental management, and so on.” (Dühr, S.; Colomb, C. & Nadin, V. (2010) European Spatial Planning and Territorial Co-operation, London: routledge, p. 346).
2.2. Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007-2013 Programme

The Kolarctic Programme is one of nine ENPI Programmes on external land borders of the European Union. It is also one of three ENPI Programmes between the Nordic countries and the Russian Federation (see Figure 1). The Kolarctic Programme differs from the other two north-eastern ENPI Programmes in the way that it includes four countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia) rather than two as in the other two Programmes (only Finland and Russia). The regions included in the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme are: Lapland in Finland, Norrbotten in Sweden, Finnmark, Troms and Nordland in Norway and Murmansk Oblast, Archangelsk Oblast and Nenets Autonomous District in Russia. Adjacent areas are Northern Ostrobothnia in Finland, Västerbotten in Sweden and Republic of Karelia, Leningrad Oblast and St. Petersburg in Russia.

The geographic area of the Programme is vast and extremely sparsely populated with dispersed settlements, although some large urban centres, such as Rovaniemi, Luleå, Tromsø and Murmansk, do exist. The total Kolarctic area covers approximately one million square kilometres. The low population density and long distance between urban centres also poses challenges to cross-border co-operation as there are relatively few actors and organisations in existence. Travel connections are rather weak, particularly in east-west directions. For example, there are very few inter-regional flight connections between the participating countries. Most of the flight connections are with the respective national capitals. As a result, travel times are long, which is further complicated by the fact that on the Norwegian and Finnish border with Russia (approximately 700kms in length), there are only three international border crossings: Storskog in Norway and Raja-Jooseppi and Salla in Finland (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007-2013 Programme Area](image-url)
In terms of institutional and administrative evolution, the Kolarctic ENPI Programme could build on experiences and achievements gained from a number of previous co-operation programmes, including the Barents II A Programme (1996-1999), Kolarctic sub-programme of INTERREG III A North (2000-2004) and the Kolarctic Neighbourhood Programme 2004-2006. For the Russian side, TACIS CBC funding was made available before financial arrangements were integrated from the launch of the ENPI Programme from 2007 onwards.

According to the Programme Document, the overall aim of the Programme is “to reduce the periphery of the countries’ border regions and problems related to the periphery as well as to promote multilateral cross-border cooperation” by developing “their cross-border economic, social and environmental potential, which shall be achieved by supporting innovative cross-border activities, accessibility, and the sustainable development of natural resources, communities and cultural heritage”. In order to operationalise this overall aim, the Programme has specified three objectives under which projects are selected and implemented.

The management structure of the Programme is quite complex and consists of a number Programme bodies, including the Joint Managing Authority (JMA), the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), the Joint Selection Committee (JSC) and the Regional Assessment Groups (RAG). Please see section 5.3 for a detailed description of the tasks and responsibilities of the different Programme bodies.
3. Evaluation framework and approach

3.1. Overall aims and objectives

Overall, the purpose of this mid-term evaluation is to support the implementation and management of the ongoing Programme and provide information for the formulation of the new Kolarctic CBC 2014-2020 Programme. In order to achieve this task, this evaluation addresses the appropriateness of the institutional arrangements in place for the management, coordination and implementation of the Programme. Respectively the evaluation will also estimate whether the tasks have been allocated efficiently and in accordance with the relevant regulatory requirements and whether the various components of the system functioned efficiently during the Programme implementation.

The assignment is implemented in two phases:

3. Evaluation of the Programme management, control and monitoring systems
4. Evaluation of the results and impacts of the projects financed under the Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007-2013 Programme

This evaluation report focuses primarily on the first phase, since the second phase covers a limited analysis of eleven projects that have been preselected by the Joint Managing Authority of the Programme. The original criteria for selection of the eleven projects was that they had not undergone the ROM (Results Oriented-Monitoring) evaluation process in the Programme. A systematic and thorough analysis of the entire project portfolio and its results and impacts will be realised in ex post evaluation process of the Programme.

The Terms of Reference set the following key requirements for this evaluation process:

1. Programme management, control and monitoring systems
   a. Cooperation between regional, national and EU (EC) authorities
   b. Procedure of preparation of project applications from the applicant’s point of view
   c. Selection of project applications
   d. JMA’s role in the application selection and preparation process
   e. Role of the Branch offices
   f. Process of financial reporting and payments from JMA to Lead Partners/ partners
   g. Process of narrative reporting
   h. Functionality of IT-systems
   i. Process of monitoring and follow-up of the projects
   j. Customer orientation and good governance principle
   k. First and second level control
   l. Coherence of management practices and methods between authorities
   m. Functionality, appropriateness and consistency of administrative procedures and regulations
   n. Efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Programme management
   o. Financing committed to the projects, compared to the available Programme financing

2. Evaluation of the results and impacts of the projects
   a. Achievement of expected objectives
   b. Resulted sustainable improvement and development in the target region
   c. Facilitation and enhancement of cross-border co-operation within the Programme are
   d. Co-operation between project partners
e. Degree of participation of the project partners from different countries
f. Enhancement of project results the achievement of the Programme’s objectives

These evaluations questions will not all be answered individually in the evaluation process. Rather they are treated as horizontal questions/aspects going through the two phases of the evaluation. A more detailed description of the evaluation methodology will be provided in the following chapter.

3.2. Methodological approach

The evaluation of the Programme and the resulting report provide key information and knowledge for understanding the managerial processes and results of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme. The evaluation of the Programme has been an interactive process between the client and the external evaluators. Quantitative (structured questionnaires) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) research methods have been applied, and obtained data have been analysed with the help of triangulation (i.e. cross-checking of findings on the basis of different sources of information). Triangulation method (figure 2) allowed the evaluators to identify and verify highly significant data on background factors and territorial aspects of the Programme’s implementation.

![Figure 2. The Triangulation Evaluation Method](image)

The evaluation method used in this assignment is based on a customer-oriented approach that provides knowledge with regard to the benefits that the Programme has delivered to final beneficiaries, the project partners and the Programme regions. The customer-oriented approach is emphasised throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation does not only include the tangible and measurable results of activities with regard to projects, but if possible also their spill-over benefits that may improve the customers’ economic, social and human development.
Another advantage of the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is that there is a real added value because the information from both data collecting procedures is not compiled in separation. This process also generates cross-references between datasets, thus validating each other. In the evaluation process of Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme, questionnaires and interviews have been specifically structured as quantitative and qualitative data collecting instruments, so that identical aspects regarding contents could be commented from different perspectives. In this manner, comparisons can be applied using data interpretation. Connections or discrepancies between the different perspectives of those questioned can be determined and discussed. The questionnaire was sent out to the members of the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Joint Selection Committee, the Regional Assessment Groups and to the Branch office representatives. A total of 25 responses were received.

Methodologically the evaluation process first drew on the critical review of the respective Mid-term evaluation of the ENPI CBC Programmes 2007-2013 and annual reports of the Programme in order to capture perspectives on the specific features of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme. This was necessary in order to broaden access to actual intrinsic performance of the Programme.

With regard to Programme management and governing, the evaluators addressed the relevance of the institutional arrangements in place for the management, coordination and implementation of the Programme. Respectively, the evaluators analysed whether the tasks were distributed efficiently and in accordance with regulatory requirements. In addition, the evaluators estimated whether the various components of the system functioned effectively during the Programme implementation. Attention was also paid to the depth of formal co-operation across national borders and the instruments of decision-making, mutual communication at all levels (vertically and horizontally) and joint implementation.

Furthermore, an analysis of the monitoring, reporting and control systems was carried out. Financial inputs and outputs as well as cost-effectiveness of the Programme management was evaluated. Particular attention was also paid to the analysis of the project selection process: criteria and self-evidence of procedures, quality of the calls for proposals, dissemination modes of information, rate of selection, selection criteria, qualification of selection committees and others.

The eleven case studies selected by the JMA were examined in order to gain insights into the implementation, results, impacts and overall performance of the projects. The project analysis also provides a starting point for a more thorough ex post evaluation process of the Programme. The main goal in terms of the selection of the projects was to cover all the priorities defined in the Programme strategy. The main sources of information were the viewpoints and experiences of those responsible for implementing the projects. Where possible/applicable, the evaluation approach has also included interviews of project partners and project beneficiaries. Before the interviews were carried out, the selected projects were examined on the basis of desk-top analysis comprising the grant application, project plan, interim/final reports and IPQM-reports.
4. Overview of the Programme area

4.1. Regional structure and environment

The Kolarctic ENPI 2007-2013 Programme has regional participation from four participating countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.

From Russia, three regions are included in the core programming area. The Murmansk region, with the City of Murmansk as its administrative centre, has a population of approximately 770 000 over an area of 145 000 km². Administratively, this region is divided into 12 urban districts (Murmansk, Alexandrovsk, Apatity, Vidyaevo, Zaozersk, Kirovsk, Kvodor, Monchegorsk, Olenegorsk, Ostrovnoi, Polyarnye Zori, and Severomorsk) and 5 municipal districts (Kandalakshsky, Kolsky, Lovozersky, Pechengsky, and Tersky). The Arkhangelsk region, with the City of Arkhangelsk as its administrative centre, has a population of 1.18 million. Its total area is 587 000 km², which includes Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO). The Arkhangelsk region is divided into 7 urban districts (Arkhangelsk, Koryazhma, Kotlas, Mirnyi, Novaya Zemlya, Novodvinsk, and Severodvinsk) and 19 municipal districts (Velsky, Verkhnetoemsky, Vilegodskaia, Vinogradovsky, Kargopol, Konoshsky, Kotlassky, Krasnoborsky, Lensky, Leshukonsky, Mezensky, Nyadomsky, Onezhsky, Pinezhsky, Plesetsky, Primorsky, Ustystinsky, Kholmogorsky, and Shinkursky). NAO is formally part of the Arkhangelsk region, but it is also a separate region of the Russian Federation. NAO has a population of 43 000 over an area of 177 000 km². Its administrative centre is Naryn-Mar. NAO is divided into 1 urban district (Naryn-Mar) and 1 municipal district (Zapolyarnyi). Each of these three regions has its own regional administration, which is responsible for regional development, planning, provision of public services, and for international cooperation.

From Finland, the single region (maakunta) of Lapland, with the City of Rovaniemi as its administrative centre, is included in the programming area. The region has an approximate population of 180 000 over an area of 99 000 km². The region is governed by the Regional Council, which is in essence an inter-municipal organization, as each municipality located within the region has to be a member. Regional Councils in Finland are responsible for both regional development and regional planning in their areas. They are also important authorities in implementing EU territorial co-operation and other cohesion policy instruments. The region of Lapland has six sub-regions (Itä-Lappi, Kemi-Tornio, Pohjois-Lappi, Rovaniemi, Tornio and Tunturi-Lappi) and consists of 21 municipalities (Kemi-Järvi, Pelkosenniemi, Posio, Salla, Savukoski, Kemi, Keminmaa, Simo, Tervola, Tornio, Inari, Sodankylä, Utajoki, Ranua, Rovaniemi, Pello, Ylitornio, Enontekiö, Kittilä, Kolari and Muonio).

From Sweden, the single county (län) of Norbotten is included in the Programme area. The administrative centre of Norbotten is the City of Luleå, which is also the seat of the County Administrative Board. The region has a population of approximately 250 000 distributed over approximately 98 000 km². Norbotten consists of a total of 14 municipalities: Älvsbyn, Arjeplog, Arvidsjaur, Boden, Gällivare, Haparanda, Jokkmokk, Kalix, Kiruna, Luleå, Överkalix, Övertorneå, Pajala, Piteå.

From Norway, the three counties (fylke) of Nordland (pop. 240 000, administrative centre Bodø), Troms (pop. 160 000, administrative centre Tromsø) and Finnmark (pop. 75 000, administrative centre Vadsø) are included in the Kolarctic Programme. The county council’s tasks are regional development and the provision of services that are not the responsibility of the municipalities.
4.2. Economic performance

Extraction of oil and natural gas is the largest contributor to GDP in the Barents Sea region. This industry is highly developed in the regions of northern Norway and in the Nenets Autonomous Region of Russia, where GDP per capita is well above the EU average (see Table 1). The oil and gas sector has been the main driver of economic growth in these regions. Very high GDP per capita was also achieved in the Swedish region of Norrbotten. This region has been relatively prosperous on account of mining of metal ores, forestry and the paper industry.

In other regions GDP per capita was notably lower than the EU average. In the Murmansk region the main economic branches have been ferrous metals, power generation and transport. The Arkhangelsk region has depended on forestry, the paper industry and machine-building. The economy of Finnish Lapland has developed on account of mining and natural resources, tourism, basic industries and reindeer husbandry.

The global economic crisis of 2008 and subsequent fall in oil and gas prices have had a negative impact on regional economies of the Barents Region. Some major investment projects (e.g. the development of the Shtokman offshore gas field) have been cancelled, and regional economic growth has slowed down.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>GDP per capita EU average = 100</th>
<th>Real GDP change, annual average, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2005 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland and Norrbotten, total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2005 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnmark</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2008 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troms</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2008 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordland</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>2008 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Norway, total</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2008 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmansk Region</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2005 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangelsk Region</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2005 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenets Autonomous District</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>2005 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-western Russia, total</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2005 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire area, total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3. Population development

There are about 2.87 million inhabitants in the Programme area and almost 70% of the area’s population live in the Russian part of the area. In 2006, over 3.10 million inhabitants lived in the area. The number of inhabitants has been declining during the Programme period due to negative net migration and a declining birth rate. Out-migration from the Programme area has been most pronounced among the working age population. Changes in population have been the most significant in North-western Russia, where the number of inhabitants has declined by almost 11 percent in eight years. At the same time the population of
Northern Norway has increased, mainly due to immigration. In Lapland and Norrbotten changes in population have been quite moderate, though declining.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lapland</td>
<td>182820</td>
<td>180335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrbotten</td>
<td>251886</td>
<td>248609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland and Norrbotten, total</td>
<td>434706</td>
<td>428944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnmark</td>
<td>72937</td>
<td>72856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troms</td>
<td>153585</td>
<td>156494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordland</td>
<td>236257</td>
<td>236271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Norway, total</td>
<td>462779</td>
<td>465621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmansk Region</td>
<td>864607</td>
<td>799765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangelsk Region</td>
<td>1291370</td>
<td>1237493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenets Autonomous District</td>
<td>41989</td>
<td>42115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-western Russia, total</td>
<td>2197966</td>
<td>2079371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire area, total</td>
<td>3095451</td>
<td>2973938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age structure of the population in the Programme area is characterised by the large proportion of the Russian population. There are fewer elderly people in North-western Russia than in other parts of the Programme area. The number of children under 15 years of age is the highest and the number of elderly people is the lowest in Nenets Autonomous District. The percentage of elderly people has increased when compared to the situation in the beginning of the Programme period.

