

## **An impact evaluation of the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020: NPA and the Arctic: Briefing Note**



### **Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020**

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**November 2018**

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## NEEDS, OPPORTUNITIES & ACTION

NPA programme addresses specific development needs on the ground and responds to strategic opportunities



## STRATEGIC IMPACT

The NPA programme has a valuable strategic impact in boosting Arctic territorial collaboration

- STRATEGIC FORESIGHT**  
Strategic thinking on emerging trends
- PROFILE**  
Stronger presence and profile
- KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE**  
Facilitate knowledge exchange, building capacity
- PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**  
Building synergies

Facilitated strategic thinking and debate - built capacity

Joint presence at events, coordinated websites, Arctic awards - increased strategic profile and built critical mass

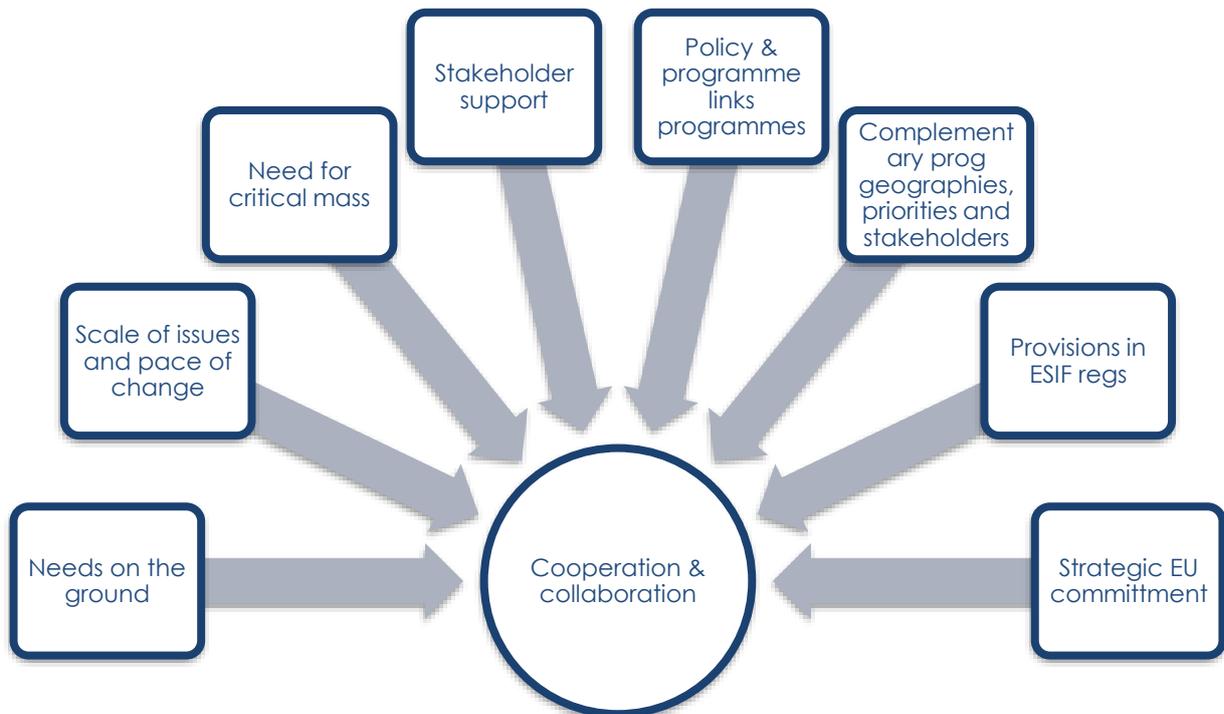
facilitated exchange on implementation of Arctic-relevant priorities and projects and engagement with other cooperation fora

Development and implementation of cluster projects -

The NPA Programme has a strong Arctic dimension. A considerable part of the Programme area is located in the north of the Arctic Circle, but it also includes areas which belong to the subarctic or the northern temperate zone. Many of the regions in the Programme area, therefore, are Arctic or at least 'Arctic like'. With the exception of Ireland, the Programme's partner regions and/or countries have specific Arctic Strategies in place, with Scotland in the process of developing its own Arctic Policy Framework (separate from the UK Arctic Strategy<sup>1</sup>). Moreover, due to changes taking place in the Arctic region (climate change and reduced sea ice in particular), the political, economic and social importance of the Arctic region is growing.

