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2021-2023

ARCTIC COUNCIL
RUSSIA'S CHAIRMANSHIP

**RUSSIAN-FINNISH COOPERATION
IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
IN THE ARCTIC REGION**

2021-2022



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RUSSIAN-FINNISH COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC REGION

1. The UN Sustainable Development Goals in the Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Policy

1.1. Main goals and priorities

For many years Finland has been an active member of international organizations for the development of the Arctic region, namely the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Finland's interest in development and cooperation in the Arctic is due to a complex of factors, including its geographical location, climate change, and the indigenous people of the Arctic. Even though the country does not have access to the Arctic Ocean, it has accumulated significant experience in the Arctic research and expertise in icebreaking construction and conducting economic activities in the region.

In 2021, Finland adopted the new Strategy for the Arctic Policy . Its goals and priorities correspond to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and are aimed at achieving them. The priority areas for Finland's Arctic activities until 2030 include: 1) climate change mitigation and adaptation, 2) inhabitants, promotion of well-being, and the rights of the Sámi as an indigenous people, 3) expertise, livelihoods, and leading-edge research, 4) infrastructure and logistics. Environmental protection is the top priority in the Finland's Strategy for the Arctic Policy since every year climate change affects increasingly the state of Arctic ecosystems and requires adjustments of all economic activities in the region.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

The key strategic measures within this field are aimed at achieving several UN Sustainable Development

¹ Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy // Finnish Government. [Электронный ресурс]. URL: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/163247> (дата обращения: 2.11.2021)

Goals, namely SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 13 – Climate Action; SDG 14 – Life below Water; SDG 15 – Life on Land (Table 1). In this regard Finland promotes transition to carbon neutrality, developing renewable energy sources, bioeconomy, and the circular economy. Investment in climate-wise infrastructure is also a key part of its climate policy in the Arctic.

According to the Strategy, a special attention is to be paid to the climate change adaptation for indigenous people – Sámi, which requires food security and creating the preconditions for local industries, in particular reindeer husbandry and other traditional livelihoods. Furthermore, based on the expertise of the Sámi about the region, a Sámi Climate Council is to be created in order to adjust local measures to climate change.

One of the important issues in the field of climate change mitigation is the protection of Arctic species and habitats threatened by the climate change and ecosystem degradation, and the preservation of marine ecosystems and marine littering prevention.

Moreover, the goal is to establish a system for risks monitoring, including the prevention of forest fires, diseases, and pests. As a result, comprehensive measures will promote the design of nature-based solutions to the region management.

Inhabitants, promotion of well-being

There are two key areas of action in this field: **promotion of well-being** and protection of the rights of the Sámi as an indigenous people. As for promotion of well-being, much attention is to be paid to health issues, which have become acute during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Strategy, telemedicine solutions accessible for residents of the Arctic territories of Finland are to be introduced. Moreover, professional competence of medical staff requires improving. More focus is made on the mental health of the population, for which psychological assistance programs will be created. The measures above correlate with the SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being (Table 1).

In addition, it is necessary to introduce digital technologies into primary and secondary education so that residents of sparsely populated areas have equal access to educational resources. Therefore, digitalization will promote entrepreneurship and create new jobs, thus achieving SDG 4 - Quality Education and SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth (Table 1).

An important topic within this field is the problem of gender inequality and discrimination (SDG 5 - Gender Equality (Table 1)), for which it is planned to involve residents equally in solving the problems of the region, for instance through the work in the Arctic Council.

As for the **protection of the Sámi rights**, the objective is to increase the opportunities for the indigenous

people to participate in the activities of the Arctic Council (Saami Council is already a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council) and other international platforms in the Arctic region. Much attention is to be paid to the preservation of the Sámi national culture, the maintenance of their language, and its use in education. In addition, the work of the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” for the Sámi is to be continued, with respect to the policy of the Nordic countries having suppressed the use of Sámi languages in public life in the XXth century.

Expertise, livelihoods, and leading-edge research

The tasks in the field correspond to SDG 4 - Quality Education, SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 - Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure, SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, and SDG 14 – Life below Water (Table 1).

A special focus is made on ensuring economic growth in the Arctic region based on the principles of sustainable development using Finnish expertise in various sectors of economic activity, primarily in the Arctic ship technology and ship operations. It includes ship electrification and automation, design and implementation of ice breaking technologies, navigation of shipping companies. Finnish companies have considerable experience in undersea cables laying and developing wireless networks (5G and other satellite services). Moreover, there is great potential in the field of wind energy production, which meets the objectives of the energy policy of Finland and the EU.

Scientific research in a collaboration with large research centers, for example, the Academy of Finland, the Horizon Europe, the EU Structural Funds is an important aspect of the Finnish Strategy. In this regard, research development should be introduced into business processes to expand the capabilities of companies and increase production in the Arctic region.

Finally, in this area, it is crucial to ensure the availability of skilled labour, promote an innovation policy in all sectors of the economy, year-round tourism in the Arctic, and Cross-Border cooperation with neighbouring countries. The Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council are considered as the main platforms for strengthening international cooperation on this topic.

Infrastructure and logistics

The measures of this priority will implement SDG 9 - Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure, SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 14 – Life below Water. In this regard, existing transport hubs should be further developed, likewise, transport infrastructure should be strengthened, especially for vehicles powered by alternative fuels, for instance by creating additional charging infrastructure.

The measures of this priority will implement SDG 9 - Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure, SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 14 – Life below Water. In this regard, existing transport hubs should be further developed, likewise, transport infrastructure should be strengthened, especially for vehicles powered by alternative fuels, for instance by creating additional charging infrastructure.

It is also crucial to ensure smooth transport chains so that passengers could choose between the most appropriate means of transport - planes, trains, buses, and cars – within one trip². As for maritime transport, cooperation with neighboring countries in the field of winter navigation is to be planned. Of high priority is to promote digital economy, invest into telecommunications, and create data centers.