There are more males than females in Lapland, Norrbotten and Northern Norway. In North-western Russia the situation is vice versa. The difference between the ratio of men and female has become more pronounced in the Programme period.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Age structure %</th>
<th>Gender %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0–14 years</td>
<td>15–64 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland</td>
<td>15,4</td>
<td>64,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrbotten</td>
<td>14,9</td>
<td>62,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland and Norrbotten, average</td>
<td>15,2</td>
<td>63,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnmark</td>
<td>18,3</td>
<td>66,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troms</td>
<td>18,1</td>
<td>66,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordland</td>
<td>17,6</td>
<td>64,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Norway, average</td>
<td>18,0</td>
<td>65,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmansk Region</td>
<td>16,4</td>
<td>74,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangelsk Region</td>
<td>16,3</td>
<td>71,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenets Autonomous District</td>
<td>21,6</td>
<td>71,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-western Russia, average</td>
<td>18,1</td>
<td>72,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4. Labour market

There were about 1.46 million employed persons in the Programme area in 2011 and 1.03 million of them were in North-western Russia. On the whole, the amount of employed persons has been declining when comparing the situation from year 2006 to year 2011. Decline has also taken place in Russia, except in Nenets Autonomous District where the development has been opposite due to the region’s oil production industry. In Northern Norway, Lapland and Norrbotten, the amount of employed persons has increased during this period.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lapland</td>
<td>70751</td>
<td>72153</td>
<td>71590</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>1,19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrbotten</td>
<td>114208</td>
<td>116040</td>
<td>118963</td>
<td>4755</td>
<td>4,16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland and Norrbotten, total</td>
<td>184959</td>
<td>188193</td>
<td>190553</td>
<td>5594</td>
<td>3,02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnmark</td>
<td>35000</td>
<td>36000</td>
<td>38000</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>8,57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troms</td>
<td>78000</td>
<td>81000</td>
<td>80000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordland</td>
<td>113000</td>
<td>116000</td>
<td>116000</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>2,65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Norway, total</td>
<td>226000</td>
<td>233000</td>
<td>234000</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>3,54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmansk Region</td>
<td>445800</td>
<td>442900</td>
<td>427400</td>
<td>-18400</td>
<td>-4,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangelsk Region</td>
<td>589400</td>
<td>582300</td>
<td>574100</td>
<td>-15300</td>
<td>-2,60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenets Autonomous District</td>
<td>29500</td>
<td>32800</td>
<td>31800</td>
<td>2300</td>
<td>7,80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-western Russia, total</td>
<td>1064700</td>
<td>1058000</td>
<td>1033300</td>
<td>-31400</td>
<td>-2,95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire area, total</td>
<td>1475659</td>
<td>1479193</td>
<td>1457853</td>
<td>-17806</td>
<td>-1,21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unemployment rate in the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian parts of the Programme area has slightly declined since 2006, whereas it has increased or remained same in North-west Russia. The highest unemployment rate has been in Lapland during the entire Programme period. In 2014, the unemployment rate in Lapland was 9.7%. The lowest unemployment rate during that period was in Northern Norway.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Unemployment rate (%)</th>
<th>Change 2006–2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lapland</td>
<td>12,4</td>
<td>-2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norrbotten</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>-1,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland and Norrbotten, total</td>
<td>10,6</td>
<td>-1,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnmark</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>-1,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troms</td>
<td>2,9</td>
<td>-0,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordland</td>
<td>3,4</td>
<td>-0,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Norway, total</td>
<td>3,6</td>
<td>-0,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murmansk Region</td>
<td>6,7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangelsk Region</td>
<td>5,9</td>
<td>0,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nenets Autonomous District</td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>0,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-western Russia, total</td>
<td>6,0</td>
<td>0,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Analysis of Programme performance

5.1. The outputs and achieved objectives

The overall aim of the Kolarctic Programme is to reduce the peripherality of the countries’ border regions and problems related to the periphery as well as to promote multilateral cross-border cooperation. The Programme aims to help the regions within the Programme area to develop their cross-border economic, social and environmental potential, which shall be achieved by supporting innovative cross-border activities, accessibility, and sustainable development of natural resources, communities and cultural heritage.

The Programme is divided into three priorities that recognize regional strengths and problems. These priorities are:

1. Economic and social development
2. Common challenges
3. People-to-people cooperation and identity building

The indicative allocation of Community funding in the ENPI CBC Strategy Paper 2007–2013 to the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme for the years 2007–2013 was 28,24 M€. The Norwegian equivalent funding was in total 7 M€ for the Programme period. The national co-financing from the EU Member States (Finland and Sweden) was 14 M€ and from Norway 7 M€. The national co-financing from the Russian Federation was in total 14 M€. Altogether the original Programme funding was about 70 M€ (table 6).

Table 6. Financial table of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007–2013, programme budget vs. financing committed on projects. (Source: JMA.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of financing</th>
<th>Original indicative financing plan, €</th>
<th>Additional financing, €</th>
<th>Financing plan total €, projects and TA **)</th>
<th>Committed on projects, €</th>
<th>committed/budgeted, % technical assistance frame excluded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community funding</td>
<td>28 241 018</td>
<td>2 230 000</td>
<td>30 471 018</td>
<td>26 697 375</td>
<td>98,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National co-financing/EU Member states *)</td>
<td>14 120 509</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 120 509</td>
<td>9 338 920</td>
<td>73,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian equivalent Kolarctic funding</td>
<td>7 000 000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 000 000</td>
<td>5 720 629</td>
<td>90,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National co-financing/Norway</td>
<td>7 000 000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7 000 000</td>
<td>5 936 592</td>
<td>94,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National co-financing/Russia</td>
<td>14 120 509</td>
<td>22 350 205</td>
<td>36 470 714</td>
<td>33 025 533</td>
<td>95,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national funding / Finland</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 959 035</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other national funding / Russia</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 776 581</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private funding all countries</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 426 299</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>95 062 241</strong></td>
<td><strong>91 880 964</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>105,5</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) Committed amount includes Swedish project’s own contribution.
***) 8,4 % of the indicative financing (7 945 176 €) is committed to the technical assistance.
****) Amounts not indicated in the JOP
Additionally, all individual projects were requested to make their own contribution of 10–30%. The Government of Russian Federation transferred an additional 22,35 M€ as Russian national funding to the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme. Therefore, also the EU funding for the Programme increased by 2,23 M€. According to the JMA project monitoring, the funding committed to the 48 standard projects and three large scale projects is about 105% of the programme projects’ total budget.

About 68% of the budgeted EC funding and 52% of budgeted Swedish and Finnish national co-funding was paid to the projects by November 2015 (table 7). By that time 30% of national co-funding from Russia was also paid to the projects. Information about the current Norwegian payments to projects was not available.

Table 7. Financial table of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC 2007–2013, planned financing and the realisation 31.10.2015. (Source: JMA.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of financing</th>
<th>Original + additional financing, €</th>
<th>Realisation 31.10.2015, €</th>
<th>Realisation 31.10.2015, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community funding</td>
<td>30 471 018</td>
<td>20 800 000</td>
<td>68,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National co-financing/EU Member states</td>
<td>14 120 509</td>
<td>7 371 000</td>
<td>52,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian equivalent funding</td>
<td>7 000 000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National co-financing/Norway</td>
<td>7 000 000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National co-financing/Russia</td>
<td>36 470 714</td>
<td>11 000 000</td>
<td>30,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95 062 241</td>
<td>39 171 000</td>
<td>41,2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of four Calls for Proposals, 51 projects were financed within the Programme, including 48 Standard Projects and three Large Scale Projects. By the end of 2014, ten projects were closed (final payment done). 29 of ongoing projects requested prolongation of their implementation period, and the Programme as a whole has been prolonged till the end of 2015. By September 2015, the collected data from projects on result indicators under Programme objectives presented the following results (see Table 8).

Table 8. Reported result indicators of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme 2007–2013 compared to expected values. (Source: EMOS, accessed 22.9.2015.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General level indicators</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Result/Expected value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of operative cross-border networks on environmental issues to be planned</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>162,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of adopted environmental technical solutions to be planned</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>90,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of activities to be carried out to further adaptation to climate change</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>124,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of males/females &lt;29 years of age that will participate in activities</td>
<td>8252</td>
<td>14984</td>
<td>181,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people that will participate in activities</td>
<td>21617</td>
<td>53344</td>
<td>246,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people that will participate in educational activities</td>
<td>9762</td>
<td>12657</td>
<td>129,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of scientific reports or studies to be published</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>117,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people that will participate in conferences, seminars, education etc.</td>
<td>11132</td>
<td>29608</td>
<td>266,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It appears that almost all planned targets have been exceeded, in some cases to a major extent, even despite the fact that the table above presents the results of completed projects only. The only exception is the number of adopted environmental technical solutions, which is about 9% less than expected.

The next three tables present programme indicators at the priority level. Each activity in priority 1 has to guarantee sustainable economic, social and ecologic development in the Programme area, which can be achieved by focusing on the specific needs of the participating regions.

**Table 9.** Expected and reported result indicators in priority 1 of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme 2007–2013. (Source: EMOS, accessed 22.9.2015.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority level indicators, priority 1</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Result/Expected value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of SMEs participating in network and business relation projects</td>
<td>1087</td>
<td>1347</td>
<td>123,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of education and information events to be arranged</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>137,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of solutions to be implemented in using renewable energy or active energy saving</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>103,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of activities will be carried out in the project that will facilitate the movement of labour force</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>613,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of municipalities that will participate in cross-border cooperation</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>145,2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All indicators in priority 1 have exceeded the expected targets. The excess is the largest in the ‘number of activities will be carried out in the project that will facilitate the movement of labour force’.

Priority 2 focuses on common challenges of the Programme area. They include issues that may affect a large number of people simultaneously. These challenges concern health, security, accidents, environmental risks, and management and border issues. The feeling of basic security is a precondition for successful cooperation, and a stable and safe environment is a major factor in attracting investments and skilled labour to the Programme area.

**Table 10.** Expected and reported result indicators in Priority 2 of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme 2007–2013. (Source: EMOS 22.9.2015.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority level indicators, priority 2</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Result/Expected value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of initiated activities in monitoring of the state of the environment</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>135,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of implemented plans consisting environmental aspects</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>132,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of published materials concerning environmental issues</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>341,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of educational and information exchange activities between border authorities</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Priority 2 targets have also been clearly exceeded, except the number of educational and information exchange activities between border authorities, which has so far resulted in about 20% of the expected.

The Programme has also provided an opportunity to strengthen people-to-people and civil society contacts at the local and regional levels. Actions in the educational and cultural fields as well as enhanced cross-border contacts between civil society groups and NGOs also aim at promoting local governance and mutual understanding. Networking in different fields of arts, improving people’s knowledge of history and cultural heritage and all kinds of people-to-people cooperation aim at creating direct links between citizens, educational and research institutions, societies, foundations and communities in order to promote understanding, share know-how and develop new solutions to common problems. These actions were carried out under Priority 3.

Table 11. Expected and reported result indicators in Priority 3 of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme 2007–2013. (Source: EMOS 22.9.2015.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority level indicators, priority 3</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Result/Expected value (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of new common cultural/sports events or common meeting places</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>176,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people that will participate in common cultural/sports events and meeting places</td>
<td>208740</td>
<td>297523</td>
<td>142,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of media products that increase public knowledge about the Programme area to be published</td>
<td>4207</td>
<td>3298</td>
<td>78,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of networks to be created between institutions</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>202,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of educational organisations, NGOs and cultural institutions that will participate in cooperation</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>150,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people that will participate in activities supporting cultural diversity</td>
<td>9599</td>
<td>9367</td>
<td>97,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of activities (seminars, festivals etc.) that support cultural diversity to be arranged</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>191,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also under Priority 3, indicators show that expectations have been exceeded in most cases. However, the number of published media products concerning the Programme area has so far remained below the target. But the goal still can be achieved by the end of 2015.

5.2. Programme management expectations versus actual performance

Relevance relates to the extent to which the priorities of a Programme are pertinent to the needs and challenges of the Programme areas and people and are consistent with ENPI CBC policy objectives as outlined in the ENPI CBC Strategy Paper. Relevance to the ENPI CBC Strategy Paper objectives, and the needs of the Programme area, was taken into account when the EC, EU Member States and Partner Countries identified, formulated and planned the ENPI CBC Programme strategic frameworks. The identification of the four objectives in the ENPI CBC Strategy paper followed an economic and social analysis of the border area and consultations with stakeholders, and took into account the Partner Country policy agendas and the past and
ongoing cooperation with the EU. Representatives of the participating countries then agreed on a set of priorities that are in line with the Strategy Paper objectives and the specific CBC needs of the Programme area identified through consultations with national and regional stakeholders. The priorities, together with agreed measures prescribing the action to be taken, were spelled out in the Joint Operational Programmes [for example the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme]. (Mid-Term Evaluation of ENPI CBC Programmes 2007-2013.)

Finland, Russia, Sweden and Norway have a long history of cross-border cooperation supported by the EU and other donors under various regional, national and bilateral initiatives. Before the Kolarctic Programme was started, a SWOT analysis was carried out. It identified a number of common problems. These include the lack of SME cooperation and shortage of highly educated employees; underused natural and cultural heritage, difficulties in communication and transportation, peripheral status of the regional economy, depopulation, common environmental problems, etc. According to the ROM report of 2013, all these issues were addressed and discussed during the programming process and transformed into the Programme objectives and priorities, agreed by all involved countries. The Programme preparation was thoroughly discussed in all countries through public consultation process, which ensured that the Programme reflects actual regional and national needs.

According to the Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) of 2013, the Kolarctic Programme is in line with the main principles of the ENPI CBC Strategy Paper 2007-2013. It is also coherent with the ENPI Russia Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013, the Financing Agreement EU-Russia on CBC Kolarctic, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and also various EU sectoral strategies and programmes. The Kolarctic Programme is managed "locally", involving all Programme countries and taking into account the EU and the national rules and regulations. In this context, the Programme also meets the criteria of the Paris Declaration.

The ROM report for 2013 states that the Kolarctic Programme is fully coherent with the national policies and strategies for socio-economic development in all countries involved. It is relevant also to the national and regional sectoral programmes in various key sectors (tourism, health, education, environment, mining industry, transport and infrastructure, etc.). It is recognized that Kolarctic contributes to the actual implementation of these programmes.

The present study also confirms that the Kolarctic Programme has succeeded in such fields as the introduction of new modes of action and the attraction of new people into regional development activities, as well as it has played a clear role in regional development. An overwhelming majority of the respondents have agreed with these conclusions (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Impact of the Programme (Source: Evaluation survey, 2015)
The overall aims of the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme has been to reduce the periphery of the countries' border regions, to alleviate problems related to the periphery, and to promote multilateral cross-border cooperation. The evaluation survey contained questions asking respondents to assess whether the Programme has so far reached these aims. Figure 4 presents the results.

**Figure 4.** Answers to the question: "How far has the Programme managed to reach its main aims?" (Source: Evaluation survey, 2015).

According to respondents, the Programme has been quite successful in terms of promoting multilateral CBC. As a majority of respondents also noted, without Kolarctic's funding it would be impossible to implement the cross-border initiatives that this Programme has supported (see Figure 5). Therefore, it can be said that Kolarctic has been the main source of funding for CBC in the Barents region. In respect of the two other aims, the respondents were less optimistic: slightly more than a half of them were of the opinion that the Programme has managed to reduce peripherality and associated problems in the Barents region "excellently" or "well". This is not a surprise: one Programme cannot eliminate disadvantages related to periphery, but it can only be expected to reduce such problems.