The NPA Programme and its projects have pursued active Arctic links following the groundwork prepared by its predecessor programme, NPP. The 2007-13 NPP Programme was heavily engaged in discussions on future territorial cooperation in the wider European Arctic.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the NPP undertook its own work on how the 'Arctic challenges and opportunities' should be addressed. The conclusions from this work highlight the practical and strategic benefits of formal and informal cooperation and collaboration (see Figure 1). The work of the NPP also emphasised the rationale for having a strong European Arctic dimension in the NPA.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1:** Rationales for Arctic cooperation and collaboration



Source: Evaluation team drawing on McMaster, I. van Der Zwet, A. et al. (2015) Arctic Collaboration Mechanism, Final Report to Scottish Government and Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, EPRC, University of Strathclyde

<sup>1</sup> The UK's first Arctic Policy Framework 'Adapting to Change' was published in 2013 and an update to this 'Beyond the ice: UK policy toward the Arctic' was published in 2018.

<sup>2</sup> McMaster, I. van Der Zwet, A. et al. (2015) Arctic Collaboration Mechanism, Final Report to Scottish Government and Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, EPRC, University of Strathclyde

<sup>3</sup> NPA (2014) Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020, NPA, p. 24-25

Given the growing international and EU interest in the developments in the Arctic area, the Arctic dimension was added to the title of the Programme at the start of the 2014-20 programme period. Consequently, the Programme set out specific Arctic aims which are to:

- contribute to economically more robust local communities and regions that are of importance to people, including indigenous people, living in the Arctic;
- support cooperation, innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology within themes which are of significance for the Arctic territories (e.g. sustainable use of non-renewable and renewable resources and demographic development); and
- build a more collaborative approach between programmes that cover the Arctic region.<sup>4</sup>

This puts the Programme in a position where it adds a ‘regional development level’ to EU Arctic Policy, and in doing so reinforces and strengthens wider NPA activities, objectives and areas.

**(i) Collaboration with other programmes in the Arctic**

Under the coordination of the NPA, various European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes operating within the Arctic are working more closely together as part of an Arctic Network mandated by the European Commission’s 2016 ‘Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: An integrated European Policy for the Arctic’. The Joint Communication states that the Programme will “lead a pilot activity aiming at bringing together a network of managing authorities and stakeholders from various regional development programmes in the European part of the Arctic. It is to facilitate the exchange of information, plan and coordinate calls for proposals and monitor the impact of programmes on the region. The new collaborative network will also be open to participation by relevant national and international financing instruments. Based on the extensive work and experience of the programmes, the network feeds into the work of the European Arctic Stakeholder Forum in identifying the research and investment priorities (see also Figure 2)”.<sup>5</sup> The Programme, along with other INTERREG programmes, is also identified as an important source of project financing in the region.<sup>6</sup> Following the work carried out by the European Arctic Stakeholder Forum and the Arctic network, the Commission has agreed to fund and facilitate an annual Arctic stakeholder conference in the European Arctic region to strengthen collaboration and networking between stakeholders to improve capacity building, international project development and awareness of financing sources.<sup>7</sup>

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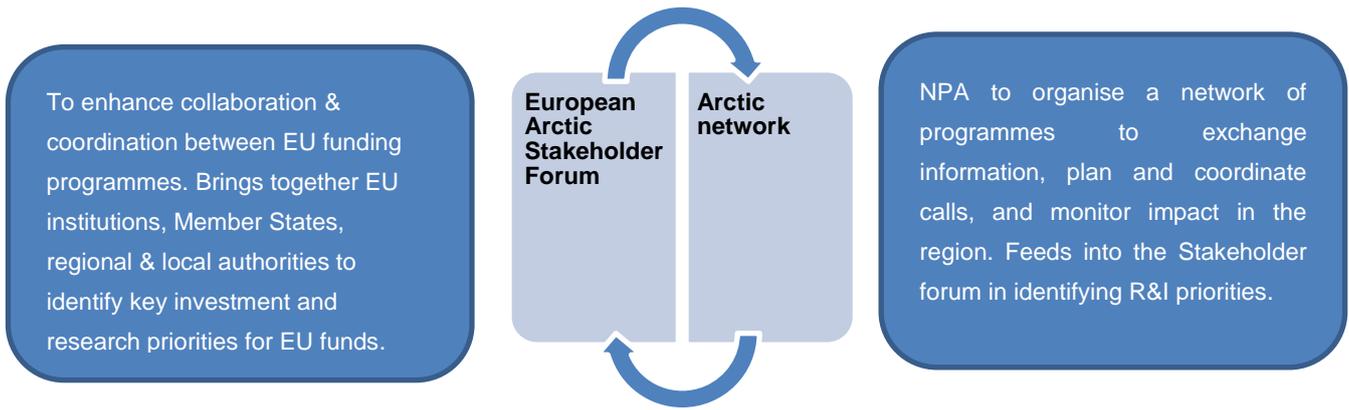
<sup>4</sup> NPA (2014) Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, 2014-2020, NPA, p. 24