Table 1 - UN Sustainable Development Goals in the Finland’s Strategy for Arctic Policy 2021

1. Climate change mitigation and adaptation - emission reduction, renewable energy development, circular economy; - biodiversity conservation, natural disaster risk monitoring system; - climate-wise infrastructure; - food security for the locals.	12 - Responsible Consumption and Production
	13 - Climate Action
	14 - Life below Water
	15 - Life on Land
2. Inhabitants, promotion of well-being: 2.1. Well-being - healthcare, telemedicine technologies; - digitalization of primary and secondary education; - gender equality, equal involvement of residents in the work of regional and local cooperation platforms.	3 - Good Health and Well-being
	4 - Quality Education
	5 - Gender Equality
	8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth
2.2. Rights of the indigenous people - preservation of the Sámi national culture, language; - working of the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” to eliminate historical injustice against the Sámi in Finland.	4 - Quality Education
	10 - Reduced Inequalities
	16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

² Finavia. (2019, September 18). Commentary: The future of Finland’s accessibility is best ensured by combining different modes of transport. Retrieved from <https://www.finavia.fi/en/newsroom/2019/commentary-future-finlands-accessibility-best-ensured-combining-different-modes>



<p>3. Expertise, livelihoods, and leading-edge research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - economic growth using the Finnish experience in the field of sustainable development (ship electrification and automation, icebreaking technologies); - wind energy; - involvement of research centers in the Arctic research; - development of human capital, attraction of skilled labour. 	4 - Quality Education
	8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth
	9 - Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure
	11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities
	14 – Life below Water
<p>4. Infrastructure and logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - alternative fuel transport, infrastructure for its maintenance; - year-round tourism; - updating the icebreaker fleet; - digital economy, telecommunications, data centers. 	9 - Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure
	11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities
	14 – Life below Water

Prepared by the authors based on the Finland’s Strategy for the Arctic Policy 2021

1.2. Mechanisms and formats of cooperation

Multilateral mechanisms

Finland’s Arctic policy in the field of sustainable development is implemented both through multilateral cooperation within Arctic institutions and through Finland’s bilateral relations with the Arctic states. According to the Finland’s Strategy for the Arctic Policy, the country advocates for maintaining peace and security in the region through international cooperation. Finland participates in the following formats of multilateral cooperation:

- Arctic Council and Arctic Economic Council;
- Barents Euro-Arctic Council;
- International environmental agreements.

Finland considers the Arctic Council as the main platform for cooperation on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Back in 1989, it was Finland that stood at the origins of the Arctic Council having established “The Rovaniemi process” – a ministerial conference of eight Arctic states to work out an agreement on environmental protection in the Arctic. Since all eight Arctic states, including Russia, are the members of the Arctic Council, it enables implementation of comprehensive solutions for the region management. The work

³ Arctic Council. Finland. Retrieved from <https://arctic-council.org/ru/about/states/finland/>



in the Arctic Council is conducted through several working groups, in particular the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), which became more active during Finland's chairmanship in the Arctic Council 2017-2019. It was under the chairmanship of Finland in 2017 when the Arctic Council recognized the need to implement the UN SDGs in the Arctic region⁴.

Thus, within the framework of the Circumpolar Diversity Monitoring Program, activities on the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan on Invasive Alien Species and the Initiative on Migratory Birds of the Arctic were intensified⁵. Together with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), serious work was carried out to improve the quality of Arctic observations in the field of meteorology and oceanography⁶.

Within the Sustainable Development Working Group of the Arctic Council, Finland participates in projects on the "blue economy", waste management, renewable energy production and oversees educational projects aimed at developing knowledge and competencies in the field of sustainable development among residents of sparsely populated areas.

A signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Arctic Council and the Arctic Economic Council in 2019 for 4 years became a major event during the Finnish presidency, thus expanding the field for joint projects, including projects of the "blue economy", telecommunications, science, and education within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals⁷.

Besides, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council appears to be a promising platform for cooperation between the Arctic states in the field of sustainable development, especially during the Finnish chairmanship in 2021-2023. The priorities of its chairmanship are sustainable development, youth involvement, and transport, with the emphasis on climate adaptation. In accordance with the UN SDGs, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Paris Climate Agreement, a set of measures will be aimed at preserving biodiversity in the region.

Moreover, together with the EU, Russia, Norway, and Iceland, Finland, participates in a joint partnership "Northern Dimension", which covers several areas of cooperation, such as environmental protection, nuclear energy safety, energy cooperation, transport and logistics, trade and investment, scientific research, education and culture⁹.

⁴ Arctic Council. Sustainable Development Goals in the Arctic. Retrieved from <https://arctic-council.org/ru/projects/sustainable-development-goals-in-the-arctic/>

⁵ Arctic Council. Circumpolar Resilience, Engagement & Action Through Story. Retrieved from <https://sdwg.org/what-we-do/projects/circumpolar-resilience-engagement-action-through-story-creates/>

⁶ World Meteorological Organisation. Polar Prediction. (2017, October 6). Retrieved from <https://public.wmo.int/en/projects/polar-prediction>

⁷ Zhuravel, V. (2019). Predsedatelstvo v Arkticheskom Sovete: ot Finlyandii k Islandii [Arctic Council Chairmanship: from Finland to Iceland]. *Modern Europe*, 4, 97-107.

⁸ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The Finnish Presidency of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2021-2023. Retrieved from https://um.fi/documents/35732/0/Barents_esite_en_A4.pdf/ffa01a-b846-2b59-6629-15b07e60bdc4?t=1634029750356

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. "North Dimension" and Russia. Retrieved from https://www.mid.ru/about/social_organizations/association/-/asset_publisher/w6CkLeKcy2bQ/content/id/4272094

As for the European dimension of the Finland's Arctic policy, Finland plays the major role in the development of the European Arctic policy. Furthermore, according to the Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy, it advocates for strengthening the EU's position in the Arctic Council.