Figure 5 indicates that the majority of survey respondents were of the opinion that equivalent operations would not have been financed without the support of the Programme. As such, the Programme appears to be essential for the implementation of the CBC initiatives, most of which would have not been carried out without this Programme.

**Figure 5.** Answers to the question: "Could equivalent activities be financed without Kolarctic's funding?" (Source: Evaluation survey, 2015).
According to the results of the survey a clearly strategic outlook can characterize the Kolarctic Programme: the Programme responds to the regional needs of the Kolarctic area and takes national and EU strategies into account (Figure 6). It should be noted that over 40% of the respondents of the survey see the current geopolitical situation affecting the Programme strongly and one quarter of them think the Programme does not respond quickly to socio-economic changes in its target regions. However, it should be noted that the questionnaire was open from early November to late December 2014, which could, to some extent, have affected the responses. The Programme has not encountered problems in its interaction with regional authorities, and national and supranational authorities have not much regularly interfered in the Programme's implementation according to the survey respondents.

![Figure 6. Answers to the question: "Do you agree with these statements about the Kolarctic Programme?"
(Source: Evaluation survey, 2015).](image)

**5.3. Management of the Programme**

Efficient decision-making and management is identified in the Kolarctic ENPI Programme Document as a “key precondition for the successful implementation of a Programme”. Based on the results of the questionnaire and interviews with programming bodies and stakeholders, the aim of this section is to present the analysis of management practices (strengths and weaknesses) with particular regard to the evaluation questions detailed in the Terms of Reference.

Initially it should be noted that over time and though a succession of earlier programming periods, continuous reforms have simplified the administrative dimension of cross-border co-operation and have increased reciprocity through the establishment of joint selection, decision-making and financial practices.
Overall, CBC on the external borders of the European Union is now closer to practices on the internal borders of the EU. However, there is still a common perception that bureaucracy, particularly as regards project implementation, is excessive in the external cross-border co-operation programmes, for which mostly EU-legislation is blamed. One key factor is the obligatory implementation of the Practical Guide (PraG) rules. PraG rules are perceived as being overly complex and inflexible and designed more to curb corruption than to facilitate co-operation on an equal footing between neighbouring countries. The set of rules limits the JMA’s possibilities to engage in an active dialogue with applicants about applications, topics, possible duplication of activities, and does not allow flexible spending at the end of the programming period. The challenge for the JMA and other Programme bodies is thus to apply a customer-oriented approach - to put the customer before the administrative principles and engage proactively with project applicants and other stakeholders, within the tight constraints set by the Practical Guidelines and EU legislation. The JMA has thus an important role in softening the rules by the Commission within the confines of the legislation and acts as a buffer between the Commission and the projects.

In order to set the context for the analysis of internal management, it is useful to present initially the organizational structure of the Programme. The management structure of the Kolarctic Programme includes a number of bodies and committees that deal with different tasks and obligations. The Regional Council of Lapland, based in Rovaniemi, has been designated the Joint Managing Authority (JMA). The JMA is responsible for the overall management of the Programme in accordance with the principle of sound technical and financial management. It oversees the implementation of the operational programme and coordinates the work of and informs the different Programme bodies. The JMA consists of the Operational Unit, the Financial Unit and an Internal Audit Service. The Operational Unit has the tasks to organize calls for proposals and applications, conclude contracts and agreements, advise, monitor and follow-up ongoing projects, organize and follow-up meetings of the JMC and JSC, prepare all necessary reports and plans, collaborate with regional authorities in the programming area, and disseminate information about and provide visibility for the Programme. The Financial Unit’s responsibility is to deal with all financial aspects of the Programme implementation, including annual and project budgets, payments, recoveries, accounting and reporting. The Internal Audit Service, which is provided by the Regional Council of Lapland, implements an annual control in order to check and ensure that procedures have been correctly applied within the JMA. The JMA is supported in their work by three Branch Offices. The Norwegian Branch Office is located in Vadsø, the Russian one in Murmansk and the Swedish one in Luleå. Due to the fact that JMA is located in Rovaniemi, there is no branch office in Finland. In particular, the Branch Offices are creating a link between the JMA and the participating regions and supporting the JMA in communication and dissemination of information from the Programme to the regions. They also assist the JMA in monitoring project activities and results. The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) is the highest decision-making organ in the Programme. It consists of representatives from central government and regional-level representatives from all participating countries. The JMC’s tasks and responsibilities are varied and, according to the Kolarctic ENPI Programme Document, include:

- adoptions of Rules of Procedures,
- approving the detailed annual action plan for the Programme prepared by the JMA together with the participating regions,
- approving the Joint Managing Authority's annual work programme,
- deciding on the volume and allocation of the Programme's resources for technical assistance and human resources,
• adopt the Programme’s Annual Information Action Plan prepared by the JMA,
• at each of its meetings, review the management decisions taken by the Joint Managing Authority,
• appoint the Joint Selection Committee (project selection committee),
• decide on the selection criteria for the projects and make the final decision on projects and the sums granted to them,
• at each of its meetings and on the basis of the documents submitted by the JMA, evaluate and monitor progress towards the priorities of the Programme,
• review all reports submitted by the JMA and take appropriate measures when necessary,
• examine any contentious cases of recovery brought to its attention by the JMA,
• make proposals to the European Commission about changes in the Programme.

In order to ensure partnership and equality within the Programme, all decisions made by the JMC have to be based on consensus. The Joint Selection Committee (JSC) is appointed by the JMC and recommends the projects to be funded by the Programme. The JSC uses the evaluations of the application produced by the Regional Assessment Groups (RAG). The RAGs are formed for project evaluation purposes in each country participating in the Programme. They include selected experts on tropics and themes that are dealt with in the projects. The RAG members evaluate project applications using a so-called Evaluation Grid and discuss their findings in RAG meetings organized by the JMA.

5.3.1. Financial and human resources
The JMA is the key node through which the Programme is administered and managed and its activities to a significant extent influence the potential success or failure of implementing the Programme. It is therefore important to evaluate the overall organization of work and management practices within the Joint Managing Authority, including an assessment of the financial and human resources.

The work of the JMA is financed from the Technical Assistance budget line of the Kolarctic Programme. Overall, the amount of funding, despite the long distances and expensive travelling costs involved has mostly been seen as sufficient among the interviewees, also within the JMA itself. The questionnaire revealed a slightly more negative picture but a significant amount of its respondents were not knowledgeable about the financial situation of the JMA (see Figure 7). The interviews at the JMA, however, revealed some concerns concerning the workloads and distribution of responsibilities at the unit. The financial unit of the JMA appears to be sufficiently staffed to carry out its tasks. Due to the design of the Programme and as a result of the significant delay in its launch, some workload peaks and subsequent delays in dealing with the financial aspects of the projects were unavoidable, but did not represent a problem.

The interviews revealed that the overwhelming majority stakeholders of the Programme appear to be very satisfied with and praised the general, day-to-day organisation of the Programme and its activities carried out by the Operational Unit. 84% of the questionnaire respondents indeed had the opinion that the JMA provided sufficient support to the work of the JMC, JSC and RAG. However, the interviews at the JMA itself indicated that the Operational Unit is to some extent struggling to engage in a more strategic approach and future-oriented work - particularly in terms of communication and monitoring - and as all time is taken up by the day-to-day running of the Programme. Particularly, additional staff was desired to improve information and communication activities, but also to ease high workloads during Calls and transitions between Programmes, i.e. for the writing of Programme Documents.
Staff at the JMA was also concerned with the high workload that is involved and the long time it takes to prepare the Grant contract for accepted projects. This, in turn, delayed the start of the projects. As the positive assessment of the JMA’s work shows, the internal workloads and challenges are not transmitted and made visible to the other Programme bodies and stakeholders. Particularly the majority of the JMC members pointed out that all meetings were prepared efficiently and that communication between the JMA and JMC worked well. Also the RAG members frequently mentioned that meetings were organized efficiently and that they were generally pleased with the guidance provided by the JMA. Co-operation between the financial and Operational Unit is consistently perceived as excellent. Particularly the fact that both units are under the same roof is seen as contributing to this as communication and interaction distance is low.

Figure 7. JMA’s financial and human resources.

In terms of distribution of tasks and responsibilities within the JMA, unclear division of labour and decision-making caused some uncertainties in the management structure of the unit. Vagueness with regard to authority and delegation of tasks, in turn, can lead to problems in the implementation of the Programme. However, these issues were not noticeable from outside the JMA and have not led to problems in the overall implementation of the Programme. In the interviews it was indicated that this distribution of tasks and responsibilities will be tackled as part of the launch of the upcoming ENI Programme.

During the interviews, some desire was detectable to increase the role and commitment of the Internal Audit Service, which is provided by the Regional Council of Lapland to the Kolarctic Programme. The Internal Audit is a key mechanism in ensuring that procedures have been correctly applied within the JMA. A more thorough involvement and proactive role of this element would help to increase the quality of the Programme even further. Particular the lack of audits at the Branch Office in Russia and the need to see and audit the Programme from an international perspective were mentioned as areas of potential improvement during the interviews.

The role of the Branch Offices differs slightly from country to country. The Norwegian Branch Office, for example, is responsible for Norwegian equivalent funding and acts as an independent payment authority
working according to Norwegian rules, not EU rules. The Norwegian Branch Office also runs its own Kolarctic website with contents directed to the Norwegian audience, which is not always entirely in line with the JMA’s Kolarctic website. Co-ordination between the work of the JMA and the rather independent Norwegian Branch Office is thus of importance, particularly with regard to consistency of information given to potential projects applicants about the opportunities and practicalities of the Programme and financial co-ordination as regards project funding. The Luleå and Murmansk Branch Offices almost exclusively focus on liaising with participating bodies and regional sector authorities in the respective countries and support the JMA in the dissemination of information and aid in practical issue with regard to running the programme and projects.

**Figure 8.** Performance of Branch Offices in the overall Programme structure.

In the questionnaire, the role and activities of the BOs are seen in a positive light as 76% of the respondents (Figure 9) stated that the Branch offices play an important role in the Programme implementation (16% disagreed with this statement). The majority of respondents also stated that Branch offices are well informed about the projects implemented in their regions (64%), although a significant number were not able/knowledgeable to assess the statement (32%). Interaction and co-operation between the JMA and the BOs has been described as rather active during the interviews. Face-to-face meetings are arranged several times a year and there are frequent contacts by phone, email and video conferencing. Informational and promotional materials are generally produced by the JMA and then distributed by the Branch Offices. Branch offices can also independently organize events such as roundtables and seminars with the approval of the JMA. As regards the potential role of the Branch Offices in the future, a couple of points were raised during the interviews. Some interviewees saw the need to re-establish a Branch Office in Arkhangelsk. The vast geographical area covered single-handedly by the BO in Murmansk provides good arguments for this. Through increased applicant support, a second BO in Russia could also contribute to a potential increase in the number of Russian Lead Partners in the Programme, for which there has been a universal desire among the interviewees. An overall strengthening of the role of the BOs, for example with regard to project guidance and monitoring, was also mentioned in some interviews, as was the desire to increase in interaction between the BOs and the regional authorities in order the Programme with even more regional relevance.
5.3.2. Internal communication & external dissemination

Internal communication between the different bodies is of vital importance for the smooth implementation of the Programme. Initially it can be stated that language (English being the working language) is not seen as a barrier to the co-operation between the authorities and bodies involved in the Programme (80% of the questionnaire respondents agreed to the statement). The JMA, including the Branch Offices, represents a node and point of transmission between the remaining programming bodies, such as the JMC, JSC, RAGs and the projects. Communication and interaction between the JMA and its Branch Offices has been described in the previous section.

Table 12. Number of events and meetings (source: Kolarctic annual reports for 2010 – 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information seminars and workshops for applicants and project participants</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint meetings of JMA and branch offices (incl. meetings over Skype)</td>
<td>several</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENPI- and ENI-related meetings and conferences, organized by the EC, INTERACT, ministries, etc.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings of JMC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings of JSC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings of RAG</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>&gt;28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12 shows the numbers of events and meetings organised as part of the Kolarctic Programme for the years 2010 to 2014. As can be seen, the number of meetings and events is dependent on the programming phase. Naturally, information seminars and workshops for potential applicants were organised at the beginning of the programming period. Overall, the number of participants at the information seminars and workshops was 485 in 2010, 779 in 2011 and 557 in 2012. This initial phase of the Programme also saw regular meetings of the JSC and RAGs.

As can be seen from Figure 10, programming stakeholders see the accuracy and timeliness of information distributed from the JMA and BOs in a generally positive light, with ratings ‘excellent’ and ‘well’ accounting for well over 60% of the answers. Accuracy of the information provided by the BOs receives a slightly more critical reception, but our data does not allow us to examine whether there are any significant differences between the individual Branch Offices. Communication between the JMA and RAGs is mostly limited to the time after the submission of the project proposals within each Call. The JMA organizes the evaluation processes with the Regional Assessment Groups and a representative of the JMA and the respective Branch Office person is present at the RAG meetings where the projects and evaluations are discussed. The majority of RAG members interviewed emphasised that communication functioned well and that they were happy with the organisation of the evaluation process by the JMA. It was also stated that there was sufficient prior training, although some interviewees mentioned that even clearer instructions could be provided and more information. Communication and information with the JSC is mostly organized through the EMOS system, to which JSC members have external access. As regards to communication with the JMC, the information gathered from the interviews indicates that the information flows between the JMA and members of the JMC is in excellent shape. Interviewees stressed that meetings have been well prepared, all important information has been received on time and that the JMA has been responsive to specific requests for information.

![Figure 10. Accuracy and timeliness of information distributed from the JMA and BOs](image-url)
According to the Programming Document, the JMA is responsible for the distribution and dissemination of information on to the Programme; and to provide visibility on regional, national as well as international levels. In order to achieve this goal the JMA employed quite a wide range of communication activities during the ENPI Programme to spread information about impending calls and opportunities for potential applicants, including email lists, open information seminars in all countries participating in the Programme (in the respective languages), notices in local newspapers, small info seminars for particular groups, brochures, and also face-to-face communication door as the people can directly visit the JMA in Rovaniemi or Branch Offices in the participating regions (phone calls are also important for direct communication applicants and project partners). Specific training sessions, such as for example on Project Cycle Management, are an important element of a communicative and proactive approach with potential and existing project partners. However, interviews at the JMA revealed that communication with the external audience (also potential project applicants) could be strengthened and carried out more effectively if the Operational Unit of JMA had more human resources to engage in this task. There were also calls for a PR specialist to be employed by the JMA in order to strengthen strategic communication and information activities.

As can be seen from Figure 11, the quality of dissemination activities with regard to the utilisation of project results, visibility and effective programme implementation has, nevertheless, generally been seen in a positive light. The interview results allow for a more fine-grained analysis of dissemination activities. The overall visibility of the Programme has been described as good by some interviewees, including a strong and recognizable logo and a functioning and attractive website. Regional visibility is seen as being well developed, although national and international visibility is lower. As Kolarctic is a regionally-based programme, this should, however, not be seen as an overly important problem. However, the interviewees were hoping for stronger result-oriented dissemination activities, for example by providing mid-term reporting on achieved results and details about implementation and activities of current and ongoing projects.