<sup>5</sup> CEC (2016) ‘Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: An integrated European Policy for the Arctic’, Brussels 27.04.16, p.11

<sup>6</sup> CEC (2016) ‘Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: An integrated European Policy for the Arctic’, Brussels 27.04.16, p. 9

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2016) Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic, 27 April 2016

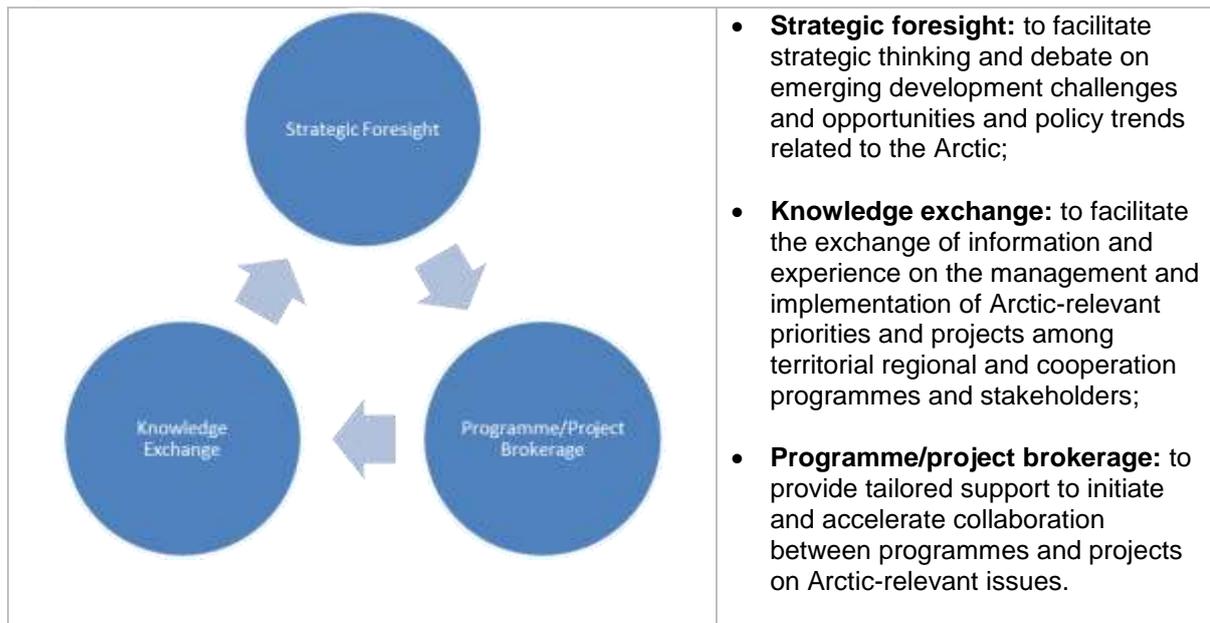
**Figure 2: European Arctic Stakeholder Forum and the Arctic network**



Source: Evaluation team

Despite the fact that some form of cooperation has taken place in the past, the Arctic network is new as it entails a more systematic and formalised way of cooperating in the 2014-20 period. The network offers a range of opportunities (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Arctic Network Collaboration**