Since Finland is a member of the Nordic Council, it also participates in joint projects on sustainable development, including those in the Arctic¹⁰. Most of them are research initiatives on climate change, for example, forecasting climate changes in the region using data on changes in sea ice and ocean followed by the development of the adaptation measures¹¹. Some projects are dedicated to combating marine litter and the preservation of marine ecosystems.

Bilateral mechanisms and cooperation with the EU

Most international projects in which Finland takes part are conducted on a bilateral basis. Projects with Denmark and Iceland are aimed at countering and adapting to climate change, protecting the environment, and combating marine litter. Projects with Norway focus on the exploitation of Arctic oil and gas resources for Europe's energy supply¹². Cooperation with Canada is traditionally conducted in the field of winter navigation, icebreaking, and shipbuilding; joint projects in the field of circular economy are planned as well¹³. Finland implements projects with the USA, which are related to climate change and focused on air and water purification¹⁴. In 2015, Finland and Sweden created a joint combat group to "carry out maritime surveillance"¹⁵.

Finland joins some European projects in the Arctic region, since economic activity in the EU and its climate policy have a significant impact on the Arctic region. In addition, the territories of two EU countries – Finland and Sweden - are partially located beyond the Arctic Circle, but do not have access to the Arctic Ocean, which limits the possibilities of activity and cooperation in the region.

¹⁰ Nordic Council of Ministers. Sustainable Development Action – The Nordic Way. Retrieved from <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1092868/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

¹¹ NordForsk. Arctic Climate Predictions: Pathways to Resilient, Sustainable Societies. Retrieved from <https://www.nordforsk.org/projects/arctic-climate-predictions-pathways-resilient-sustainable-societies-arcpath>

¹² Morgunova, M., Telegina, E. (2012). Finland's Strategy in the Arctic Region. Russian International Affairs Council. Retrieved from <https://russian-council.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/finland-s-strategy-in-the-arctic-region/>

¹³ Government of Canada. (2020). Finland, Canada, and the Netherlands join forces to advance the circular economy as key to a sustainable recovery. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2020/06/finland-canada-and-the-netherlands-join-forces-to-advance-the-circular-economy-as-key-to-a-sustainable-recovery.html>

¹⁴ The White House. (2019). Joint Statement from the President of the United States and the President of the Republic of Finland. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-statement-president-united-states-president-republic-finland/>

¹⁵ Eranosyan, B. (2020, June 3). "Arctic Union" of Sweden and Finland. GoArctic. Retrieved from <https://goarctic.ru/politics/arkticheskiy-soyuz-shvetsii-i-finlyandi/>



The core mechanism of cooperation between Finland and the EU in the Arctic is the Cross-border Cooperation Programs (CBC) launched by the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument in 2007. The CBC cover Sweden, Finland, Russia, and Norway. The main purpose of the programs is the cooperation of public organizations in various fields, the exchange of cultural experience and scientific knowledge, the creation and application of new approaches to the region management. As for Russia and Finland, they take part in the CBC "Kolarctic", "Karelia", "South-East Finland – Russia" that are prolonged for 2021–2027.

2. Russian – Finnish Cooperation in the field of sustainable development

2.1. Russian – Finnish bilateral cooperation in the Arctic

Despite some existing restrictions related to the sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic, Finland and Russia maintain a close political dialogue, the leaders of both states exchange views on the development of bilateral relations regularly, in the Arctic region as well. For instance, at the Vth International Arctic Forum "The Arctic is the Territory of Dialogue", held in St. Petersburg in 2019, Sauli Niinisto, President of Finland, pointed out that Russia and Finland "have marked the Arctic region on the world map"¹⁶ in recent years and expressed hope for cooperation with Russia, especially through the Arctic Council. In 2021, a personal meeting of the Presidents of Russia and Finland took place. The leaders discussed the prospects of trade and economic relations and the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁷. Vladimir Putin also noted that the positions of Russia and Finland on climate change are quite similar¹⁸, which in turn creates more opportunities for dialogue and cooperation.

Among the spheres of cooperation in the field of sustainable development between Russia and Finland are forestry, carbon-free energy, waste management, new technologies in construction, icebreaker production, infrastructure, information technologies. Countries support cultural dialog and scientific exchanges as well.

Environmental protection

In the field of environmental protection, Russia and Finland have a great groundwork in sustainable forestry development; the importance of forest restoration and regulation of approaches to pricing of forest resources is discussed during meetings of Russian-Finnish representatives¹⁹.

¹⁶ Vladimir Putin praised Finland's contribution to the development of the Arctic. (2019). Finnish-Russian Chamber of Commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.svkk.ru/novosti/putin-otsenil-vklad-finlandiji-v-osvojenije-arktiki/>

¹⁷ The President of Finland called the discussion with Putin intense. (2021). Retrieved from <https://ria.ru/20211029/putin-1756924106.html>

¹⁸ Putin called the approaches of Russia and Finland close in the fight against climate change. (2021). TASS. Retrieved from <https://tass.ru/politika/12799883>

¹⁹ Russia and Finland discussed cooperation on sustainable forestry development. (2019). Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. Retrieved from http://www.mnr.gov.ru/press/news/rossiya_i_finlyandiya_obsudili_vzaimodeystvie_v_voprosakh_ustoychivogo_razvitiya_lesnogo_khozyaystva/?special_version=Y

Furthermore, in 2001, the countries signed a Framework agreement on the coordination of the Russian-Finnish Program for the Development of Sustainable Forestry and Biodiversity Conservation in the North-West of Russia²⁰.

Supported by the Finnish-Russian Chamber of Commerce and "Russian Environmental Operator", the countries are implementing joint projects on waste recycling and waste management. Thus, Russia is interested in using Finnish expertise in this area and intends to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation²¹.