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**Figure 11.** The quality of dissemination activities
5.3.3. Project calls and selection phase

Altogether there have been four Calls for Proposals in the Kolarctic ENPI CBC Programme 2007 -2013. The first Call for Proposal was implemented between January and April 2010 and the last one in spring 2012. As a result of these four Calls of Proposals, 51 projects were financed within the Programme, including 48 Standard Projects and three Large Scale Projects. The total number of applications and approved applications by Calls is presented in the following Figure. The total number of applications decreased after the 1st Call for Proposals, as the opening of it had been postponed. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Calls for Proposals were implemented with only two months in between, which has been reported to have an effect to the number of the applications received, especially in the 3rd Call.

![Figure 12. Number of applications received and approved (Annual report 2013).](image)

The number of the Lead Partners in the applications received under the 1st Call was the highest from Finland. This has been reported to be most probably the result of the experience of the Finnish organizations in the management of projects gained from other EU Programmes. The number of Finnish Lead Partners decreased during the course of the Programme, but remained the highest in all four Calls. The number of Russian Lead Partners applicants increased in the later phase of the Programme, being on the highest level during the 2nd Call. Organizations from Sweden and Norway acted as Lead Partners as well. In Sweden, the highest interest towards the Programme was shown during the 2nd Call, whereas in Norway it has been quite stable in all four Calls (Annual report 2013).
Russian partners are represented the most in the applications received in all four Calls for Proposals, which is due to the fact that the Programme rules require at least one Russian Partner to be in each project. However, the number of both Finnish and Russian Partners in the applications received decreased along the course of the Calls. The interest among the Swedish and Norwegian organizations to act as a Partner was the highest in the 2nd Call (Annual report 2013).

As it was earlier mentioned, Grants have also been awarded without Calls for Proposals. Large Scale Projects (LSPs) have a clear investment (infrastructure) character and the investments had to take place on the Russian side of the Programme area. Three Large Scale Projects were implemented in the Programme.

With the reception of the proposals, the project selection phase started. After proposals were registered, the JMA Operational Unit, acting as secretariat for the JSC, is responsible for the administrative check of the applications, in which the eligibility of the applicant, the partners and proposed activities is evaluated. Proposals passing this check continue to the regional assessment groups (RAGs) and JSC quality assessments. The JSC can also return rejected applications to the process. The quality assessment takes place after the administrative check. All administratively compliant proposals are sent for assessment to the RAGs. The task of the RAGs is to assess the content of the applications based on the evaluation grid published together with the guidelines. The JMA may ask applicants to provide clarifications based on the questions raised during the assessment of the RAGs. Based on the assessment by the RAGs, the JSC carries out the technical assessment by taking into account quality and regional development relevance. The JMC makes then the final decision on projects and the sums granted to them. The JMC should always make its decisions on the basis of consensus.

In order to evaluate their functioning, survey respondents were asked to give their assessment concerning the project calls and project selection procedures. The following Figure 14 shows the respondents’ opinion with regard to a number of given statements. Survey respondents consider the EMOS submission system as
working well and general guidelines for applicants are considered to be understandable and helpful. Stakeholders also state the opinion that approval of projects is made on the basis of compromise between participating countries, although political bargaining is naturally part of the decision-making process. About 70-80% of respondents agree with these statements. Respondents also see advice given by JMA also in a generally positive light, with ratings “agree completely” and “agree” accounting for approximately 60% of the answers. Open calls seem to be considered more desirable than thematic calls and applicants seem to be quite satisfied with the way the advice is received from the JMA during the project calls. The answers to the first statement shows that some of the respondents are of the opinion that provided funding for projects is less than the required amount. The majority of the respondents, however, have the opinion that the amount of funding has not been changed from the original applications. The time and resources spent on project preparation in relation to the value and benefit of potential projects receives a somewhat more critical reception. About half of the respondents agree or agree completely with this point of view.

Figure 14. Assessment of the statements concerning project calls and project selection procedures.

Questions concerning the preparation of project applications were also discussed during the interviews with Programme stakeholders. As regards to the functionality of the application form, the information gathered from the interviews indicates that there are differences of opinion in the matter. It was mentioned that preparation of application form, including the usability of the manual for applicants, is dependent on the experience of the applicant. Experienced applicants are in a better position than the newcomers. In addition,
experienced applicants often have existing networks or relationships with potential partners, which makes the application phase easier for them in that sense. It was, for example, suggested that the JMA could do more in bringing in new partners to the process and put them in touch with each other in order to provide better access and lower thresholds for novices. Another aspect that was dealt with during the interviews was JMA’s role in the application preparation phase. Hopes were raised to get more help from the JMA in project application phase particularly from the Swedish side of the Programme it was hoped that the process with the JMA should base more on dialogue and interaction between the applicant and the JMA or RAG. Anyhow, it should be remembered that the JMA is supposed to ensure equality and transparency in the process. Therefore, all of these hopes for increased interaction and negotiation cannot be fulfilled. In this respect, it was also mentioned that it is good that JMA is not involved in the politics that may be included in the selection process. Seminars concentrating on more specific topics such as financial management of projects were called for particularly from the Russian side of the Programme area.

In the questionnaire to the programming stakeholders, respondents were asked to consider some of the phases and features concerning the selection procedure. These opinions are presented in Figure 15. The application selection procedure is seen in a positive light as a whole. Only a few percent of the respondents regarded selection procedure as bad. The majority of the respondents also stated that documentation, equality, open calls for proposals and administrative checks were implemented/realised mainly well. A significant number of respondents stated that cost-effectiveness, explicitness and transparency were realized only moderately.

![Figure 15. Different phases of the selection procedure](image-url)
There were also interesting debates on the application selection procedure with the interviewees. There is common agreement that the project selection process is too complicated and lengthy and involving too many levels of decision-making. After the reception of a project application, the JMA initially carries out an administrative check, then the project quality will be evaluated by the RAGs and ultimately the JMC decide whether the project will be funded. This decision-making process can take between 3 to 5 months, which is perceived as far too long by the applicants. Some of the interviewed applicants also mentioned that it took about a year from submitting the project application until the signing of the grant contract. This means that application process is stretching also after the project approval before projects commence in practice.

Particularly the JSC level is seen as unnecessary and indeed there are plans to remove this level from the decision-making process on applications for the upcoming ENI period. This would mean that the Joint Monitoring Committee carried out the project selection directly on the basis of the RAG recommendations. The work of the RAG in assessing the quality of the applications, working in their respective countries but looking at applications from all regions, has received universal praise and is seen as important part of the programming activities. Some noticeable divergences in scoring were detected after each RAG submitted their evaluations. It was stated that these differences were the highest during the first call, after which the differences in scoring decreased to some extent.

As regard to the selection criteria of the project application, interviewed RAG members were mostly happy with the situation. The scoring is done by using a so-called evaluation grid and the RAG members go through all projects, not just the ones where their own country is involved. This is said to help RAG members see things also from the perspective of other countries. RAG members mentioned that the evaluation grid worked as a good base for their evaluations. The grid was described as transparent and systematic tool to assess project applications and it included all the essential perspectives. However, in some comments it was argued that the grid could be a bit shorter and therefore faster to score. The most difficult parts to judge during the RAG process were, according to the interviewees, the size of the budget and the competence of consortium/partners. The latter one was seen as hard to evaluate because there was not much information from Russian partners on the Internet. Horizontal objectives were raised also as a something to be clarified. Russian applicants were said to have problems in describing environmental and gender aspects in their applications. Describing these issues in the application seems to be more familiar to the Nordic partners.

According to the RAG members, the project applications scoring the highest points in their assessments were mostly selected by JSC and JMC in the end, but some exceptions were also noticed. It is hard to say what was behind these cases. In this context, it could be argued that the JMC project selection procedure could be made more transparent, including more information provided for RAG members and applicants about the reasoning behind decisions on project selection.

According to the information gathered from the interviews, the assessment process has to potentially be rethought in the future as a result of a number of reasons. First, RAG members, often high-level experts from regional authorities and organisations, invest a significant amount of time into the evaluation process. They do this in addition to their regular duties at their jobs. Probably a compensatory system has to be set up if continued participation of the best experts in the evaluation process is to be ensured. The time given for the evaluation of a project (2 weeks) is considered to be too little, particularly if the expert has to assess more than a few projects resulting from a Call.
Questionnaire respondents were also asked to evaluate the work of different Programme bodies in the selection process. A rather large proportion of respondents stated that they could not answer this question. The RAGs, the JMA, Branch offices and the JSC were considered as working well in the project selection procedures. The JMC, Regional authorities and National authorities also received mainly good assessments. The work and role of the European Commission was the most difficult actor to assess in this sense for the respondents because only approximately 40% of respondents could form opinion about the issue. Some interviewees mentioned that the regional authorities could be more committed and involved in the Programme steering and strategy setting particularly as the Programme provides them with added value as regards to transnational co-operation in regional development.

5.3.4. Monitoring and control at the Programme level

The monitoring and control system of the Programme is in general indicated to be good by the respondents of the questionnaire (see Figure 17). Overall, the JMA received positive feedback as regards the electronic monitoring system EMOS and IT-systems of the Programme. A total of 64% of the respondents assessed that the IT-systems of the Programme operate ‘excellently’ or ‘well’ and 60% provided the same scoring for the EMOS system. Naturally, it has to be borne in mind that these points of views originate from persons working within the Programme management, who do not necessary have real world experiences with the application of, for instance, the EMOS-system. Respondents also weighed very positively the follow-up system that is in place with regard to the projects as a whole and the appropriateness of instructions from the JMA.
Monitoring and the control of the Programme received negative valuation from the respondents in relation to the processing time of narrative reports and narrative reporting in general. In both cases about one third of the respondents assessed that the narrative reporting was managed only moderately in the Programme. According to the respondents, no major weaknesses were reported in the monitoring and control system of the Programme.

Figure 17 illustrates clearly that the respondents, representing members of the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Joint Selection Committee, the Regional Assessment Groups and the Branch Offices, do not have an overall overview of the Programme management with regard to monitoring and control. The frequency of ‘Don’t know’ responses is rather high concerning all statements about this aspect of Programme management. The is mostly due to the fact that the above-mentioned Programme bodies do not have project-specific responsibilities, and rely in their operations only on the information received from the JMA, whose task is to inform these bodies of all activities related to the Programme. In the previous sections, it has already been determined that the JMA has the main responsibility for informing the various Programme bodies, and that the JMA has succeeded well in these activities. However, it could also be argued that the questionnaire responses show that a relatively high share of persons do not have a thorough comprehension of Programme’s state and practices of monitoring at the moment. This could be interpreted in the way that the JMA could pay attention to increased and better provision of information to the different bodies of the Programme.

Figure 17. The functionality of the monitoring and control of the Programme

Also the interviewed members of the Joint Monitoring committee were reflecting rather positively on the overall monitoring and control system of the Programme. Naturally, there were some issues at the beginning of the Programme implementation when ENPI-regulations caused some administrative difficulties for the
overall monitoring process of the Programme. The general feeling among the interviewed persons within the JMC was that the JMA was dedicated to advance and develop monitoring arrangements in the Programme. JMC members did not see it as necessary to become more involved in the overall monitoring activities of the Programme.

Clarity of the guidelines and administrative procedures is a necessity for efficient performance of the Programme. In terms of the monitoring and control principles of the Programme, the questionnaire respondents assessed the guiding regulations and programme administrative procedures very positively (see Figure 18). This result is also supported by the fact that a clear majority of the respondents considers the Programme management as customer-oriented.

![Figure 18. Overall assessment of the monitoring and control principles of the Programme.](image)

Naturally, respondents representing Joint Monitoring Committee, Joint Selection Committee, Regional Assessment Groups and Branch Offices have little experience with financial reporting and payments of the Programme, which is reflected by the high amount of ‘I don’t know’ responses. The financial reporting and payments of the Programme were in any case judged to be well managed in the Programme. The lead partner principle defines that the lead partner operates as a linkage between the project and the Programme and has responsibility for making sure the project’s implementation. The respondents regarded this principle as working well. Respondents were most critical towards the statement that the participating countries have equal possibilities to influence the running of the Programme. In the completed interviews, especially the Norwegians raised the critical viewpoint that the Programme is more based on Finnish-Russian rather than real transnational co-operation. However, the Norwegians considered it as an important the option to have bilateral projects with Russian counterparts.

As noted in some interviews, the JMC, by becoming more involved in strategic aspects and guidance of the implementation process, could have a potential role in the strive towards a more strategic orientation of the
The tasks of the JMC include the acceptance JMA’s annual work programme and decision on the volume and allocation of the Programme’s resources for technical assistance and human resources, which can already be regarded as strategic as such. The JMC’s stronger strategic orientation does not, however, pertain to the selection or prioritisation of choosing separate strategic projects, as it is done in some Interreg programmes (e.g. Lighthouse projects in the Baltic Sea Region Programme), although, as some interviewees mentioned, large-scale projects have received particular attention from the JMC.

The involvement of JMC members and their opportunities to react to different monitoring or strategic questions within the Programme implementation relies heavily on JMA’s responsiveness and willingness to provide the necessary information. In practice, the JMC receives and accepts annual reports from the JMA about various monitoring activities. This was seen as sufficient for most of the interviewed JMC members. It was also revealed that the JMA is responsive to particular and separate requests for further information. Some interviewees wished for more information from the JMA about the monitoring activities within the Programme as the provided information was too general. However, none of the interviewed persons were unsatisfied for the information delivery of the JMA.

JMC members also assessed the JMA’s work on project monitoring and control positively. They did not see it as necessary or important to widen the JMC’s responsibilities in this regard. Some interviewees underlined the importance of receiving more information about ongoing projects in the Programme. This required information does not directly relate to the monitoring and control tasks of the JMA with regard to the projects but rather to the overall implementation of the Programme. To some extent this wish relates to the above presented results of the questionnaire, in which the number of ‘don’t know’ responses was rather high.

Generally there were no major differences in responses between the participating countries in relation to overall monitoring of the Programme. Nevertheless, one issue that was raised in the interviews with the members of the JMC was the fact that the Kolarctic Programme is to some extent separated in some monitoring and control aspects. The Norwegian Branch Office in Vadsø, part of Finnmark County Authority, also acts as Norwegian secretariat and payment authority on behalf of the Norwegian Programme partnership. The two-tier system, i.e. divided responsibilities between JMA in Rovaniemi and Norwegian Branch Office in Vadsø, raised some discussion about fairness between the countries in JMA’s activities in the beginning of the Programme. On the one hand, a Norwegian interviewee mentioned that the JMA is partial and prioritises more Finnish/Russian than Swedish/Norwegian interests. This has caused some tensions between the JMA and Vadsø branch Office but the problems have not overwhelmingly caused problems for the co-operation. On the other hand, other Norwegian interviewees did not consider this relationship as problematic one. All interviewees in Norwegian side underlined the importance of their option to have bilateral projects with Russian counterparts.

The basic tools for the JMA in project monitoring are the payment requests, narrative interim report, narrative final reports and possible project updates. The three first ones are prepared by the lead partner in the Programme’s electronic monitoring system (EMOS) on the basis of information and documents received from the project partners. Separate project updates can be demanded by the JMA, to which the project’s lead partner has to response within 15 working days also in the EMOS-system. The lead partner is responsible for sending all required reports to the JMA. The contact person at the JMA first checks the reports and inquires possible amendments or changes from the lead partner. After this first check, the Financial Unit is controlling the auditing reports by comparing them with the financial report. The Financial Unit will also check the possible tendering documents and requests copies of receipts from the lead partner if they have
noticed some inconsistency after sample control from different budget lines. Operational control of the project activities include also the checking of the minutes of project and other meetings as well as produced material in the project. An important dimension in the financial control is also the justification of non-eligible costs, administrative overheads and currency exchange.