Source: Evaluation Team

At present, the Arctic network includes the Botnia-Atlantica, Nord, Kolarctic and Karelia programmes, although the inclusion of other programmes is also considered and is likely to become a more topical issue for the post-2020 period. The current programme period also provides a 'learning platform' paving the way for the future cooperation in the post-2020 period. Based on experience from the current period, it must be recognised that the success of the Arctic network cooperation is dependent on the active involvement by all the programmes. There is scope for ensuring that all the involved programmes are clear with regards to the Arctic focus from the outset of the new period. For instance, in the case of the Karelia CBC, the Arctic element and coordination was introduced rather late into the programming process, largely due to the lack of direction from the European Commission. Furthermore, the definition of Arctic dimension needs to be clearly focussed to maximise the benefits and to avoid the risk of 'Arctic'

encompassing almost everything. The NPA entails specific Arctic criteria for projects, but this is not necessarily the case for the other programmes.

With respect to the areas in which the Arctic network programmes are working together, the following impacts can be noted (see also Box 1):

- **Catalyst for interaction.** The programmes have proved well placed to foster cooperation between relevant stakeholders and have pursued the mobilisation and implementation of an Arctic dimension.
- **Complementarity and synergies.** Synergies and complementarities with relevant programmes and strategies have been developed through:
  - Ensuring a high level of information and awareness within the Joint Secretariat and Monitoring Committee;
  - Strategic engagement with programmes and strategies on issues of common interest;
  - Direct cooperation on projects.
- **Exchange of information.** The participating programmes have exchanged information on project applications between the programmes, which has made it easier to find links between activities, projects and partnerships. This has been done for instance at the project cluster events. Crucially, Programme efforts and collaboration between programmes have now resulted in project clusters (Arctic and North European Energy Cluster). The main objective is to use transnational cooperation to ensure better implementation and knowledge exchange of the energy solutions available across the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programmes. The partners will optimise networking, co-ordination, monitoring, exchange of information, and the exploitation and dissemination of results.<sup>8</sup>
- **Better knowledge of the programmes** and their implementation, which has made communication easier, particularly with respect to guiding projects to correct financing sources.
- **Deliver support in relevant thematic areas.** Five areas of particular note are: sustainable use of resources; Arctic entrepreneurial spirit; cold climate opportunities; overcoming critical mass; and direct benefits for people living in the Arctic.
- **More visibility to the programmes,** through for instance the Arctic Project Award. The recognition of projects through the Arctic Award has been well-appreciated, not least due to the additional visibility. The Award competition, which has been organised twice in the programme period, aims to highlight good practice projects focussed on topics of particular relevance to the Arctic area (assessment also linked to the Arctic project criteria, see Figure 5). Another positive element of the Award noted by the ENI CBC programmes is that the competition has been available for all projects, including those that are not yet implemented as long as they are able to demonstrate 'Arctic Promise'.<sup>9</sup> The Arctic cooperation has also made it easier to advocate their shared interests as a group (e.g. joint seminar during the European Week of the Regions and Cities and similar information on the websites).
- **Foster change.** Ultimately, projects and project involvement will foster change that is important to the people living in the Arctic (see Figure 4).

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.interreg-npa.eu/news/two-clustering-projects-approved/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.interreg-npa.eu/news/the-arctic-project-awards-2018-are-launched/>

Figure 4: Arctic Cooperation



Source: Evaluation team

**Box 1: From aims to results – NPA Arctic Cooperation Network**

Aims	Concrete activities	Results
More informed/coordinated project selection and thereby better use of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated websites</li> <li>• Joint project development events</li> <li>• Annual seminars (organised with programme events)</li> <li>• Cluster projects / cross programme clustering call</li> <li>• Joint presence at Arctic / European conferences (e.g. European Week of the Regions)</li> <li>• Arctic awards for projects</li> <li>• Data gathering in final reports</li> <li>• Joint publications on results / post-2020 period</li> </ul>	Regular exchange of information on project applications to create joint activities/projects/partnerships.
Clearer and more integrated information to applicants and a wider network of collaboration partners		Project clustering events (in Skellefteå, Sweden in 2017 under four themes). Similar event to be organised in November 2018.
More concrete and relevant project outputs meeting the needs of Arctic stakeholders		Better knowledge of the programmes, which has made it easier to communicate and direct projects to the correct funding source.
Better promotion of results to a wider audience		Coordinated call cycles.
More efficient programme management		More visibility through the Arctic Awards.
More strategic approach to impact policy development		

