



# The Northern Periphery and Arctic programme in brief

## Information about progress in the year 2019



### About the programme

The Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014–2020 covers a huge area that corresponds to 75% of EU's area. The Programme comprises a cooperation between 9 Programme partner countries; the EU-Member States of Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (Scotland and Northern Ireland) in cooperation with the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland and Norway. Besides that, Russia and Canada have been offered the status as observers in the Monitoring Committee. This means that the Programme area encompasses the Euro-Arctic zone, parts of the Atlantic zone and parts of the Barents region, with neighbouring areas in Russia. Despite geographical differences, the large Programme area shares several common features, such as low population density, low accessibility, low economic diversity, abundant natural resources, and high impact of climate change. This unique combination of features results in joint challenges and joint opportunities that can best be overcome and realised by transnational cooperation.

The Programme's vision is to help to generate vibrant, competitive and sustainable communities by harnessing innovation, expanding the capacity for entrepreneurship, and seizing the unique growth initiatives and opportunities of the Northern and Arctic regions in a resource-efficient way.

The development needs and potentials of the Programme area, together with the policy and historic context, have resulted in 4 priority axes to achieve the Programme vision:

1. Using innovation to maintain and develop robust and competitive communities.
2. Promoting entrepreneurship to realise the potential of the Programme area's competitive advantage.
3. Fostering energy-secure communities through promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency.
4. Protecting, promoting and developing cultural and natural heritage.

The sparsely populated communities of the Programme area are the focal point of all 4 priority axes.

The development of the Arctic has had and still has a growing attention at national level as well as in international cooperation, which is also expressed by the EU communication on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic. Therefore, in addition to the four above mentioned priority axes, the NPA addresses the "Arctic Dimension" as a cross cutting theme. This is done by including partners from the Arctic part from the Programme Area and by supporting cooperation, innovation and transfer of knowledge, and technology within themes of specific significance for the Arctic territories. The overall intention is that NPA projects shall foster changes that are of importance to people, including indigenous peoples, living in the Arctic area.

During the period 2014–2020, the Programme will allocate approximately 56 million Euros of programme funding to a target of 54 projects with a maximum total project budget of 2 million Euros per project including match funding.

In terms of monitoring results at programme level, result indicators, baseline values and targets for the six programme specific objectives were developed and approved by the Monitoring Committee during 2015.

Due to the lack of data covering the programme area, the Programme has decided to work with panels of regional experts, who were asked to describe and assess the regional status-quo in quantitative and qualitative terms in 2015 (baseline values), and then to assess the progress towards the achievement of objectives in 2017, 2019 and 2023. Rather than monitoring the entire programme area, a sample of three regions, defined on NUTS3 level, was selected and an expert panel was constituted for each of the six result indicators.

The baseline assessment provides the NPA Programme with a rich data set covering various quantitative-qualitative dimensions that give a detailed and varied picture of the status quo in the sample regions as a basis for monitoring the impact of the Programme's interventions. The 2019 update of the baseline values for the result indicators shows that most of the values have developed in line with the expectations in 2015. Even though three out of 6 values are a little below the expectations, in particular indicator 3, the regional experts are still optimistic with regard to reaching the target values in 2023. For three indicators, the 2019-update is higher than expected.

In terms of output indicators, two common indicators have been selected for priority axis 1 and 2.

One common indicator has been selected for Priority axis 3 and a common, and a programme specific output indicator have been selected for Priority axis 4.

### Progress in 2019

The Annual Implementation Report 2019 gives an overview of the implementation of the Programme in 2019. The following summarizes some key points in the report:

During 2019, the programme reached the peak of 35 ongoing projects from six calls implementing at the same time. In March 2019, the Monitoring Committee approved 6 projects out of 25 submitted in the Sixth Call, bringing the total of approved main projects to 50.

Distance and costs are often obstacles to the development of a strong and well balanced project partnership, due to the dispersed geography of the NPA Programme area. For that reason, preparatory projects are a programme specific tool developed to bring potential project partners together and to generate high-quality main project applications. During the year another 3 preparatory projects were approved, bringing the total number of preparatory projects to 59.

By the end of the year, 51 953 204 or 92% of the total NPA funding for projects was allocated, when taking into account de-commitments from the first finalized projects.

After 6 calls, the allocation is unevenly distributed across the funding sources. Of the ERDF funding, 92% was committed, whilst 98% of the Norwegian, 99% of the Icelandic, 94% of the Faroese and 83% of the Greenlandic funding to projects was committed, although some of the non-member states decided to increase their contribution to the programme in 2017.

The 356 main project beneficiaries are distributed as follows across the three geographical zones of the programme area: 145 partners in Finland, Sweden and Norway, 140 partners in Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland and 57 partners in Greenland, Iceland and Faroe Islands, and other countries 14. When looking at the geographical distribution of Lead Partners, the distribution between the three zones is more uneven, mainly because Greenlandic and Faroese partners cannot be Lead Partners.

The NPA addresses the “Arctic Dimension” as a cross cutting theme, and the integrated European Union policy for the Arctic mandated the NPA to have a leading role in bringing together a network of managing authorities and stakeholders from cooperation programmes in the European Arctic. In 2019, a wide range of activities was organised jointly by NPA, Interreg Nord, Interreg Botnia-Atlantica, Kolarctic and Karelia CBC ENI . The highlight of 2019 was the first Arctic Cooperation conference “*What can cooperation programmes do for the Arctic?*” on 18<sup>th</sup> September in Copenhagen. The event showcased the results of the Arctic Cooperation, through concrete project presentations, videos and an exhibition. Approximately 105 people participated, from 12 countries, representing national, regional and local public authorities, as well as members of parliament, representatives of the EU Commission DG Regio, and research organisations. A conference video is available on the NPA website.



