



Impact assessment, v1

Respondent information	
My name	Päivi Kärnä, director
My organisation	Finland-Russia Society
Date for e-mailing this evaluation to my partners	17.10.2018
The deadline for concluding this impact assessment	08.10.2018

1. Why did you join the project?

Present your Background - own experiences and interests for Nordic – Russian cooperation

One central task of Finland-Russia Society is promoting people to people cooperation between Finland and Russia. We have had several networking projects during the last 10 years, for example: Youth and cultural NGOs in border regions 2007 – 2009 (Tacis and Interreg funding), Cooperation of women's NGOs in Finland and North-West Russia 2005 – 2009 (MID Finland). We have acted as the national focal point of the Baltic Sea NGO Network since 2001, participated in most of the forums and promoted the forums on Finland. We have also had 2 projects financed by NCM with cross border networking as one part of the project.

When we were invited to be a partner in this project, we eagerly took the opportunity. For us it was a good chance to include NGOs in Nordic countries stronger in our cooperation building. We also welcomed new contacts in Arkhangelsk region.

2. Your main activities in the project?

Present your main activities in the project including the challenges to provide them.

We organized a workshop for Finnish NGOs in Helsinki on 14 June 2017. We collected lists of NGOs, informed them about the project and invited them to the workshop. As there is no coordination for NGO cooperation with Russia in Finland (no network, no email list, no web page), it was quite a lot of work to find the interested NGOs. Finally, quite a lot registered but not all showed up. Since then we have had an email list and we inform NGOs regularly about the project events and funding opportunities.

We have promoted the project web page and database in Finland. It has been a surprise how few people want to register on the database even if they are on the mailing list and show interest in cooperation.

I have been contacted by several NGOs from Finland and Russia and by one NGO in Denmark, asking for advice and help in finding a partner. I have been looking for potential partners for them and informed them about project funding. Unfortunately, several of the inquiries came quite close to the NCM application round deadline and there was no real opportunity to build a partnership and write a good project plan.

A few NGOs in the field of child welfare contacted me and wanted to enhance cooperation with

Russia and we have now created a network for them and are applying for funds for a networking seminar in Saint Petersburg. There is no Nordic dimension in the cooperation at the moment but it can be developed once the network has properly established itself.

We have also actively participated in all common activities of the project. We recruited participants to the conference in Arkhangelsk and found out that it was difficult to make NGOs interested in cooperation with Arkhangelsk region, especially when you had to invest 4 working days to travel to the event. Cooperation in Saint Petersburg is always much more attracting to Finnish NGOs.

3. Outcome for your own organisation?

Present possible changed motivation for and know-how and ability to be involved in future Nordic – Russian cooperation. Will such cross-border cooperation be embedded in your organisation and be a priority for your organisation's future tasks plans?

During this project we realised that in Finland there is no organization, network or any kind of platform promoting NGO cooperation between Finland and Russia. That kind of network existed some years ago but had to close down because of lack of funding. As Finland-Russia society has a relatively stable organization with quite good resources, we made the decision that we will put more emphasis on promotion of NGO networking in our strategy.

After the project we will continue functioning as a coordinating NGO in Finland: we will keep on publishing the email newsletter we created during this project, we will update information on our web site and will keep on promoting the data base. We inform more broadly that we can give advice to NGOs if they look for contacts in Russia.

This coordination activity is not completely new for us but we decided to do it more systematically and on a permanent basis.

4. Outcome for other NGOs in your country?

Did other NGOs in your country get involved and motivated for increased Nordic – Russian cooperation?

There is more knowledge about the opportunities in Nordic - Russian cooperation among the NGOs in Finland. Two NGOs that we supported, Central Union of Child Welfare and men's association Miessakit wrote an application to NCM programme (but were not funded). Finnish – Russian child welfare network is now being formed and there is a lot of motivation to continue, so it is very likely that it will be a good impulse for cooperation.

Networking on Nordic – Russian level is a challenge. It is not that easy to create networks between several countries. However, funding for Russia cooperation to NGOs is almost non-existent in Finland, so NCM funding schemes are very important. That will increase motivation to find also Nordic partners. Anyhow, many Finnish NGOs have Nordic sister organizations or belong to Nordic thematic networks so that is a resource that can be used in partnership building.

5. Outcome for other NGOs in the Nordic (or Northwest Russian) region?

Did NGOs from other Nordic countries outside DK, FI, IS (Other Northwest Russian regions outside the Arkhangelsk and Pskov Regions) get involved and motivated for increased Nordic – Russian cooperation?

I informed the focal points of the Baltic Sea NGO Network two times about the project and the database by email and asked them to promote the database in their country. The project was also presented in the Baltic Sea NGO Forum in Uppsala in May. There were not many replies so there is little information about what actually happened in each country.

We will keep on informing about the database in the coming events and especially when the next NCM application round and the Council of the Baltic Sea States application round are announced.

6. Outcome for other key stakeholders, such as political decision-makers?

Did the project have any impact on the positions or involvement of political decision-makers etc from your country and region?

We have informed the officials in Finland about the lack of resources for NGO cooperation with Russia. The Ministry for Social Affairs and Health is now aware of it and has showed interest in supporting one initiative to enhance networking. There is no evidence that we would have been able to have an impact on the positions of the decision makers. Political level tensions do seem to continue.

Thank you for your time!