Moreover, countries are concerned about oil spills in the Arctic, which may occur with the increase in shipping in the region. Therefore, at the ministerial session of the Arctic Council in 2013, an agreement on cooperation in the field of preparedness and response to oil pollution of marine areas was signed²². In 2017, the Finnish company "Lamor Corporation" and the Russian "Rosneft" signed an agreement on the establishment of a joint venture for the production of machinery and equipment for the elimination of emergency oil spills on the basis of the "82 Ship Repair Plant" in Murmansk²³, however, to date, no serious joint projects have been implemented in this regard.

Energy cooperation

A major project in the energy sector is the construction of the Hanhikivi-1 nuclear power plant in the municipality of Puhijoki in the province of Northern Ostrobothnia (Finland)²⁴. The project was launched in 2013, overseen by "Rosatom Energy International" from Russia and "Fennovoima Oy" from Finland, but the terms of its implementation have been extended, and construction will begin not sooner than in 2023²⁵.

Since Finland has extensive experience in wind power and bioenergy, both countries have successfully cooperated in this field and have already completed a joint project on creation of an autonomous wind power plant - Energy-efficient systems based on renewable energy for Arctic condition (EFREA)²⁶.

Moreover, the Finnish company "Fortum" is the Russian partner in the production of solar energy.

²⁰ International treaties and agreements with the participation of the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation. Retrieved from https://www.mnr.gov.ru/activity/international_agreements/

²¹ Russia and Finland will continue cooperation in the field of MSW management. (2021). Vedomosti. Retrieved from https://www.vedomosti.ru/press_releases/2021/09/02/rossiya-i-finlyandiya-prodolzhat-sotrudnichestvo-v-oblasti-obrascheniya-s-tko

²² Agreement on Cooperation in the field of preparedness and response to Marine Oil Pollution in the Arctic. (2013). The Codex Consortium. Retrieved from <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/499065181>

²³ The joint venture of Rosneft and Lamor will produce equipment for the elimination of oil spills. (2017). Finnish-Russian Chamber of Commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.svkk.ru/novosti/sp-rosnefti-i-lamor-budet-proizvodit-te/>

²⁴ State Atomic Energy Corporation «Rosatom». (2021). Hanhikivi-1. Retrieved from <http://rusatom-energy.ru/projects/hanhikivi-1/>

²⁵ The construction of the nuclear power plant in Puhijoki will be delayed again and will cost a billion euros more. (2021). Yle. Retrieved from https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/novosti/stroitelstvo_aes_v_pyukhyaiki_zaderzhitsya_snova_i_oboidetsya_na_milliard_yevro_dorozhe/11905724

²⁶ South-East Finland – Russia. (2018). Energy-efficient systems based on renewable energy for Arctic conditions. Retrieved from <https://www.sefrcbc.fi/ru/energy-efficient-systems-based-on-renew/>



Construction of icebreakers

While Finland has great expertise in the production of icebreakers and in maritime navigation, the countries cooperate closely in this field. Together with the Russian gas company “Novatek”, the Finnish engineering center “Aker Arctic”²⁷ and the South Korean company “Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering” work on a project of an Arctic gas carrier for year-round operation along the Northern Sea Route. Moreover, the Russian company “Atomenergo” and the Finnish “Aker Arctic” consider a project to create a heavy semi-submersible Arctic vessel of the Arc5 and Arc7 ice-class with a carrying capacity of 70 thousand tons²⁸ enabling working in narrow channels.

The projects for the construction of icebreakers and tankers conducted by the Russian companies “MMC Norilsk Nickel” and “Sovcomflot” with the Finnish company “Helsinki Shipyard” have been successfully completed as well. In this regard new joint projects for the construction of icebreakers on liquefied natural gas have been also planned between the Russian company “MMC Norilsk Nickel” and the Finnish company “Helsinki Shipyard” with the support of the Russian state corporation “Rosatom”²⁹.

Infrastructure

As for the Russian-Finnish infrastructure projects, most of them are related to the Northern Sea Route but are not limited to it. Within the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, a plan that implies the construction of new transport corridors inland was developed, for example, a line of roads and railways Vorkuta — Kotlas — Syktyvkar — Arkhangelsk — Vartius — Oulu³⁰, as well as the automobile route Murmansk — Raya-Jooseppi — Ivalo³¹. The plan, however, does not involve the allocation of funding from the BEAC and should be financed by the countries themselves. Moreover, countries cooperate actively in the field of infrastructure, within the cross-border cooperation programs “Karelia”, “South-East Finland — Russia”, and “Kolarctic”, thus several checkpoints on the Finnish-Russian border have been reconstructed, for example, “Vyartsilya”, “Vartius”, “Salla”³².

²⁶ South-East Finland – Russia. (2018). Energy-efficient systems based on renewable energy for Arctic conditions. Retrieved from <https://www.sefrbc.fi/ru/energy-efficient-systems-based-on-renew/>

²⁷ Russia and Finland intend to cooperate in the construction of icebreakers and the development of the Arctic (2021). Portnews. Retrieved from <https://portnews.ru/news/313432/>

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Norilsk Nickel to invest in icebreakers. (2021). Kommersant. Retrieved from <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4917011>

³⁰ The Barents Euro-Arctic Region. (2021). Joint transport plan of the Barents Region. Retrieved from <http://www.rador.ru/activities/plan/inf/300614/01.pdf>

³¹ Ibid

³² Three programs of cross-border cooperation between Russia and the EU will start implementing 178 million euros in October. (2018). Fontanka. Retrieved from <https://www.fontanka.ru/2018/08/17/075/>

As for the last major Russian-Finnish infrastructure projects in the Arctic region, one of them is the laying of the “Arctic Connect” submarine cable³³. Russian company “MegaFon” and the Finnish infrastructure operator “Cinia Oy” has agreed on this project at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in 2019. At the moment, the first phase — marine research — has been completed, but the second phase has not yet begun due to disagreements with Japanese partners «Sojitz Corporation», which also joined the project³⁴. This telecommunication cable should become the shortest data transmission cable between Europe and Asia. Its construction was planned to be completed by 2023, but the project is currently frozen, and the terms of its implementation are yet to be specified³⁵.