An award ceremony for the third edition of the Arctic Award project competition took place during the festive evening reception of the Arctic Cooperation conference. The winner of Category 1, Sustainable Use of Resources, was the BusK project (NPA). The winner of Category 2, Arctic Entrepreneurial Spirit, was Our Stories (Nord). As a prize, the projects received project videos, which were premiered during the award ceremony. The project videos are available on the NPA website. When analysing NPA achievements in relation to targets set for the programme, it can be concluded that all targets have been reached or exceeded already at this stage of the implementation. In 2018 an impact evaluation of the programme was carried out, results of this are described in the report “An impact evaluation of the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020”, published in January 2019. The evaluation report describes a range of impacts of NPA interventions, such as new SME links to R&D institutes/public sector supporting economic development, new business growth opportunities, improved service provision to remote communities, changing attitudes and perceptions, future oriented strategic partnerships and transnational links as well as growing local capacity to engage with macro development issues. The evaluators conclude that the NPA delivers impact for a range of beneficiaries at a variety of different levels and the transnational dimension brings a distinct added value to stakeholders.

At the occasion of its 2019 Annual Conference in the Faroe Islands, the programme published the first of 9 results maps with stories about project impacts, this one focussing on the Faroe Islands. The map was the starting point of a wider project to promote project results through a combination of paper/PDF maps and an online interactive map on the NPA website, which will be launched during the Annual Conference 2020.

### Examples of funded projects

Two examples of funded projects from the fifth call are listed below. These examples address core themes within the NPA Programme:

#### **SMARCTIC - Smart energy management in remote Northern, Peripheral and Arctic regions'**

The project addresses Priority Axis 3 Renewables and Energy Efficiency, Specific Objective Increased use of energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions.

The SMARCTIC project aims to **increase the use of energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions in housing and public infrastructures** in remote, sparsely populated areas.



The project objectives are to:

- 1. Provide a Smart Energy Management model suitable for NPA communities**  
Provide a technological framework for decreasing the total energy usage in the NPA communities by deploying an ICT-based Smart Energy Management Model.
- 2. Test the effectiveness of the new smart energy solutions**  
Test the effectiveness of the model to improve the awareness of energy efficiency and renewable solutions in housing and public infrastructures in the project regions.
- 3. Increase NPA's communities innovation capacity to deliver energy solutions**  
Provide an ecosystem to increase the capacity of the NPA communities to work together to deliver innovative energy solutions.

Affordable, reliable and efficient supply and usage of energy is a major challenge for Northern Periphery and Arctic communities. The approach of the SMARCTIC project to this common challenge is to focus, not on individual buildings or public infrastructure, but on the entire stock of buildings and public infrastructure within the community and to minimise overall energy usage within the geographic boundary of that community. This approach has the potential to realise **greater overall energy efficiency gains**, e.g. reuse excess energy from a factory to heat a swimming pool.

This approach requires a new type of solution, i.e., a Smart Energy Management Model (SEMM) combining smart cities approaches with new ICT, Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things.

Transnational cooperation is needed to achieve the project's objectives and results because the range of ICT and energy "tech" knowledge to develop the project's main output, i.e., the trans-boundary Smart Energy Management Model, does not exist in a single NPA region. This project, through its partners, brings the different knowledge specialisms together.



The partnership is led by an Irish partner and involves partners from Northern Ireland, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden.

For further details: <http://smarctic.interreg-npa.eu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SMARCTICproject>

<https://twitter.com/smarctic>

### **ChatPal - Conversational Interfaces Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing of People in Sparsely Populated Areas**

The project addresses Priority Axis 1, Specific Objective 1.2 Increased innovation in public service provision.

Current mental health service provision for NPA citizens cannot meet the rising demand to prevent and manage mental ill health.



Traditional one-to-one mental health services supporting people with chronic mental illness as well as mild-to-moderate mental illness is expensive and resource limited. One-to-one intervention support requires significant travel for clients living in rural areas; hence accessibility to traditional treatments are a particular concern. Moreover, given mental ill health remains a stigma, citizens often feel embarrassed when setting up appointments with a support person due to the lack of anonymisation.

Evidence collected within ChatPal preparatory project suggests that citizens will engage or open up sooner to an online virtual presence (chatbot) in comparison to a human project worker due to anonymity and the lack of stigmatisation.

The project objectives are:

- To understand the mental health and digital mental health requirements of older and younger citizens in rural and sparsely populated NPA regions
- To co-create and pilot a multilingual chatbot service that is effective for providing a blended digital mental health service supporting project workers and skills coaches across different NPA regions and age groups
- To inform, and to increase awareness and attitudes of mental health and healthcare professionals regarding the use of digital health tools and particularly chatbots to augment and improve mental health service provision

ChatPal will be a new, blended mental health service offering. It will augment and extend the reach of traditional existing services but it will not replace these services.



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Arctic Programme**  
2014–2020



**EUROPEAN UNION**

Investing in your future  
European Regional Development Fund

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For further details: <http://chatpal.interreg-npa.eu/>

<https://twitter.com/ChatPal1>