The Financial Unit of the JMA is crucial for the overall monitoring of the Programme, but its activities in this respect are somewhat separated from the monitoring tasks of the Operational Unit of the JMA. Although the regulatory aspects have been functioning well from point of view of both units, it seems that connections between Financial Unit and Operational Unit in terms of the production of monitoring data could be stronger. A representative of the Financial Unit during the interviews raised the need to pay more attention to auditors’ reporting forms. This report form is derived from the Practical Guide (PraG) and is deemed to be not detailed enough. Auditors’ report forms have contained a quite high number of mistakes, and there is also a rather remarkable variation between auditors’ efforts in terms of quality. Therefore, the JMA has developed templates by themselves for the project implementers. These documents are also available in Russia, which makes reporting procedures a lot easier especially for the Russian counterparts.

The Financial Unit representative also mentioned that the maximum of 7% administrative overhead has caused some difficulties during the processing of the projects’ financial reports. The correct overhead percentage of the financial report covers the whole project implementation period and total costs in the project. The issue concerning administrative overhead is concrete as the project lead partner reports all costs to the JMA’s Financial Unit. All project partners have not applied for the administrative overheads although they are, according to the Grant Contract, entitled to apply for it. On the one hand, the problem lies with the project partners not knowing about this aspect and, on the other hand, the problem is rooted in the strict interpretation of the auditors. The latter is the case among Russian project partners where the auditors have not accepted any costs without receipts for the project. As a solution, the JMA’s Financial Unit processed the financial reports by calculating themselves the administrative overheads according to the Grant Contract for each project even though the projects had not applied overheads in their financial reports. However, the Commission did not accept this procedure due to the fact that the rules stipulate that the Programme can fund only the amount applied for by the projects.

The requests for clarification by the Financial Unit often revolved around tendering aspects, which turned out to be a difficult procedure for project implementers; lead partners also approached the Financial Unit with questions dealing with tendering processes directly. Normally, the payments for a particular project are made to the lead partner who transfers the payment on to other partners in the project. The Financial Unit does not have an overview of the payments taking place within a project. In case the lead partners is Russian, the JMA’s Financial Unit normally transfers funding directly to partners for in Sweden, Norway or Finland as it is unnecessary to circulate payments through a Russian rouble account.

The link between the financial and narrative reports of the projects is relatively weak as there is only limited cross-checking carried out between them. The Financial Unit representative mentioned that feedback from projects is not systematically collected, as it is procedure in the JMA’s Operational Unit. This kind of feedback process might be a useful tool for the Financial Unit, since many project partners are rather unexperienced in EU-projects and especially financial reporting procedures. However, the JMA has received positive feedback from the project actors as regards the clarity requests of clarification.

The contact person for a project follows its implementation and controls the narrative reporting generated by the lead partner. The contact person is nominated for a certain project in the Grant Contract. For
programme monitoring purposes as a whole, contact persons have an important position within the Operational Unit of the JMA. The contact person is not only an important person for projects as a contact at the JMA, but also for delivering information from the JMA to the project level. Normally, contact persons also attend project meetings and advisory boards especially during the initial phases of a project. However, it was also underlined by the JMA representatives that all projects are different and require also different levels and types of attention. Contact persons do not interfere with projects too much but rather monitor that the project is implemented according to its plan and is achieving the targeted results.

Financial reporting is naturally important, but the narrative reporting provides a thorough crosscut of a project’s activities, operations and achieved results during the reporting period in question. The JMA has during the Programme implementation emphasised the importance of narrative reporting though various information and training courses. What comes to efficient monitoring of the projects, the JMA has designed and introduced an IPQM (Internal Project Qualitative Monitoring) system. IPQM is intended to act as a warning mechanism that allows the JMA and the project partners to follow the project implementation and to alert a project to potential malfunctions and failures. The idea of IPQM is to discover possible problems before they develop critical for the project implementation. The system also assists projects to recognise solutions for existing problems themselves. The JMA conducts the IPQM separately from the above mentioned regular reporting systems. IPQM is processed through a web-based questionnaire sent to lead partner of the project. It is based on five OECD evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability). In addition to IPQM, the JMA also applies other information sources such as contacts with projects, independent ROM reports, and information requests to lead partners.

The Kolarctic Programme has undergone three ROM (Results Oriented-Monitoring) processes: the first one in October 2011, second one in January 2013 and third one in June 2015. The ROM process is an impartial review of EU funded policy programmes. It is performed in all EU member states through on-site assessments of cohesion policy interventions that are weighed against OECD evaluation criteria. However, the ROM provides only a snapshot of the implementation of the Programme within a given moment. Therefore, it does not really function as a tool for programme management or monitoring, although it was planned and initiated for these kinds of purposes. Generally, ROM process produces in each case recommendation for the improvement of the implementation of programmes and underlines some dimensions necessary to pay attention in the future. Generally, the JMA Operational Unit personnel were rather critical towards ROM process, because the ROM report in 2011 included clear mistakes, for instance in Programme name. IPQM was introduced after the second ROM process. This was partly due to the feedback received in the ROM reports.

The first IPQM questionnaire was sent to the projects at the beginning of 2013. Simultaneously, a separate IPMQ Guidelines report was published and the IPMQ system was also introduced in the training sessions for the project implementers. According to the interviewed persons at the JMA, the IPQM system has worked properly and project implementers have been relatively satisfied with the introduced system. However, the interviewees at the JMA underlined also that IPQM is additional tool to the official narrative reports and financial reports from the projects.

On the basis of generated IPQM-survey and information from other relevant sources, each project is classified according to a no risk, low risk and high risk scale. ‘No risk’ reflects certainty to produce targeted results; ‘low risk’ identification of some issues that might endanger producing targeted results and ‘high risk’ clearly recognised issues that include a potentiality of not producing the expected results. The higher the
scored risk in the project is the more follow-up is necessitated by the JMA towards the project. A new inquiry into projects through the IPQM system will depend on what risk-level they were assigned; ‘High risk’ indicates a new IPQM session after a month, ‘low risk’ after three months and ‘no risk’ after six months. On the basis of this process, the overall situation of projects is evaluated and further monitored through a Project Monitoring Plan, which is designed after the IPQM-process for each of the project in order to organise required activities derived from the IPQM. The Project Monitoring Plan is applied in particular if there are identified issues that necessitate follow-up or specific action.

The IPQM Guidelines report from January 2013 describes the main dimensions of IPQM system in relation to other applied Programme and EU level monitoring system. On the basis of this, the Guidelines provide concrete descriptions and recommendations for action in applying IPQM system. It is expected that not only the JMA but also the projects shall promote and carry out the project monitoring in order to develop and improve their internal activities. The Guidelines give clear pointers on how the IPQM system has become part of the monitoring process in the Programme, including the alignment between the Monitoring by EC Task Managers (TM) organised by European Commission (EC), Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM), and Audit of projects. It is evident that there were, as the ROM reviewers also noted in their reports in 2011 and 2013, some shortcomings of a systemic approach to evaluate activities in the projects and Programme as a whole. Introduction of the IPQM system has made it possible to assess the effectiveness and efficiency as well as relevance of the Programme operations not only at the project level but also on the Programme level as a whole.

The IPQM has proved its importance as a support mechanism for the projects through its function as a self-evaluation system. All interviewed persons in the JMA emphasised the significance of IPQM system; they underlined that projects have taken it on board very well and project leaders respond to the questions in a very honest fashion. Obviously, character of responses from the projects to the IPQM depends on who is actually filling the web-based questionnaire. Lead partner’s response does not necessarily reflect or is not shared among the project partners. It was also underlined in the comments of JMA representatives that the answers can be biased as a result of the respondents wanting to satisfy the JMA and thus shield them from further inquiry by the JMA. As a matter a fact, particular problems that have arisen with and within the projects have seldom been visible in the IPQM. Therefore, representatives of the JMA also questioned the real value of the IPQM as a problem identification tool. The information value of the IPQM could be increased by carrying out

The IPQM system has become a similar and complementary arrangement to the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) that is applied as compulsory process during the application phase. LFA is part of the overall Project Cycle Management procedure, which has been applied to European Union-funded projects already from the beginning 1990s. IPQM forms functional link with LFA within the Programme structure as both are designed and designated to strengthen and advance the project implementation in the Programme. Some JMC members also raised the importance of getting more thorough information about the Programme implementation.

The Customer-oriented approach has been introduced by the JMA to improve their overall service provided towards project applicants, project implementers and other stakeholders relevant for the implementation of the Programme. In the Terms of Reference of this evaluation this approach was also underlined by the JMA by stating that the evaluation has to be processed “using customer-oriented evaluation approach”. In this sense, as customers are regarded according to Terms of Reference as final beneficiaries, project partners and
the Programme regions. This evaluation process approaches the customer oriented approach as a cross-cutting theme in the whole Programme structure.

The interviews completed at the JMA convinced the evaluators that the customer-oriented approach represents a vital part of the overall strategy and working processes at the JMA. This, in principle, means that the JMA does not intend to act solely as an administrator of the Programme, but rather works flexibly and proactively in promoting the Programme. The purpose is not to control project activities, but to monitor and to provide assistance if required; in the form of above described IPQM-system, for instance. This approach also means that new projects receive more attention and support. An important dimension of the customer-oriented approach is also the ‘softening the rules’ within the confines of the legislation. Representatives of the JMA mentioned in the interview that the Programme applies more personal guidance towards the projects as compared to the other ENPI Programmes. The JMA has received positive feedback from the project implementers especially on their ability to flexibly resolve basic technical problems. An important element of the customer-oriented approach is the various training sessions organised, which not only deal with normal monitoring and reporting issues, but with common mistakes and misunderstandings.

The customer-oriented approach is very much an inbuilt strategy approach in the everyday work of the JMA. However, it is not stated or emphasised in any of the official documents of the Programme. One would expect that a clear emphasis related to everyday monitoring and controlling activities in the JMA is also clearly stated in the basic documents of the Programme. However, the main issue is not to have the customer-oriented approach proclaimed in all strategic documents of the Programme, but, as it is the case now, to implement it as a natural part of all daily activities. In case of Kolarctic, the customer-oriented approach is an implicit strategy that is put into practice, rather than an explicit strategy that is not.

5.4 Conclusions and recommendations on Programme performance and management

This mid-term evaluation and the resulting report at hand aims to assess the implementation, coordination and management of the Kolarctic CBC 2007-2013 Programme, particularly whether the institutional arrangements in place for its management are appropriate whether the various components of the system function efficiently.

With regard to overall Programme performance and outputs, the evaluation has shown that almost all reported general level indicators and indicators at the priority level have been realised to a significantly greater extent than expected, despite the fact that not all projects have yet been finalised. However, it is difficult that assess whether the reason for this (over)performance is that projects have been very successful in their implementation or that initial targets were set too low. The fulfilling of the targets and expectations provide the ground for a positive impact of the Programme to regional and cross-border development. However, with regard to the impacts of the Programme it can be stated that peripherality and the problems it creates in the Kolarctic area is a result of the process of historical development, and it would be naive to expect that a seven-year programme with quite limited resources can make a major change in this respect. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the development of CBC is a factor contributing towards gradual alleviation of the peripherality syndrome.
The Kolarctic Programme is an important programme for supporting international co-operation and in the current political situation its relevance in that sense has become even more pronounced. With regard to regional development, peripherality of the Programme area is an unavoidable fact. Therefore, the Programme has to focus more on the identification and tackling of particular strengths and weaknesses that may or may not be part of the wider peripherality syndrome.

In terms of interaction with the relevant public institutions and governments, it can be stated that the Programme does not encounter problems in its interaction with these. National as well as regional and local authorities do not interfere in its implementation to a significant extent and support the Programme. EU regulations have, particularly at the beginning of the programming period, resulted in some management challenges, but these have been resolved or alleviated during the course of the Programme.

With regard to the management of the Programme and interaction/communication between the different programming bodies, it can be stated that the overall situation within and working mechanisms of the Programme is seen as working very well by the surveyed and interviewed programme actors. The support that is provided by the JMA/Branch Offices to the JMC, RAGs, JSC and projects is judged positively, with only minor potential fields for improvement, which have been outlined in more detail in the report.

With regard to management within the JMA, there is some concern over workloads and insufficient staff at the Operational Unit; particularly during intense phases such as the initial Calls for Proposals and the transition towards the new Programmes, although these challenges are not made visible to other Programme bodies, such as the JMC. Shortage of human resources can result in reduced engagement and promotion of longer term planning and strategic communication and dissemination with regard to the activities of the JMA. A significant strengthening of information and communication activities could also result in the improved dissemination of project and programme results towards the appropriate audience, which would, in turn, contribute to the visibility and success of the Programme.

With regard to the programming procedures, project calls and the selection procedures, have been carefully planned to provide applicants equal possibilities to obtain project funding. The project calls and application selection are realised generally well and with transparency in the Programme. There are however some features to be considered regarding the project calls and selection procedure. Some significant differences were identified in the preconditions for applying for funding. Preparation of application form, including the usability of the manual for applicants, is dependent on the experience of the applicant. Experienced applicants are in a better position than the newcomers. In addition, experienced applicants often have existing networks or relationships with potential partners, which make the application phase easier for them. This may result in that it is quite hard to enlarge the group of lead partners and partners in the Programme.

From the perspective of the applicants, the project selection process has been characterised as being too complicated and lengthy and involving too many levels of decision-making, although this process has been the result and reflection of administrative and political considerations. This decision-making process including the signing of the grant contract is perceived as far too long, although applicants can themselves speed up the process themselves by carefully preparing the budget and implementation plan of their proposed projects. Particularly the JSC level is seen as unnecessary and indeed there are plans to remove this level from the decision-making process on applications for the upcoming ENI period.

The work of the RAGs in assessing the quality of the applications has received universal praise and is seen as an important part of the project selection. The evaluation grid was described as a transparent and systematic
tool to assess project applications and it included all the necessary perspectives. The most difficult parts to judge during the RAG process were the size of the budget and the competence of the consortium partners. There was concern among the interviewees about the RAG system in the future as there is no compensatory scheme and experts invest a significant amount of time into the evaluation process. It appears that most RAG members take part in the project evaluation in addition to their regular duties at their jobs. Therefore a compensatory system, or stronger commitment by the national institutions to support their involvement in evaluation and funding decisions with regard to national co-funding, has to be considered to be set up if continued participation of the best RAG experts in the evaluation process is to be ensured.

Generally, the respondents to the questionnaire and interviewed persons were very satisfied with the monitoring and control system in place. As regards the monitoring of the projects, the IPQM-system has proved its strength to act as a warning mechanism at the project level. The system is well structured and does not represent heavy burden for the lead partners. IPQM could be slightly improved by directing the questionnaire also to project partners rather than only to the lead partner. The idea of IPQM is to discover possible issues before they develop into critical problems for the project implementation.