Culture

Russia and Finland promote cultural dialog, which is primarily because of Finno-Ugric people live on the territory of both states. Among those are Karelians, Komi-Permyaks, Mordvins, Khanty, and Mansi³⁶. Therefore, they participate in the World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples held every four years³⁷, which due to the COVID-19 pandemic took place in the Estonian city of Tartu in 2021 in a hybrid format.

Furthermore, since 2000, the Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum has been held, which brings together experts from various fields of art. The main purpose of the forum is to establish cultural contacts and exchange knowledge in this field. In 2021, the congress was held online, several sessions were devoted to the concept of the cultural code and its impact on urban spaces³⁸.

In 2019, during the Vth International Arctic Forum “The Arctic — the Territory of Dialogue”, the Russian Geographical Society and the Arctic Society of Finland signed an agreement on scientific and cultural cooperation in the field of Arctic region studies³⁹.

Science

³³ Megafon decided to revise the project of the Arctic Connect underwater communication line. (2021). Interfax. Retrieved from <https://www.interfax.ru/business/769075>

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Russian-Finnish relations. Embassy of the Russian Federation in Finland. Retrieved from <https://helsinki.mid.ru/rossijsko-finlandskie-otnosenia>

³⁷ Eighth World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples. (2021). Fenno-Ugria. Retrieved from <https://fennougria.ee/ru/predstavitelstva/vsermirnye-kongressy/vosmoj/>

³⁸ XXII Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum announced the program. (2021). St. Petersburg International Cultural Forum. Retrieved from <https://culturalforum.ru/news/xxii-rossijsko-finlyandskiy-kulturnyy-forum-obyavil-programmu>

³⁹ RGS and the Arctic Society of Finland will conclude a cooperation agreement. (2019). Russian Geographical Society. Retrieved from <https://www.rgo.ru/ru/article/rgo-i-arkticheskoe-obshchestvo-finlyandii-zaklyuchat-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve>



Universities and research centers of Russia and Finland participate in international scientific exchange. The most popular option – the FIRST exchange program⁴⁰. Another option is the student exchange program “Cross-Border University” (Finnish-Russian Cross-Border University), in which several Russian universities (St. Petersburg State University, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, European University in St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg State Forestry University, Petrozavodsk State University) and two Finnish universities – Tampere University and East Finland University take part⁴¹. The exchange of students and post-graduates is also implemented under the program of the Center for International Exchanges of the Ministry of Education of Finland and under the agreement between the Academy of Finland and the Russian Academy of Sciences⁴².

A major platform for cooperation is the University of the Arctic - a network of universities, colleges, research institutes, and other organizations cooperating in the fields of research in the North. On its basis, various scientific conferences and meetings are held annually. For instance, in 2022 in the light of the Russian chairmanship in the Arctic Council the Congress of the University of the Arctic will be held at the Moscow State University and will be devoted to the prospects of international Arctic scientific cooperation and the development of exchange programs in the region⁴³.

2.2. Russian-Finnish multilateral cooperation

Russia and Finland cooperate more closely within multilateral formats. Major institutions of multilateral cooperation are:

- Arctic Council;
- Programs of Cross-Border Cooperation “Kolarctic”, “Karelia”, “South-East Finland – Russia”.

Russian-Finnish cooperation under Arctic Council

Russia and Finland are the leads of the “Biosecurity in the Arctic” project, which has started in 2021. The project is being managed in collaboration with the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP)⁴⁴. This project will contribute to supporting public health systems and public services in implementing a quick response to current and future biological threats. The project will result in a case study-based peer-reviewed

⁴⁰ FIRST+-Programme. Finnish national Agency for Education. Retrieved from <https://www.oph.fi/en/programmes/first-programme>

⁴¹ Russian-Finnish relations. Embassy of the Russian Federation in Finland. Retrieved from <https://helsinki.mid.ru/rossijsko-finlandskie-otnosenia>

⁴² Cooperation in the field of science and education. Embassy of the Russian Federation in Finland. Retrieved from <https://helsinki.mid.ru/sotrudnicestvo-v-sfere-nauke-i-obrazovania>

⁴³ The Congress of the University of the Arctic in 2022 will be held at Moscow State University. (2020). MSU. Retrieved from https://www.msu.ru/science/main_themes/kongress-universiteta-arktiki-v-2022-godu-sostoitsya-v-mgu.html

⁴⁴ Arctic Council. Biosecurity in the Arctic. Retrieved from <https://sdwg.org/what-we-do/projects/biosecurity-in-the-arctic/>



report integrated with indigenous knowledge related to specific biohazards in the Arctic. Another goal of this project is to prepare recommendations on a community-based screening, monitoring, and information system for infectious disease control, prevention, and risk communication.

Finland, Russia, the USA, and Iceland are working on a project in the field of environmental protection. The title of this project is "Advancing Arctic Resilience: Information, capacity, and networks for navigating impacts of permafrost thaw"⁴⁵. Northern Forum, Association of World Reindeer Herders, International Arctic Social Sciences Association (IASSA), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and UArctic also participate. The project is being managed in collaboration with the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program (AMAP), Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) and Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR). This project will provide a roadmap for addressing the impacts of permafrost thawing. The results of the project will contribute to solving several UN SDGs, such as SDG 3 — Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 4 — Quality Education, SDG 6 — Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 9 — Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 13 — Climate Action, and SDG 17 — Partnerships for the Goals⁴⁶.