Source: Evaluation Team

**(ii) Arctic projects**

Besides supporting Arctic collaboration, specific Arctic project criteria are used to inform and support projects (see Figure 5). 16 out of the 18 projects from the two first calls include at least one partner from the Arctic part of the programme area,<sup>10</sup> and all the 16 projects support themes which are of particular significance for the Arctic territories. Also worth noting is the value and impact of links to the Arctic for partners outside the Arctic region. There is scope for project activities to gain profile and visibility via a 'link to the Arctic' due to the wider political, economic, social and environmental relevance of the region, all of which have associated benefits for programme and project impact.

**Figure 5: Arctic project criteria**

Arctic project criteria	
<b>Sustainable use of resources</b>	Clean technology for Arctic business sectors (e.g. forestry, mining, fisheries and industry bi-products) and capitalisation on implemented innovative technologies in the Arctic Energy and resource efficiency, recycling adapted for remote communities in harsh climate Environmental protection designed for cold climate and Arctic economic development and utilising blue and green growth opportunities
<b>Arctic entrepreneurial spirit</b>	Project supports core entrepreneurial skills required by people with multiple incomes (employment / self-employment / micro companies) Project supports businesses based on Arctic products and cultural heritage (food, tourism, creative industries, indigenous)
<b>Cold climate opportunities</b>	Technological innovations specific for cold climate (transport, housing, textile, materials, mining) Preparedness and risk prevention (health care, search and rescue)
<b>Overcoming critical mass</b>	Distance-spanning technology (eHealth, education, governmental services, culture, heritage and nature) Match-making and clustering for SMEs in Arctic sectors (cross-sector collaboration and increasing connections, export / internationalisation and business incubation) Pooling resources to meet (external and internal) market demands (supply chain innovation, branding, combined portfolio of competences as well as strategic clustering initiatives)
<b>Horizontal criteria – direct benefits for people living in the Arctic</b>	Solutions tailored for an Arctic lifestyle The project makes a special effort to involve people in the design of the solutions The project demonstrates excellence in promoting its (expected) results to the relevant target audiences The project successfully involves underrepresented groups (women, young people, indigenous peoples)

Source: Evaluation Team

A number of projects have been funded which have explicit Arctic focus or are based in the Arctic Region. For instance, projects such as Smart Fish, URCHIN, Remoage, eCAP, Rye Connect, Circular Ocean, Saint, BusK, Recent, eLighthouse and REGINA appear to have quite tangible links in relation to the Arctic Dimension. The following overviews draw on regional case studies carried out as part of the impact evaluation of the 2014-2020 Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme and focus specifically on their Arctic dimension and impact.

<sup>10</sup> Lappland (FI), Norrbotten (SE), Finnmark (NO), Troms (NO), Nordland (NO), Iceland outside Reykjavik (IS), Greenland (GL)



### ARCTIC IMPACT: OVERCOMING CRITICAL MASS

- Distance-spanning technology (eHealth, education, governmental services, culture, heritage and nature).
- Match-making and clustering for SMEs in Arctic sectors (cross-sector collaboration and increasing connections, export / internationalisation and business incubation).
- Pooling resources to meet (external and internal) market demands (supply chain innovation, branding, combined portfolio of competences as well as strategic clustering initiatives).

Project	Distance-spanning technology	Clustering in Arctic sectors	Pooling of resources
			✓
			✓
	✓		
	✓		



#### Conclusions

- Four NPA projects have explicitly addressed the Arctic project criterion 'overcoming critical mass'.
- Two projects have promoted pooling of resources. The Smart Fish Label concept developed by the Smart Fish project provides a foundation for supply chain innovations, which can address challenges faced by many NPA regions related to long distances to markets. URCHIN project has provided opportunities to expand the high value sea urchin industry. The project has e.g benefited SMEs in isolated peripheral areas to become part of a larger, transnational research programmes.
- Two projects have promoted distance-spanning technology. Remoage and eCAP have both provided a number of service packages, which have contribute to the technology-driven (distance-spanning) solutions for public service provision in remote areas.