The customer oriented approach, despite being only an implicit strategy, appears to permeate all activities at the JMA. The approach is realised both on project and on the Programme level. The overall positive answers received from the respondents reflect clearly that this approach has been put into practice.
6. Managing the projects

This chapter presents opinions of representatives of 11 selected projects in respect of the Kolarctic programme, their experiences in project implementation, as well as brief reviews of these projects. The chapter is written on the basis of data from the EMOS system (project applications, IPMQ statements, and projects' interim and final reports), a structured survey and a series of semi-structured interviews with project representatives, who included lead partners, partners and main beneficiaries.

6.1. Project calls and selection phase

The first aspect, which was evaluated within the framework of this study, was the dissemination of information about the Programme in general and about its calls for proposals in particular. According to representatives of the selected projects, both JMA and branch offices distributed accurate information in a timely fashion (see Figure 19). The respondents have particularly commended JMA and branch offices for good organization of information seminars and workshops for applicants and project partners. The only major shortcoming was insufficient funding for the Arkhangelsk branch office, where one half-time employee could not alone satisfy information needs of this vast region.

![Figure 19. Answers to the question: "Please assess the quality of information dissemination in the Programme?" (Source: Evaluation survey, 2015)](image)

Representatives of the projects and their beneficiaries were also asked to assess give assessment concerning the project calls and project selection procedures in the evaluation. Figure 20 shows that interviewees see the application form as clear and simple to use and general guidelines for applicants are considered understandable and helpful. The project selection criteria are also seen as clear enough. The respondents had difficulties in answering to the question whether the open calls or thematic calls would be better as over half of the interviewees could not provide an answer to this question. Those who could answer were of the opinion that open calls are more suitable. Representatives and beneficiaries of the projects see advice given by JMA also in a very positive light, with ratings “strongly agree” and “agree” accounting for approximately 75% of the answers.
About one third of the respondents held the opinion that provided funding to projects was less than the required amount. The majority of respondents however did not share this view. The time and resources spent on project preparation in relation to the value and benefit of the projects were considered well-justified according to an overwhelming majority of the interviewed.

**Figure 20.** Answers to the question: Please evaluate the following statements concerning project calls and project selection procedures

Representatives and beneficiaries of projects were also asked to assess the project selection procedure. Their opinions are presented in Figure 21. On the whole, the selection procedure is seen as working well. Likewise, the majority of respondents stated that financial negotiations preceding the signing of grant contracts and organisation of calls for proposals, were carried out well or very well. A significant number of respondents were also well satisfied with explicitness and transparency of selection procedures. The most divided opinions concerned cost efficiency of the procedures.. A lot of interviewees commented that cost-efficiency would be higher if the process did not take so much time. It was suggested that one level of decision-making should be removed from the application process in order to make project selection more straightforward and efficient. In addition, it was mentioned that the project preparation procedure was easier for larger organisations, which might be then reason why smaller organisations regarded this procedure as not quite cost-efficient for them.
Figure 21. Answers to the question: How do you assess the following phases and features of the project selection procedure?

6.2. Project implementation

Project participants and beneficiaries have been also asked to evaluate a number of specific aspects of implementation of the Programme (see Figure 22). According to their opinions, there were no major shortcomings in respect of the Programme’s guiding regulations for project participants, administrative procedures, transfers of money from JMA to partners, and cooperation between lead partners and partners. A significant number of respondents (circa 28%) were not satisfied with the waiting time for project funding decisions, which they considered too lengthy. However, a majority of respondents (60%) saw no problems in this field.

Figure 22. Evaluation of some aspects of implementation of the Kolarctic Programme.
In relation to management issues hampering the implementation of the projects, the respondents underlined some general points discussed already in previous paragraphs. Basically most of the respondents did not raise any particular issues. Just one respondent noted that his project experienced difficulties in identifying a relevant scientific partner within the Programme region. One more critical comment concerned the allegedly diverging advice from the JMA and the Branch Offices.

Project participants and beneficiaries also evaluated some aspects of JMA’s work (see Figure 23). In all respects this work has been evaluated as good or very good. The respondents were particularly satisfied with various forms of support, which the JMA offered to projects. Measures of control and functioning of EMOS have also been assessed very favourably. Overall comments of the respondents included some negative aspects on monitoring related issues but they reflected mostly project internal coherence and not interaction with the JMA.

The Kolarctic Programme has pursued three aims, and the respondents have been asked to evaluate to what extent their projects have contributed to the achievement of these aims (see Figure 24). According to the respondents, their projects have greatly stimulated multilateral cross-border cooperation and managed to reduce peripherality of this region, thus making a substantial contribution towards achieving these aims. Much fewer respondents noted that their projects reduced the problems caused by the region’s peripherality. Still a majority of respondents (57%) held the opinion that their projects succeeded in this respect. The Kolarctic perspective of peripherality is something to which various authorities and stakeholders can easily engage with and relate to. Promotion of multilateral cross-border co-operation builds on a strong basis of traditional co-operation in Barents region, where connections already existed among the main stakeholders and authorities. However, the comments of respondents also underline importance of the Programme in generating co-operation activities in regional and local level.
Figure 24. Evaluation of the contribution of projects to the aims of the Programme

As we consider the achieved objectives in the projects, a clear majority of the projects announced that they have reached the set objectives. Only three of evaluated eleven projects had difficulties in reaching the objectives. Reasons for not reaching the objectives were connected to such issues as too complicated project structure as well as delays with transfers of payments to the projects. We have to bear in mind that negative aspects did not refer to overall objectives of the projects but rather to some particular issues in project implementation. Positive commentary of the achievements was normally linked to improvement of particular activities or processes, sharing experiences and best practices, and development of new businesses in the Programme area.

Figure 25 illustrates the possibilities to implement similar projects without the support from the Kolarctic Programme. This figure shows that most of the projects would not be implemented without Kolarctic’s funding. According to respondents, some smaller-scale initiatives could be implemented on account of other sources, but in respect of funding for cross-border activities the Programme has been absolutely indispensable. On the basis of comments from the interviews, the significance of Kolarctic funding was important in three ways. First, Kolarctic was the only available funding opportunity as a result of the lack of equivalent local/regional sources of funding. Second, there probably would have been a possibility to implement the project activities with other funding sources, but only on a relatively limited scale. Third, the Kolarctic funding possibilities was actually the only way to involve partners from the neighbouring countries in the project activities.
In respect to the operational environment, the projects did not encounter significant problems (see Figure 26). Only 13% of the assessed projects faced some difficulties with the regional authorities or other authorities during their project activities. Several respondents mentioned that municipal authorities, which participated in projects, were supportive towards various project activities. The geopolitical situation did not appear to affect projects negatively. A majority of respondents were convinced that their projects reflected the needs of regions in the Kolarctic area.

6.3. Case projects

The project level aspect was further examined in the evaluation by having a closer look on the selected projects. The case project selection was made by the client of the evaluation and it included altogether 11 projects. The project selection was based on the fact that these 11 projects were not examined earlier in the Programme internal evaluation or in the ROM process. Therefore the project selection also aims at producing new project level evaluation information for the client. The case studies were made based on the existing monitoring data and documentation as well as gathered information from the representatives and beneficiaries of these projects. The chosen case study projects are seen in the following table.
Table 16. Selected case study projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Lead partner</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme priority 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-TOUR: Cooperation and Development of Tourism Business between SME’s in Barents (KO428)</td>
<td>Svefi Academy</td>
<td>993 375 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENERU - Efficient Energy Management in Barents Region (KO533)</td>
<td>Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences</td>
<td>944 324 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRACTICE FUTURE - an Open Innovation Local Business and Students Network in the Barents Region (KO394)</td>
<td>Finnmark University College / Høgskolen i Finnmark</td>
<td>838 581 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reindeer hide - quality high (KO547)</td>
<td>Lapin Nahka Oy</td>
<td>624 520 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian-Swedish Council for SME</td>
<td>Företagarna Norrbotten Service AB</td>
<td>660 249 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme priority 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEAC Children and Youth At Risk in the Barents Region 2012-2015 (KO466)</td>
<td>Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, Northern Norway</td>
<td>1 858 266 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CETIA - Coastal environment, technology and innovation in the Arctic (KO187)</td>
<td>University of Tromsø</td>
<td>1 916 268 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement of Oil Spill Response System by Establishing Oil Database (KO437)</td>
<td>FBI State Regional Centre for standardization, Metrology and Testing in the Murmansk Region (MCSM)</td>
<td>1 004 211 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme priority 3</td>
<td>CYB - Connecting Young Barents (KO441)</td>
<td>Non-commercial partnership Education, innovation and scientific research union &quot;Socium+&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited Abilities - Unlimited Potential (KO343)</td>
<td>The Regional Public Organisation of the Disabled “Nadezhda”, Russia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case project selection included projects from all of the Programme area countries: four lead partners of the projects were from Russia, three from Finland and Norway and two from Sweden. Six case projects were funded from the Programme priority 1, three projects from Programme priority 2 and two projects from Programme priority 3. The following chapters will present the project case studies one by one.

**Co-TOUR: Cooperation and Development of Tourism Business between SME’s in Barents**

**Background**

Co-TOUR project operates between Northern Sweden, Northern Finland and North-western Russia and aims to develop and strengthen the tourism industry in the countries. The project acts mainly in different project areas by helping small and medium-sized enterprises, tourist attractions and hotels to become more visible, competitive and internationally attractive to each other’s markets. This is accomplished through cooperation where the target groups can take advantage of knowledge, improve, develop and adapt their products after each other’s markets, create and package common products over destination borders, build contacts with key persons, participating in marketing and sales trips, as well as in joint marketing materials across the whole region.

**Objectives**

The specific activities of the project can be defined into the three objectives. 1) To gain more knowledge about each other’s travel markets and get better understanding of the demands; to boost cooperation between 15 regions and 450 small and medium-sized destinations, tourist attractions, hotels and SMEs in order to become more competitive and visible in the project regions. 2) To adjust and improve existing products, develop and offer new jointly packaged products and services, thus becoming more attractive for the tourists from the project regions and adjacent areas even during the low seasons. 3) To produce explicit and accessible information about destinations in the designated languages and to reach out to tour operators, tourist information offices and travellers as well as to exploit joint packaging and marketing opportunities with the bigger and well-known destinations.
Implementation

Svefi Academy from Sweden worked as a lead partner. Other partners were MIPKI (Interindustrial Institute for Staff Development and Information), Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Visit Gellivare Lapland, Haparanda Stad, Piteå Presenterar, Kiruna Lapland Turistbyrå, Boden Turism, Heart of Lapland, Municipality of Ustainskiy District of Archangelsk Region, Municipality of Gatchina District, Association The Hotels Club and Hotel School, State Historic and Architectural Museum Solovky and Tourism Association of Murmansk Golfstream.

There has been some arguing between the partners about the way to implement the project and about the responsibilities. There were also other conflict of interests and the different ways of doing things also complicated the cooperation. All this supported the evolvement that at least some of the partners ended up doing own individual minor parts in the project and at worst it had felt like being the assistant to the lead partner. These problems were solved in due course so that the project was functional to fulfil its planned activities. However, this left some shadows for the project implementation. The partner network appeared to be somewhat bilateral and the cooperation occurred mainly between the lead partner and single partners resulting that partners were left quite unknown to each other. These complications did not however reflect to the target group level, which was noticed and taken into consideration rather well.

Administration

The project representative did not express criticism in respect of JMA or Branch Offices. Project actors were dealing mostly with the JMA. There were some problems in securing national co-funding in Sweden making the whole application phase more insecure.

Results and impacts

The project has carried out activities as educational workshops and seminars, study visits, familiarization trips, job shadowing and experience exchange of the hotel personnel, preparation visits before the FAMtrips, translation of the company or marketing materials, creating and publishing of the printed and electronic marketing materials. Over 600 companies took part or were involved at least in one or several of project activities. The companies in the respective countries were introduced to 700 counterparts within the cross-border business activities between SMEs. The educational activities of the project in Sweden, Finland and Russia used the data collected through the market research with 400 people and thorough analysis of the marketing reports from Russia, Finland and Sweden reaching 500 companies in all the countries.

The changes in the political and economic situation in Russia in 2014 had an impact on the project and on the project regions. The number of tourists coming to the project regions from abroad decreased due to that reason but still project managed to finish its activities with fairly good quantitative results close to the levels that were expected. The objective regarding the formation of travel packages, which are joint-packages of several firms, was not realised well.

The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area

Despite the challenges emerging in the political and economic situation the project managed to improve cooperation in the region’s tourist branch rather well. It produced marketing material and promoted networking of the enterprises. The project established direct business links between the Swedish, Finnish and Russian companies. It improved knowledge among the companies about the Russian tourist market, needs and requests of the Russian tourists, established personal business contacts with the main tour operators from Murmansk, St. Petersburg and Moscow interested in the Swedish and Finnish project regions.
The local companies have acquired knowledge and got a possibility to adapt their existing products for the Russian market or create new ones with the help of the data provided. The Russian companies have acquired knowledge to do the same in Russia for the Nordic tourists and companies. There should also be expectations that the quality of the services in the branch will be improved due to the work of the project.

**ENERU – Efficient Energy Management in the Barents region**

**Background**

ENERU project targeted to strengthen cross-border co-operation in the energy management sector and to increase business cooperation between the South Kola region in Russia, Finnish Lapland and Norrbotten in Sweden. The project established a multidisciplinary cross-border network, which joined energy sector experts, local energy companies, authorities, educational and research organisations and other relevant stakeholders, pursued this goal. The aim of the network was to transfer the knowledge, methodology and practical know-how of efficient energy usage and renewable energy solutions within the region.

**Objectives**

Overall objective of the project was the development of cross border cooperation in energy management in programme area in order to promote economic and social development. Specific objective was to enhance know-how on energy management solutions by creating a network and transferring knowledge, methodology and practical know-how of efficient energy usage and renewable energy solutions between participating regions.

**Implementation**

The ENERU network involved Lapland University of Applied Sciences (lead partner), Bionova Ltd, Micropolis Il and Kemi-Tornionlaakso Municipal Education and Training Consortium Lappia from Finland, Bothnian Arc and Piteå Municipality from Sweden, Institute of the Industrial Ecology Problems of the North of the Kola and Cities of Kandalaksha and Kirovsk in Russia. In order to identify potential for energy efficient management, the project experts studied current situation with energy consumption in the target regions, conducted energy audits in the pilot buildings in Russia and developed adjusted audit methodology based on international practices. Furthermore, project experts produced analysis on current and potential use of renewable energy in South Kola region.

The findings of the research and fieldwork were used for the development of the Action Plan for the cities of Kirovsk and Kandalaksha with the aim to share know-how and to assist the municipalities with planning and implementing future energy efficiency activities. The goals of the project were achieved by forming a multidisciplinary co-operation structures on the basis of triple-helix model. The collaboration was based on mutual benefits, in which the educational institutes were acting as generators and distributors of knowledge and business sources of productive activity. Public authorities had a role as guarantee of the established rules and agreements.

**Administration**

Co-operation between the project partners went well and got better towards the end of the project. However, there was one problem in the beginning of the project when the lead partner had to change one partner to another one. The result was that the project got three new partners from Russia instead of that one. With them the project got the expertise what was needed and the change was beneficial for the project.
Also the participation of all partners was not as wide as was planned and budgeted. In addition, there were difficulties with accounting, financial reporting and payments between the project partners.