Currently, the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) is completing a project related to food security, which is titled "Arctic Foods Innovation Cluster (AFIC)"⁴⁷. Under this project, the working group has developed the plan of establishing the Arctic Food Innovation Cluster, which is aimed to address current regional and global challenges in the field of food security. In Russia, research was underway in the fields of agroforestry, aquaculture, and biotechnology to identify how innovations can be used to promote environmentally sustainable and profitable land use systems⁴⁸. Under the project, a series of comprehensive studies are being conducted into the state of marine ecosystems and aquatic bio-resources in the Russian Arctic, including the use of White Sea seaweed as an ingredient of novel products. In Finland, the project will result in a business model national hub for food security, which can offer support to small and medium-sized enterprises and developers and connect different stakeholders on different levels for finding the ways to support food security and safety.

Several projects with the participation of Russia and Finland have been already completed and extended to the second phase. One of these projects is titled "EALLU Arctic Indigenous Youth, Climate Change and Food

⁴⁵ Arctic Council. Advancing Arctic Resilience: exploring aspects of arctic resilience connected to the impacts of permafrost thaw. Retrieved from <https://sdwg.org/what-we-do/projects/advancing-arctic-resilience-exploring-aspects-of-arctic-resilience-connected-to-the-impacts-of-permafrost-thaw/>

⁴⁶ Arctic Council. (2019). Advancing Arctic Resilience: Information, capacity, and networks for navigating impacts of permafrost thaw SDWG Project Proposal. Retrieved from https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/2744/SDWG_2021-10_Online_Plenary-07a1_Arctic-Resilience-Project-Proposal_2021-09-06-3.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁴⁷ Arctic Council. (2019). Proposal to SDWG: Arctic Foods Innovation Cluster. Retrieved from https://oaarchive.arctic-council.org/bitstream/handle/11374/2484/Proposal-re-ARCTIC_FOOD_INNOVATION_CLUSTER-as-of-14-Jan-2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁴⁸ Arctic Council. Innovating the Food Industry on the World. Retrieved from <https://arctic-council.org/news/innovating-the-food-industry-on-the-top-of-the-world/>

Culture”⁴⁹ and concerns indigenous food culture. The first phase was aimed at documentation, systematization, and exchange of traditional and indigenous people knowledge related to food culture. Another goal of the project was to promote knowledge development for innovation, working in the intersection between Academia and business, between science and traditional knowledge. The project also focuses on youth involvement and engagement. During the second phase, the project will result in international seminars and place-based workshops with the participation of indigenous youth.

Russian-Finnish cooperation under Arctic Council

For more than a decade, Russia and Finland are closely cooperating within the framework of the EU's Cross-Border Cooperation programs, such as “Kolarctic”, “Karelia” and “South-East Finland — Russia”. Several regions of Northwestern Federal District, such as the Republic of Karelia, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, and Leningrad regions, Nenets Autonomous District, and Saint Petersburg are covered by these programs⁵⁰. The initial focus of these programs was mostly on economic and infrastructural activities, for example, development of small and middle-sized businesses, and improvement of the quality of life. However, currently, the focus is gradually shifting to sustainable development issues, such as environmental protection, support of indigenous peoples, and improving the wellbeing of the people.

“Kolarctic” CBC

Program area of Kolarctic CBC among others includes 3 regions from Russia (Nenets Autonomous District, the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions) and 1 region from Finland (Lapland). “Kolarctic” CBC 2014-2020 has been successfully completed and extended for a period of 2021–2027. The content of the program is being negotiated. Preliminarily agreed areas of cooperation are 1) a smarter Europe and its neighbourhood, 2) a greener low-carbon Europe and its neighbourhood 3) a more connected Europe with its neighbourhood 4) a more social Europe and its neighbourhood 5) Europe and its neighbourhood closer to their citizens⁵¹. The program's draft outlines the importance of sustainable development principles, such as a transition to green energy, sustainable waste management, sustainable tourism, and transport and infrastructure, during the work under the program⁵².

One of the uncompleted projects of the previous program is Phenomena of Arctic Nature (PAN). The project is aimed at developing sustainable tourism and is scheduled for 2019–2022. The project area covers the

⁴⁹ What's next?2021-2027. (2021). Kolarctic. Retrieved from <https://kolarctic.info/ru/what-next-2021-2027/>

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Phenomena of Arctic Nature PAN. (2021). Metsähallitus. Retrieved from <https://www.metsa.fi/en/project/phenomena-of-arctic-nature-pan/>

⁵² Environment. (2021). Karelia. Retrieved from https://kareliacbc.fi/en/environment?_ga=2.232556127.1768860037.1636297363-640803683.1636297363

Murmansk region of Russia, Finnmark of Norway, and Lapland of Finland⁵³. The goal of this project is to create new infrastructure objects including objects in national parks and cities (Pasvik–Inari Park) and to raise

“Karelia” CBC

“Karelia” CBC is being realized on the territory of the Republic of Karelia in Russia and Kainuu, North Karelia, and Oulu in Finland. As well as “Kolarctic” CBC, “Karelia” CBC 2014–2020 was completed and extended for the period of 2021–2027. However, precise directions and mechanisms of cooperation are still being discussed. Potential areas of cooperation are energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, sustainable water management, circular economy, nature protection, and biodiversity⁵⁴. An important outcome of the 2014–2020 program was the reconstruction of the Vyartsilya checkpoint, which, in the long term, will simplify border crossing and contribute to the development of the tourist industry in both countries. Several projects under “Karelia” CBC are carried out in collaboration with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. One of such projects is “Pro Trout”⁵⁵. This project is aimed at local fish diversity preservation in the Lake Pyaozero and the Oulanka River, which are located along the Russian-Finnish border in Karelia. Similar projects are being carried out under “Kolarctic” CBC, for example, the project for the conservation of salmon fish and pearl mussels⁵⁶.