### ARCTIC IMPACT: ARCTIC ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

- Project supports core entrepreneurial skills required by people with multiple incomes (employment / self-employment / micro companies).
- Project supports businesses based on Arctic products and cultural heritage (food, tourism, creative industries, indigenous).

Project	Support for core entrepreneurial skills	Support for Arctic products and cultural heritage
		✓
		✓
	✓	
	✓	
		✓
	✓	



#### Conclusions

- Six NPA projects have explicitly addressed the Arctic project criterion 'Arctic entrepreneurial spirit'.
- Three projects have focused on supporting Arctic products and cultural heritage. Smart Fish and URCHIN are examples that have supported the high-quality food sector, while the Saint project has addressed micro businesses and tourism.
- Three projects have supported core entrepreneurial skills. For instance, Rye Connect has contributed to building an improved business environment by providing new tailored support tools / services to young entrepreneurs (e.g. web-portal, workshops, training resources). Circular Ocean has allowed opportunities e.g. in Greenland in a new economic activity for local businesses. Busk project in turn has e.g. developed and tested participatory planning tools to increase the use of local and indigenous knowledge.



### ARCTIC IMPACT: SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES

- Clean technology for Arctic business sectors (e.g. forestry, mining, fisheries and industry bi-products) and capitalisation on implemented innovative technologies in the Arctic
- Energy and resource efficiency, recycling adapted for remote communities in harsh climate
- Environmental protection designed for cold climate and Arctic economic development and utilising blue and green growth opportunities

Project	Clean technology for Arctic sectors	Energy / resource efficiency	Environmental protection for cold climate
		✓	
		✓	
	✓		
		✓	
		✓	



#### Conclusions

- Five NPA projects have explicitly addressed the Arctic project criterion 'sustainable use of resources'.
- Four projects have focused on enhancing energy / resource efficiency: URCHIN has supported more sustainable and balanced sea urchin fisheries and Smart Fish laid the foundations (concept) for the development of more efficient transport of aquaculture while minimising waste of resources. RECENT has had an impact on promoting community capacities in the development of energy efficient public infrastructure and e-Lighthouse on municipal energy efficiency and renewable energy targets.
- One project was concerned with promoting clean technology for the Arctic sector. Circular Ocean worked with new sustainable solutions to incentivise the collection and reprocessing of discarded fishing nets and assisting the movement towards a more circular economy.



### ARCTIC IMPACT: BENEFITS TO PEOPLE LIVING IN THE ARCTIC

- Solutions tailored for an Arctic lifestyle.
- The project makes a special effort to involve people in the design of the solutions.
- The project demonstrates excellence in promoting its (expected) results to the relevant target audiences.
- The project successfully involves underrepresented groups (women, young people, indigenous peoples).

Project	Involving underrepresented groups in the design of solutions	Solutions tailored for Arctic lifestyle	Promoting results to relevant target groups
	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓	✓
	✓		
	✓		



### Conclusions

- Five NPA projects have explicitly addressed the Arctic project criterion 'direct benefits for people living in the Arctic'.
- Five of these have involved underrepresented groups in the design of solutions, three have supported specific solutions for Arctic lifestyle and promoted results to relevant target groups.
- For instance, Remoage and eCAP have addressed directly the needs of underrepresented groups, elderly and young people respectively, living in the remote and sparsely-populated areas of the NPA.
- RyeConnect project in Greenland has e.g. has developed training material in Greenlandic, making them more accessible and engaging to the target groups - indigenous population and micro enterprises in particular.
- The Busk and REGINA projects made a special effort to involve (indigenous) people in the design of solutions that respect the fragile natural environment and social fabric.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NPA Programme has a strong Arctic dimension. The NPA has wide geographical presence in the Arctic (including Arctic and 'Arctic like' regions) and has continued the work of NPP in pursuing active Arctic links.