**Results and impacts**

The project reached the set objectives and intended results successfully within the project time and budget. One of the best results has been the network established in ENERU project. Multidisciplinary approach to develop energy efficiency was noticed the most efficient way to increase the awareness of energy issues. The established network has actively transferred knowledge, methodologies and practical knowhow of efficient energy usage and renewable energy solutions inside and outside of the area. Market pre-studies will support business-developing actors to plan future activities in the Barents region. There was also cooperation between schools of Piteå and Kandalaksha where has raised awareness of the theme and promoted use of renewable energy sources and successfully implemented solutions.

**The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area**

The project achieved its objectives. It has received positive feedback from stakeholders in all partner countries. Partners gained new knowledge and understanding on energy issues. Triple-helix collaboration between local authorities, science organisations and businesses was considered very useful. The project was recognized and awarded as “The best foreign project in energy efficiency” by the Ministry of Energy of Russian Federation and “The best foreign project in the field of energy efficiency, recommended for implementation in the Russian Federation” at National competition for the energy efficiency projects.

**Reindeer hide – quality high**

**Background**

Reindeer hide – quality hide project targets to promote economic and social development related to reindeer herding and to improve working environment of slaughterhouses in Russia, and thereby supporting traditional livelihood ensure safety of local reindeer herders. Project aims to solve social and economic problems of reindeer owners by raising the level of quality of raw reindeer hides.

**Objectives**

The direct intention of the project is to survey current practices employed at reindeer slaughterhouses participating in the project, record the problematic ways of working and to compile a report of the current situation. Following this, the needs of further processing facilities will be surveyed from the industry perspective. After the basic surveying stage, instructions and processes will be created and “run in” during the two slaughtering seasons.

**Implementation**

Lapin Nahka ltd. from Finland was the lead partner of the project. Project partners were ALEX Co. Ltd. Russia and Autonomous NonProfit Organisation "Information Research Centre "Yasavey Manzara" from Russia. The project was quite close to remain without funding. At first stage it was put in the reserve list to wait if there will be funding released for the project. Finally after a waiting time the project was granted. The project was initiated in two stages: firstly the requirements of companies in Norway, Sweden and Finland using reindeer hides as raw material were surveyed. Quality criteria were examined and the study incorporated all producers. Following this stage, all potential slaughterhouses and slaughterhouses ready for cooperation in Russia were surveyed. The next stage studied the prevalent situation of slaughterhouses. The study examined
the slaughtering process implemented at each facility. After this stage, familiarisation visits were arranged and cooperation between the producers and processors started. Documentation and interviews indicate that cooperation with partners has been great. There has been a communication daily with contact persons named from each region. All partners were very active and motivated for such cooperation.

Target groups of the project have been the reindeer slaughterhouses, which are located in the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk region and Nenets Autonomous District. Final beneficiaries were reindeer owners. Indirectly, the project has benefited reindeer hides processing enterprises. The benefit received by reindeer owners has been described as substantial.

Administration
There were no remarkable problems raised or reported by the project partners. Finnish/EU bureaucracy was mentioned to be more extensive than the Russian one.

Results and impact
The main objectives of the project were achieved and the project was implemented as expected. The aim to find 15 slaughterhouses for cooperation was achieved. The only shortage in achieving this objective was that there were some regions left out from the co-operation, but the quantitative objective was however achieved. Working environment in slaughterhouses in Russia was also improved during the project implementation when the new knowledge was accepted in the slaughterhouses. The project also established networking in the field of reindeer economic and written guideline was produced and spread among all slaughterhouse in Russia in Murmansk region, Arkhangelsk region and Nenets Autonomous District as well Komi. Overall the project succeeded in developing the competence of reindeer owners and their occupational skills. And concretely reindeer owners got new incomes: before the project the reindeer hide has been a waste in Russia and caused only costs and it has been considered as environmental problem. Today reindeer hides are merchandise and source of income for them.

The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area
As it was mentioned the project achieved its objectives. The project has made a valuable contribution towards reindeer herding and improving working environment of slaughterhouses in Russia. It has also been supporting traditional livelihood ensuring safety of local reindeer herders. The project succeeded in raising the level of quality of raw reindeer hides and consequently reindeer owners in Russia have had an opportunity to turn former waste, reindeer hides, into outcome. Some of the challenges however still remain. During the project it has been challenging to solve the problems related to the huge distances between cities and slaughterhouses, as there are no roads, which are workable during the whole year.

Social and Economic Development of Teriberka

Background
The project is aimed at implementing a number of measures in order to stimulate the development of different branches of the local economy, including fishing, the fish-processing industry, agriculture, services for the natural gas extraction industry, tourism, small entrepreneurship, and waste treatment.

Objectives
Overall objectives of the project were to assist Teriberka in developing better living conditions and advance economic growth and new economic activities in the municipality. The project considers also the cross-border dimension by strengthening the overall cooperation between Finnmark County and the Murmansk
region and municipalities of Finnmark and Teriberka as well as facilitating cross-border entrepreneurship. The project divided specific objectives under three headlines: fisheries, economic growth and SME development and municipal co-operation. Fisheries included creation of better working conditions for Teriberka’s fishing companies, organisation the transfer of western know-how to Teriberka’s workers and establishing cooperation between Norwegian and Russian fishing companies. Economic dimension was emphasised by issues such as arranging training and education for start-ups, developing new recreational products and tourism, assisting local businesses in drawing business plans and attracting regional and international companies to deeper cooperation. Municipalities were involved in the target-setting by creation of future visions for localities, enhancing quality of life and environment related issues, and strengthening economic efficiency of the agriculture.

Implementation
Initially, non-Russian partners were very interested in Teriberka’s development in relation to expected implementation of the Shtokman gas project. Thus, in 2010-2011 Gazprom planned multi-billion investments in Teriberka’s industry and social infrastructure. But in 2012 the Shtokman project was cancelled, and the interest of non-Russian partners shrank. For Russian partners, this project remained highly valuable because it has allowed the Teriberka municipality to save public money to be spent on important objects of social infrastructure. As a result, throughout the project, Russian partners were the main force implementing it, while non-Russian partners remained rather passive.

The main declared beneficiaries are Teriberka’s inhabitants and the municipality, local fishing and agricultural enterprises, and local individual entrepreneurs.

Administration
JMA and Murmansk branch office are evaluated very highly. There are two suggestions for the future: (1) JMA and the branch office should use regional mass media more actively; and (2) financial aspects of projects should be explained better.

Results and impact
The project’s aims were perhaps too ambitious, and not surprisingly they fell short of original promises. The cancellation of the Shtokman project has been the main cause of the failure. Among the aforementioned objectives of this project, it can be said that the project has fulfilled only the objectives targeted to economic dimension, i.e. training and education for start-ups, developing new recreational products and tourism and assisting local businesses in drawing business plans. There were also some shortcomings in relation to enhancing quality of life and environment related issues, and strengthening economic efficiency of the agriculture.

The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area
The project was launched in anticipation of the beginning of the Shtokman offshore natural gas project, which envisaged construction of an LNG plant and objects of social infrastructure in Teriberka. But it has been abandoned, and the original rationale for this Kolarctic project had been lost. Nonetheless, the project has implemented a number of initiatives, some of which have been very helpful for the local community (e.g. purchase of a garbage removal truck and an excavator-loader, construction of a sports field and a playground, new tourist services and revival of reindeer herding).
Other initiatives have rather vague perspectives (e.g. the development of aquaculture, construction of a petrol station, a new berth for small ships, and the “House of Seamen”). In some fields Teriberka has experienced a decline: the local fish-processing factory has been closed down, which may lead to a decline in local coastal fishing (which the project wanted to develop). Thus, Teriberka may soon become a place without an economic base, which should stimulate its further depopulation.

Probably, the Kolarctic Programme should have a mechanism of cancelling/modifying projects, which suddenly faced major changes in their operational environment, such as this one.

**PRACTICE FUTURE – an Open Innovation Local Business and Students Network in the Barents Region**

**Background**
Small enterprises in the Barents Region and students and faculty staff from five universities are cooperating in an Open Innovation project. Over the entire project, a network of some 250 students from Russia, Finland and Norway will participate, as well as at least twelve firms from partners’ countries. Additionally, some 20-30 firms are supposed to be involved indirectly as potential partners of the case companies.

**Objectives**
The aim is twofold: 1) develop practically relevant business ideas and business models for the case companies in question and facilitating companies’ access to markets abroad; 2) develop and implement an internationally applicable tool of entrepreneurship education to (non-business) students.

**Implementation**
The informant found the team excellent, great teamwork. The project is the direct reason more than 300 Russian students applied to be enrolled as a student in Norway and Finland.

**Administration**
The informant considers the feedback, evaluation and monitoring very professional and found no problems with distribution of information about the program. The exchange rate got changed during the period, so the project got 3 % less funding then applied for, but this is due to circumstances beyond Kolarctic.

**Results and impacts**
The outcome of the project was not as expected, though the project was not a failure. The team expected companies to establish the solutions the students suggested. That happened to a limited extent only. The informant admits the team might have been a little too ambitious, and that might be a good explanation why the goals were not achieved. It is hard to say whether this should have been invented by supervisors and revised downwards during the process.

In conjunction with the goal of international education the program worked very well.

*The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area*
The many new Russian students give benefit for the region, for example money and employment.
This project would most likely not have been conducted without Kolarctic funding. The project didn’t experience much trouble caused by the political situation between Norway and Russia, the project was completed before the conflict became tenser.

**Russian-Swedish Council for SME**

**Background**

The project was generated in order to develop and assist Russian-Swedish co-operation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. The aim is to increase and broaden the business activities between Russian and Swedish enterprises and other business related stakeholders. Specific objective in the project is to create optimal conditions for long-term business relations for Russian and Swedish businesses through establishing a ‘Russian-Swedish Council for SME’. The main purpose is to create best possible conditions for mutual co-operation between Russian and Swedish enterprises and support them in meeting needs and demands of topic business opportunities of the region.

**Objectives**

Main activities in the project comprise business advice and support for enterprises and development and documentation of a ‘knowledge bank’ for cross-border business between Sweden and Russia. Business co-operation is ought to be developed from the standpoints of the business actors and support them to meet needs and demands in Kolarctic Programme area. Objectives are related to the existing internal knowledge in the businesses, stakeholders and authorities on both side of the border that will secure the objective to form long-term relations between participating Russian and Swedish businesses.

The project will form groups of businesses in order to achieve better opportunities and possibilities to participate in larger competitions of ongoing and coming industrial investments in Barents Region. This objective is crucial for smaller businesses to have better possibilities to have an access to large-scale investments projects in the region. One concrete objective in the project is to design particular groups of businesses for each specific need and specific object. These groups might be formed together of separately with Russian and Swedish counterparts, and later be anyway connected across the border.

**Implementation**

The project implementation was operationalised according to project plan by four main activities. First, intention was to organise open business events in Norrbotten and Murmansk Oblast in connection to ongoing seminars and expos aiming at to advance wider opportunities for participating businesses. The events were arranged according to specific themes for businesses representing these branches. Participating businesses had a possibility to involve themselves in deeper business talks or visits to potential partners. Second, the established business connections were supported and advised by the personnel at the office of “Russian-Swedish Council” in Murmansk in specific questions concerning business request from the Russian and Swedish partners. Third, businesses on both side of the border were given in education courses information and knowledge about juridical, economical and practical aspects, from both sides. The educational module was applied individually to each participating business throughout the whole project by project personnel. Participants in the education modules received a certificate proving a required level of knowledge in Swedish-Russian cross-border business. Fourth, the project established a web-site, to which relevant events, specific offers and demands on cross-border businesses, and information about financing instruments were gathered. The web-site also allowed participating businesses to advertise themselves. The web-site is owned
by the organisation “Russian-Swedish Council for SME” that guaranteed its existence after the project termination.

Administration
The project implementer did not raise any deficiencies in the overall project design. Project partners were relatively satisfied with progressing reports and received guidance from the JMA.

Results and impact
The project objectives were achieved relatively well on the basis of activities described in the previous sections. Open business events in Norrbotten and Murmansk Oblast reached broader audience than project implementers expected. The established business connections under the “Russian-Swedish Council” were manifold and numerous. However, the business connections did not really generate concrete co-operation between Russian and Swedish businesses that participated the project activities. The project implementers assumed that reason for this less concrete activity was the changed geopolitical situation. Basically the changed situation did not have influence on supported and advised businesses. Most important results were achieved on the basis of education courses about juridical, economical and practical aspects of cross-border business making. All participating businesses in the project were engaged in the educational courses and they also received the certificates for their participation. The project implementer considered this achievement as most important result in the project because it comprises a long-term basis for cross-border business partners. This realisation is supported by the created web-site that includes all information generated during the project. The web-site will be remained after the project.

The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area
According to the project implementer, the project activities as such influenced neither in positive nor in negative way on the objectives or final outcomes of the project. However, we may say from the evaluators’ point of view that the project’s overall performance was positive what it comes in relation to Programme and Programme area. Above described achievements of the project, did finally support the objectives and priorities of the Programme. There might be a lack in forming the concrete business connections but the project has definitely achieved positive results in creating opportunities and indications for starting business connections across the border. Overall, the project has fulfilled the requirements set in relation to Programme and Programme area.

Enhancement of oil spill response system by establishing oil database

Background
During the oil spills there may be changes in physical and chemical properties of oil that affect the behaviour of the oil patch. Laboratory data on oil weathering make it possible to more accurately predict the behaviour of oil at sea under various weather conditions and, therefore, to choose the most efficient response measures, for example, mechanical recovery, use of dispersants, etc. Creation of a database of oil properties would optimize the mechanism of interaction between the international response forces in case of trans-regional and cross-border oil spills. The purpose of this project is to establish such a database.

Objectives
The main objective of this project is to improve the mechanism of effective coordination between international response forces in case of emergency spills of oil in the waters of northern seas of the
Programme Region, taking into account the prediction of oil behaviour on the basis of laboratory studies and the database of properties of oil of Russian origin.

Implementation

The project’s Lead partner, the Murmansk Centre for Standardization, Metrology and Testing (MCSMT), has obtained 12 samples of oil of Russian origin and tested their physical and chemical properties. Based on the results, the project’s experts created forecast models of changes in the properties and behaviour of the 12 samples of oil, depending on weather conditions. The interaction of oil with different chemical dispersants was also studied and the effectiveness of dispersants under different weather conditions was assessed. All these data have then been included in the oil database. Then, in order to improve coordination of Russian and Norwegian Oil Spill Response Services, a joint exercise on oil spill removal was carried out. During this exercise the project’s oil database was tested and approved. All partners took an active part in the project. Among non-Russian partners the most active was the University of Oulu, which together with MCSMT worked on the development of the oil database and its testing.

The project’s beneficiaries were organizations responsible for environmental protection against oil pollution in the northern seas.

Administration

Overall, the work of JMA and branch offices was assessed as very good. In particular, JMA has been quite flexible in allowing the project to re-allocate some funds, when it was needed to carry out additional “cold-room” tests of oil samples. At the same time, the project partners suggest to simplify application procedures (i.e. to make evaluation of applications simpler) and to expand the Programme area in order to enable project organizers to invite most relevant partners.