“South-East Finland – Russia” CBC

The program core region consists of South Karelia, South-Savo and Kymenlaakso in Finland and St. Petersburg and Leningrad region in Russia. During 2014–2020, main areas of cooperation were: the development of entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized businesses; education and research; environmental protection and border security. The “South-East Finland – Russia” CBC has also been extended for 2021–2027 period. However, specific projects have not been defined yet. Thus, the main issues of the discussion are the same as for the “Kolarctic” CBC⁵⁷.

Another mechanism of cooperation in the field of sustainable development with Russian and Finnish participation is the International Union for Circumpolar Health. The Union deals with the health problems and needs

⁵³ PRO TROUT- Prospering native brown trout and local fishing professions. Karelia. Retrieved from <https://www.kareliacbc.fi/en/projects/pro-trout-prospering-native-brown-trout-and-local-fishing-professions-ka10003>

⁵⁴ Environment. (2021). Karelia. Retrieved from https://kareliacbc.fi/en/environment?_ga=2.232556127.1768860037.1636297363-640803683.1636297363

⁵⁵ PRO TROUT- Prospering native brown trout and local fishing professions. Karelia. Retrieved from <https://www.kareliacbc.fi/en/projects/pro-trout-prospering-native-brown-trout-and-local-fishing-professions-ka10003>

⁵⁶ SALMUS ENI-CBC Kolarctic project: Salmonids Fish and Freshwater Pearl Mussel Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity in the Green Belt of Fennoscandia. Luke. Retrieved from <https://www.luke.fi/projektit/salmus/>

⁵⁷ South-East Finland – Russia 2021-2027 Programme Public Hearing / Score. (2021). South-East Finland – Russia. Retrieved from <https://www.sefrcbc.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Public-Hearing-for-the-South-East-Finland-Russia-2021-2027-Programme-score-results.pdf>



of the circumpolar regions and peoples of the North, works on organizing labor safety, improving living conditions, and access to healthcare for the local population⁵⁸.

Russia and Finland are also cooperating in the field of sustainable tourism within the framework of the Joint Working Group on Tourism of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The working group addresses issues of improving transport accessibility (air and rail links), development of year-round tourism, and simplification of border crossing formalities (visa regime, etc.).

3. Prospects for Russian-Finnish cooperation

Considering the current state of Russian-Finnish relations, the main formats of cooperation in the field of sustainable development in the Arctic will be the Arctic Council and bilateral cooperation under state and non-governmental institutions. Cross-border cooperation programs such as “Kolarctic”, “South-East Finland — Russia” and “Karelia” will remain an important mechanism of cooperation, however the project portfolio could be significantly expanded.

The most promising areas of cooperation in the field of sustainable development are:

- Ecology and environmental protection;
- Energy;
- Transport and logistics infrastructure development;
- Telecommunications development;
- Tourism;
- Healthcare;
- Indigenous peoples, cultural ties;
- Science and education;
- Human capital;
- Business and innovation.

⁵⁸ International congresses. International Union for Circumpolar Health. Retrieved from <https://iuch.net/meetings/>

3. Ecology and environmental protection

Russia and Finland have significant experience in cooperating in the field of environmental protection. Several agreements have already been reached in marine ecosystems protection (for example, response to oil spills in the Arctic). However, increasing rates of climate change and the aggravation of climate risks should lead to intensification of cooperation in this field. Cooperation in this area would contribute to the achievement of SDG 13 — Climate Change, SDG 14 — Life below Water, and SDG 6 — Clean Water and Sanitation. Projects in the field of improving the quality of fresh water, ensuring the sustainable use of water systems both for the conservation of biodiversity in the region and for the prevention of various types of diseases among the inhabitants of the region due to the deterioration of the quality of fresh water seem to be promising.

Joint projects in the field of monitoring and assessment of the climate change in the Arctic seem necessary to develop measures for climate change adaptation. Satellite technologies could be used in this regard.

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Joint projects in the field of monitoring and assessment of the climate change in the Arctic seem necessary to develop measures for climate change adaptation. Satellite technologies could be used in this regard. Another promising area for cooperation in the field of environmental protection is agroforestry. Agroforestry implies the modernization of agricultural and forestry technologies to create environmentally friendly and sustainable land use systems, which will improve the availability of raw materials in the Arctic region⁵⁹. Projects, completed under “Kolarctic” CBC2014–2020, could become a starting point of strengthening cooperation in this area.

Projects in waste utilization and recycling, which are just beginning to be carried out by Finland and Russia, also seem promising since Finland has considerable experience in this area, which can be helpful for Russia

⁵⁹ Forests are rich not only in wood. (2020). Kolarctic. Retrieved from <https://kolarctic.info/ru/news-and-events/леса-богаты-не-только-древесиной/>

Energy

Essential part of the Arctic sustainable development is decarbonization and transition to renewable energy, hence cooperation under SDG 7 — Affordable and Clean Energy appears to be plausible. In this regard, a promising area for cooperation is wind power production. Currently, the Finnish company “Fortum” is implementing a number of projects related to the construction of wind farms in Russia. The natural conditions in the Arctic region (high wind speed along the sea borders) create opportunities for the organization of wind parks, offshore wind farms, and Arctic-class wind farms.

Finland is one of the world leaders in the use of wood for power generation. Russia has significant forest resources and a large forest industry. Therefore, the use of Finnish experience in sustainable production of biofuels from wood waste can play a significant role in expanding the use of renewable forest resources in the Russian Arctic.