*To what extent has the programme built a more collaborative approach between programmes that cover the Arctic region?*

- The European Commission's mandate has formalised the NPA's role in leading Arctic collaboration. This has benefitted the Programme in terms of providing necessary visibility and recognition not just in the Arctic context, but also more widely at the EU level (e.g. a formal recognition of its role in the Joint Communication).
- The Arctic Network led by the NPA appears to have been well accepted by other participating programmes, although the role of all programmes is recognised in the successful delivery.
- The NPA is viewed as successful in facilitating the Arctic collaboration in terms of:
  - providing a catalyst for interaction between relevant stakeholders on the Arctic dimension;
  - ensuring work on synergies and complementarities with relevant programmes and strategies;
  - promoting exchange of information, e.g. on project applications;
  - disseminating knowledge of the programmes and their implementation;
  - delivering support in relevant thematic areas; and
  - attracting more visibility to the programmes, e.g. through the Arctic Project Award.
- The activities undertaken in 2014-20 provide a learning platform for future cooperation in the post-2020 period. For instance, clarity on the Arctic focus areas and what the coordination entails are just some elements that need to be clearly communicated from the outset in the future period.

*To what extent has the programme supported cooperation, innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology within themes which are of significance for the Arctic territories?*

- The NPA uses specific Arctic project criteria to inform and support projects. 16 out of the 18 projects from the two first calls include at least one partner from the Arctic part of the programme area,<sup>11</sup> and all the 16 projects support themes which are of particular significance for the Arctic territories.

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<sup>11</sup> Lappland (FI), Norrbotten (SE), Finnmark (NO), Troms (NO), Nordland (NO), Iceland outside Reykjavik (IS), Greenland (GL)

- A number NPA projects appear to have quite tangible links in relation to the Arctic dimension in terms of explicitly addressing the following criteria:
  - **Overcoming critical mass:** supporting pooling of resources (e.g. Smart Fish, URCHIN) and the adoption of distance-spanning technology (e.g. Remoage and eCAP);
  - **Arctic entrepreneurial spirit:** supporting core entrepreneurial skills (e.g. RYE, Circular Ocean, BUSK) and Arctic products and cultural heritage (e.g. Smart Fish, URCHIN, Saint);
  - **Sustainable use of resources:** supporting energy and resource efficiency (e.g. Smart Fish, URCHIN, RECENT, eLighthouse) and clean technology for Arctic sectors (e.g. Circular Ocean);
  - **Benefits to people living in the Arctic:** supporting involvement of underrepresented groups in the design of solutions (e.g. Remoage, eCAP, RYE, BUSK, REGINA); promoting solutions tailored to Arctic lifestyle; and, results to relevant target groups.

*To what extent has the programme contributed to economically more robust local communities and regions that are of importance to people, including indigenous people, living in the Arctic?*

- Ultimately, the projects of the NPA will foster change that is important to the people living in the Arctic.
- As noted, many of the projects have involved and consequently impacted people living in the Arctic. Some projects have explicitly addressed issues affecting under-represented groups, including young and elderly (e.g. Remoage and eCAP) and indigenous people (e.g. RYE, BUSK).
- Partners outside the Arctic region are also benefitting from the value and impact in terms of gaining profile and visibility through the Programme's 'link to the Arctic' (e.g. Scotland in the context of developing its own Arctic Strategy). Likewise, the Arctic dimension does not appear to exclude other 'less Arctic' partners from engagement, as topics remain relevant / flexible across the geographical area.

*Recommendations for the future*

- Looking to the future, the post 2020 programme should continue to build and develop practical cooperation between INTERREG Programmes with an Arctic geography. The form and format of the cooperation may have to adapt to changes in the programme geographies of particularly CBC programmes. However, as a form of 'soft cooperation', which is responsive to programme priorities and area needs and is consensus based, the collaboration can adapt to change.
- Community and regional engagement and activity remain a key area for collaboration. The Programme's scope to offer insights and opportunities for communities, including indigenous populations, to work and engage in 'macro'/transnational development concerns affecting the Arctic is a key area of added value which can be developed further.

- National Cohesion policy programmes and regional development interventions could gain from experiencing the practical/pragmatic way in which the Arctic dimension and Arctic collaboration has been built into the Programme. Arctic cluster projects could be supported to build links with national programmes and initiatives.
- With an unchanged programme geography, care will still need to be taken that the Arctic dimension does not eclipse the needs and contribution of non-Arctic regions. The associated benefits of the Arctic role/dimension in terms of profile, access and engagement can be highlighted.
- Furthermore, the definition of the Arctic dimension needs to be clearly focussed to maximise the benefits and to avoid the risk of 'Arctic' encompassing almost everything. The NPA works with specific Arctic criteria for projects, which should be continued.