Results and impacts

The project has met its objectives: (1) the oil spill database has been created; and (2) a joint exercise on oil spill removal has been carried out.

The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area

The project has made a substantial contribution towards the Programme’s goal to address common challenges in the Barents region. Now this region has a database, which increases efficiency of response in cases of spills of oil of Russian origin in the Barents Sea. The project has also increased efficiency of coordination of responses of Norwegian and Russian environmental maritime authorities in cases of oil spills.

BEAC Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents Region 2012-2015

Background

“The Children and Youth At Risk in the Barents region” is a cooperation programme adopted and owned by the Joint Working Group on Health and related Social Issues (JWGHS) of the Council of the Barents/ Euroarctic region and therefore endorsed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

Objectives

The overall objective of the programme is to contribute to social and economical development in the region by means of improving life conditions of the target groups as well as strengthening cross-border cooperation
to respond common challenges in the region. It aims to that by the protection of children through next actions: 1) Strengthening of parental resources, 2) Developing integrated services to foster families, 3) Prevention and treatment of behavioural problems and training of social skills for children and adolescents and 4) Monitoring of the rights of the child.

Implementation

The JWGHs consists of representatives of the national and regional health authorities of the Barents countries and works closely with organizations such as the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Indigenous People’s Working Group is represented by a member. The EU Commission, the WHO, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the NDPHS take part in the work as needed. The partners worked well together. The informant considered it almost impossible to transfer the share of the Grant to the Russian partners. Since the partners in Russia are regional and republican governments and cannot receive money from external sources and from abroad to their accounts. It was also difficult for Russian partners to set aside time to participate in the evaluation process.

An important issue this project has contributed to is the fact that the project has increased the noticing of vulnerable children and young people’s needs in the Arctic region, and the need for increased coordination across borders. One benefit from this project seems to be a greater understanding for each other, each other’s culture and the public system. More and more children grow up with a Norwegian-Russian background. It is no secret that Russia has been highly critical of the Norwegian child welfare (“Barnevernet”), and there has been a tense situation between Norway and Russia in several child welfare cases. This project might help contribute to mitigate this conflict. The project has led to networking across borders.

Administration

Project support, monitoring and guidance were considered excellent. The informant found the information management connected with the program and project application impeccable, but claims it was a bit difficult to allocate costs on the correct records as the accounts were highly detailed. In addition, the project informant complained about general delay at the beginning of the Programme resulting in difficulties to implement everything as described in project application.

The informant wants to give a constructive feedback in general: The target group / topic in program classification were difficult to refine. One project can be placed in several different overarching themes. This can give random effects in the selection process.

Results and impact

The project succeeded in achieving its goals, a high degree of sharing of expertise and best practices. Cross-border activity, improving the quality of services has been achieved in the Kolarctic area and an increased transparency of children and young people’s needs. Networking and increased understanding of each other’s culture, adolescence relationships, parenting etc. The informant considers it important to maintain focus on projects like this in the future. The program was indescribably important to break down barriers and increase cooperation, visibility and understanding of each other’s culture.
The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area
As this project exposed benefits on each side of the borders, it can be considered successful. Especially the project advanced the strained relations Russia considering the Norwegian child welfare, such a cross-border project is very important in achieving higher level of understanding for each other.

CETIA – Coastal environment, technology and innovation in the Arctic

Background
Ongoing and planned offshore developments have raised concerns regarding the sensitive coastal environments of the Barents region. There is a call for increased knowledge, education and training both to raise awareness and increase regional competence to manage commercial activities and manage the marine environment. In addition there is a need for increased innovation to monitor pollution and manage sensitive coastal environments. Finally, it is acknowledged that technological innovation in combating oil-spills has been low over the past decades. CETIA seeks to address these challenges.

Objectives
The project will provide an integrated approach, with dedicated work-packages on environmental science, technology and innovation, and education. Each work-package is designed to produce increased knowledge and innovative solutions addressing common challenges in the Kolarctic Programme. In particular it addresses the aim ‘Environmental knowledge has risen’ (Kolarctic Action Plan 2010). In addition it will provide a knowledge basis for the aim ‘Activities in environmental and nature protection have been implemented’. The project aims to contribute to develop new approaches to monitor the coastal environment and new technologies of bioremediation, and by establishing cross-border cooperation in academic training.

Implementation
The informant states it was a good cooperation in general between partners, but the involvement of the project partners varied. The informant did not elaborate this, but in general several factors can lead to this, for example: unforeseen events, vague agreements and undefined distribution of roles.

Administration
The information and monitoring was considered ok. Some procedures were not in place during start-up. This led to problems, and some procedures were presented differently from Norwegian and Russian side of Kolarctic. It is easy to understand that inconsistent information can be frustration, and lead to misunderstanding and delays. These procedures should be in place in advance, before implementation.

Project guidance and monitoring from the JMA was considered fine. Financial reporting was considered complicated in a project with this amount of partners and a very detailed reporting level. On the other hand, it is interesting that the detailed level of reporting contributed to secure the money on the Russian side. The money was used in relation to the intentions, because of the level of detail. No one could “eat” from the budget outside of intentions.

Results and impacts
This project had many goals (3 WP/8 tasks). Some of the goals were not achieved. The main reason for this were more demanding national procedures than expected. This created critical delays. Delayed payments and implementation from Kolarctic also led to delays in the project. It is also said in the project monitoring
plan that because of the delay in the start-up of CETIA all activities have not been conducted according to plan due to loss of one biological growth season in 2011.

Throughout the Project there has been an aim to transfer knowledge and skills between partners. This has been successful in all work packages. Data has been shared, articles and reports co-authored, research visits of different sorts conducted etc. Also several partners have acquired new scientific or technical skills as a consequence of CETIA.

*The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area*

This project was designed to produce increased knowledge and innovative solutions addressing common challenges in the Kolarctic Programme area. In particular it was addressed the aim ‘Environmental knowledge has risen’ (Kolarctic Action Plan 2010). In addition it was planned to provide a knowledge basis for the aim ‘Activities in environmental and nature protection have been implemented’. Despite some difficulties the project has managed to contribute these objectives.

**CYB - Connecting Young Barents**

*Background*

The project seeks to reduce out-migration of young people from the Barents region by developing a cross-border network organizing regular cultural events (music festivals, music master-classes, photo exhibitions, matchmaking meetings) with participation of youngsters, thus enabling them to apply their creative talents in practice and fostering a common “Barents identity”.

*Objectives*

The project’s objective has been to strengthen the Barents identity of young people, living in the Barents region with the help of cultural events and through promoting cross-border people-to-people and civil society contacts at the local level. The specific objective is to create a communication network among creative young people and among youth workers in order to stimulate identity-building among people interested in youth sub-cultures and self-realization in the Barents region. Within the framework of this project youngsters get the opportunity to share their success, to meet and communicate with other youngsters, to show their creative works to professionals and get some knowledge on selected topics. Youth workers get the opportunity to share experience, to share ideas and to find new partners in the Barents region.

*Implementation*

This project was created on the basis of already existing network of partners, who jointly implemented international cultural projects in the past. Kolarctic’s funding has boosted this network and allowed it to expand its activities. The main role in planning, management and implementation of the project was played by Russian NGO Socium+ (the lead partner), the Department of Education and Culture of the Inari municipality, and the “Huset” department of the Alta municipality. Other partners have been active in co-organizing or hosting some cultural events: Youth Department of the City of Tornio, Murmansk regional youth fund, Youth Centre of Haparanda and Youth Center Vasatokka.

The main beneficiaries were the youths living in the Barents region, local youth organizations and creative industries.
Administration

There was no criticism in respect of JMA or branch offices. There is the problem in securing “national co-funding” in Norway and Sweden. Potential Swedish partners could not find such funding and, as a result, did not take part in the project.

Results and impacts

The project has carried out all planned activities, and even organized two events more than originally planned. Hundreds of youths have attended the project’s events in Russia, Finland and Norway. The activities included 8 youth music festivals, 6 exhibitions of photos of non-professional young photographers, 8 matchmaking meetings for people working with youth projects, 2 music master-classes, 1 opinion poll among youngsters (2000 people participated), and 1 workshop for photographers. No doubt, these events have all contributed to the fulfilment of the project’s objectives.

The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area

This project has made a valuable and timely contribution towards enlivening of cultural life in the Barents region. It has strengthened the cross-border network of youth activists seeking to make life of local youngsters more interesting, and has succeeded at doing that. The network continues its activities today, and it can be considered as an important player in the Barents cultural landscape fostering a sense of regional identity.

Limited Abilities – Unlimited Potential

Background

The overall objective is to create prerequisites for improving quality of life of the physically challenged people, promote inclusion and integration into the society by providing equal opportunities for accessing education, culture, vocational guidance, labour market, sports and health promotion programmes based on informed choices, ability to influence one’s life and situation, social self-sufficiency and independent living in the Programme areas. The project is aimed at achieving improvements in the above areas through implementation of common activities, exchange of experience, carrying out joint actions and establishing close cooperation between the organizations working for the needs of the physically challenged in Arkhangelsk, Murmansk regions in Russia, Norrbotten and Västerbotten in Sweden and Lapland in Finland.

Objectives

The main purpose of this project has been to create a more efficient and encompassing system of all types of rehabilitation (social, vocational, etc.) for the physically challenged that includes:

- creation of a centre of adapted technologies in one of the regions;
- expansion of the area and scope of existing inclusion activities for the physically challenged in all of the regions;
- implementation of joint actions in close cooperation with authorities in order to promote inclusion, to demonstrate possibilities of the physically challenged in a number of fields and to influence the attitudes in the society towards the disabled;
- exchange of experiences and best practices among project’s participants;
- motivation of the physically challenged to integrate better in social life.
Implementation

The Lead partner, Russian NGO Nadezhda, organized the project consortium and coordinated implementation of project activities. Cooperation between partners went well, and all planned activities have been carried out. However, some partners submitted their reports to the Lead partner quite late. As a result, the project sent its reports to JMA with delays. The project also faced the language barrier. In the course of its implementation the Lead partner realized that most project activities required services of an interpreter, which were too costly for the project.

The target group of the project is the physically challenged people with the focus on visually impaired in the regions of Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Lapland, Archangelsk, Murmansk and Karelia, as well as the organizations and authorities working with physically challenged people in the program regions.

The final beneficiaries of the project, apart from the physically challenged people, are the societies at large in the program areas. They benefit through higher inclusion of the physically challenged people in social life.

Administration

On the whole, the work of JMA and branch offices is assessed very positively. But it took too long for JMA to approve submitted reports. As a result, JMA delayed payments to the Lead partner. While waiting the money, project activities were halted, because neither the Lead partner nor other partners had own financial resources to carry on the activities without the Kolarctic money. Consequently, implementation of some project activities was delayed, and the project was prolonged several times.

Results and impacts

The project has reached its aims. The main achievement has been the creation of the Centre of Adaptive Technologies, in premises donated by the Arkhangelsk municipality. This Centre has become an important organization providing rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities in Arkhangelsk. The Centre houses a well-equipped gym, a computer class for the blind, and a creative studio where handicraft courses and English language lessons are now offered to disabled people. The project has also facilitated the transfer of western knowledge and know-how on rehabilitation services to the Russian partners. This knowledge has been applied in the work of the Centre. Unfortunately, the donated premises were not large enough to accommodate an audio recording studio, as planned in the project application.

The overall performance of the project in relation to the Programme and Programme area

Russian persons with disabilities are considered among the most vulnerable groups of the population. Their rehabilitation and deeper integration in social life is regarded as one of state priorities in the Russian Federation, where a special Federal Target Programme “Accessible Environment” has been implemented for several years. This project has made a major and valuable contribution in this field in Arkhangelsk. The project’s impact will likely have a multiplicative effect over time as information about the Centre of Adaptive Technologies will spread to other cities of Russia. It, however, remains a bit unclear what were the benefits from this project for its non-Russian partners.

6.4. Conclusions and recommendations on project analysis

The conclusions provided in this section relate solely to the analysis of the case projects with regard to implementation, results and overall performance. The selection of projects comprises of 11 projects from
the Programme’s portfolio. It therefore does not include observations connected to the overall setting of the projects according to the Programme’s priorities or indicators.

The project calls and selection procedure are seen in positive light by the project actors. Projects did not perceive the application form as problematic and general guidelines for applicants were considered understandable and helpful.

Overall, the JMA’s activities were rated positively and the distributed information and advice by the JMA was highly appreciated. The projects actors stated that the received funding was often somewhat less than what was applied for, but this fact did not seem to cause overwhelming problems for the projects. It was seen as valuable and beneficial to invest the time and resources for planning and organising the project application. Moving towards the project selection process, the importance of support provided during the project selection phase was emphasized. The clear and thoroughly applied project selection criteria function well and emphasise the importance of explicitness and transparency.

Even though the project calls and application selection has also worked well from the project implementer’s point of view, some concerns can be detected regarding the cost-effectiveness of the application selection procedure. This concern is mainly related to lengthy process and to small organization’s inability to prepare complex projects. In order to speed up the selection procedure one level of decision-making was suggested to be removed.

Project level beneficiaries regarded the JMA’s administrative procedures in very positive manner. Some criticism was directed only at long waiting time of project decisions. However, it was evident that even in this case the JMA received positive feedback from the projects because additional information was available from the JMA in cases of major delays or changes in processing the application. The Lead partner principle is strongly supported among the projects, which may simply be a reflection of the administrative tasks and capacities provided by the lead partner. Most actors stated that lead-partner principle effectively supports the implementation and generation of the projects. In the case of weaker and smaller partners, lead partner’s administrative and managing burden might become too heavy, potentially endangering the implementation of the project. The JMA should encourage the division of responsibilities in the projects in order to encourage less experienced partners to generate new projects.

Generally, the project implementers and the JMA co-operated well, although some critical voices were directed towards financial reporting and longer waiting times for payments. We may state that the studied projects did not detect any major difficulties with the Programme administration and where difficulties did arise the project partners regularly received assistance from the JMA. Overall, it is obvious that there is strong trust between the project partners and the JMA in the Programme. Comments of the project implementers included some negative aspects related to project monitoring, but they were mostly related to internal project coherence and not interaction with the JMA.

Investigated projects advanced multilateral cross-border co-operation. We may argue that they have reinforced co-operation between partners either through formal or informal networks and collaboration, and thereby improved the governance structure concerning cross-border co-operation. Basically multilateral co-operation within the Programme is based on existing mutual collaboration in Barents region, to which project partners and various other stakeholders find it easy to identify themselves.
The majority of the examined projects reached the set objectives completely or partially. A number of projects had difficulties in achieving the objectives because project structures were too complex from the start and delays in project decisions and late payments to the project. Project objectives often included the improvement of particular activities or processes, sharing experiences and best practices, and the development of new businesses in the Programme area. In some cases, such as in Co-Tour-project, the changed geopolitical situation caused some problems in tourism related activities, but generally, the prevailing geopolitical situation did not perform any overwhelming problems for the project activities. The JMA should consider closer communication with delayed projects.

The representatives of the projects all were convinced about their projects’ positive contribution to the Programme and programme area. In addition, most of them stated that they were able to sustain their project activities and outcomes beyond the project termination. However, the evaluators are not able to assess the overall impacts of the projects. This has to be completed in a separate ex-post evaluation process in order to understand wider socio-economic impacts of the projects.