Finland has a long history of nuclear energy use. Russia has technologies and experience in construction of nuclear energy objects. Therefore, cooperation in this field will continue, considering that currently “Rosatom” participates in the project aimed at constructing a nuclear power plant in Ostrobothnia (Finland)⁶⁰. Finally, hydrogen energy, which has a special role in the Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2035, could become a promising area of cooperation. Hydrogen energy plays a special role in the decarbonization of the EU economy, which is proved by the adoption of the European Union’s Hydrogen Strategy 2020⁶¹. Currently, projects of construction facilities for production hydrogen in Karelia are being discussed. Hydrogen produced at these facilities will be exported to Finland⁶².

Transport, logistics, and infrastructure

Underdeveloped system of roads and railways is a serious problem in the Arctic region. Therefore, to address this issue, intensive work is required under SDG 9 — Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure, SDG 11 — Sustainable cities and Communities. The development of transport infrastructure will significantly increase the region’s accessibility for both the local population and tourists. Joint projects with Russian and Finnish participation will contribute to the mobility of both large and small and medium-sized businesses. Another important issue is modernization of border checkpoints. Work in this direction could be continued

⁶⁰ Nuclear power plants under construction. State Atomic Energy Corporation «Rosatom». Retrieved from <https://rosatom.ru/production/design/stroyashchiesya-aes/>

⁶¹ European Commission. (2020). A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/hydrogen_strategy.pdf

⁶² Severstal and its partners are working on the production of “green” hydrogen in Karelia. (2021). TASS. Retrieved from <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/12875583>

within the framework of Cross-Border Cooperation programs.

Moreover, the quality of telecommunications in the Arctic is significantly lower compared with more southern regions of Europe and Russia, both in terms of coverage and data transmission speed. Thus, the expansion of cellular networks and the laying of fiber optic lines will significantly improve quality of life in the Arctic, allow access to educational resources, medicine, work remotely, and digitalization of business processes will promote entrepreneurial activity and contribute to the economic development of the region. These project directions have strong connection with SDG 4 — Quality Education, SDG 8 — Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Finally, Russia and Finland are already cooperating in icebreaker production. Projects in this area seem promising, concerning the possibility of using innovative technologies for drilling ice and using LNG (and hybrid technologies) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions during the operation of icebreakers.

Green financing is another essential part of shipping development in the region. Many banks and other financial institutions are already applying the “Poseidon principles”, which means supporting only green shipbuilding projects⁶³. Companies of this industry are committed to providing an emission reduction plan in line with the climate targets of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The adoption of such measures for Russian companies can contribute to the achievement of emission reduction targets and the implementation of SDG 13 — Climate Action and SDG 14 — Life below Water.

Healthcare

The healthcare issue has always been relevant. However, the importance of healthcare has drastically increased after COVID-19 outbreak. To ensure a high level of medicine in the region, even in sparsely populated areas, the development of telemedicine is required (SDG 3 — Good Health and Well-being), as well as the creation of transport (aviation) infrastructure for the timely provision of medical care on both sides of the Russian-Finnish border.

Tourism

Tourism is the most promising area of Russian-Finnish cooperation, mostly because of Finnish wide experience in this field. In the Russian Arctic, the tourism industry is still in the early stages of development, even though Russia has significant tourism potential, and the interest in the Arctic has been growing. The basis

⁶³ A global framework for responsible ship finance. Poseidon Principles. Retrieved from <https://www.poseidonprinciples.org/finance/#about>

for the organization of ecological tourism in Russia is a network of specially protected natural areas⁶⁴. National and natural parks can become centers of ecotourism in the region⁶⁵.

Because of the unique nature of the region, the Arctic has high potential for ecological sustainable tourism, with a focus on “closer to nature” and recreation. Therefore, work in this area relates to SDG 9 — Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure and SDG 15 — Life on Land.

One of the interesting cases in this area of cooperation is the tripartite national park “Pasvik-Inari”, located on the territory of Russia, Finland, and Norway.

It is possible to create tourist clusters based on large cities and sub-regions of the Arctic (Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Cape Zhelaniya, Yamal, Khatanga, Oymyakon).

Nevertheless, there are several unresolved problems in the field of ecological tourism. One of those is poorly developed transport and logistics infrastructure. Since the region lacks land transport, the demand for sea and river transportation increases, which leads to rapid deterioration of ships and port infrastructure. In addition, accessible tourist infrastructure, such as local hotels and hotel groups, is hardly presented. Because of that, the cost of accommodation in the region is relatively high. Therefore, for many tourists a trip to the region becomes financially unaffordable⁶⁶.

To make ecotourism affordable, both the development of infrastructure in the region, for example, through the creation of local hotel networks, and the creation of new transport solutions for tourist travels, for example, the development of cruise tourism, is required.

In addition, the governments should provide incentives to increase tourist traffic in the region. One of these could be a bilateral cashback program, which was implemented in Russia 2021. The visa regime facilitation is also necessary, not only to increase tourist traffic but also to enhance the mobility of Arctic residents.

Science and education

Close and mutually beneficial Russian-Finnish cooperation can be observed in the science and education field. A growing number of universities and research centers participate in scientific exchange programs and share research experience. In this area, consortia of universities, joint online courses of Finnish and Russian universities could be established so that residents of the Arctic regions could get access to high-quality inter-

⁶⁴ The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. (2018). What are specially protected natural areas and how are they protected. Retrieved from <http://duma.gov.ru/news/27804/>

⁶⁵ Bysova, N., Gavrilov, Yu., Golubeva, E., Drachkova, L., Zaykov, K., Zelyutkina, L. (2016). Arctic tourism in Russia. In Lukin, Yu., Shelepev, E. (Eds.), Kharlamp'eva, N. (Comps.) St. Petersburg. Retrieved from https://www.hse.ru/data/2016/07/27/1118894456/Arctic_tourism.pdf

⁶⁶ Bertosh, A. (2019). Arctic tourism: specifics and problems. GoArctic. Retrieved from <https://goarctic.ru/regions/arkticheskiy-turizm-spetsifika-i-problemy/>

national education, which meets SDG 4 - Quality Education.

Protection of the indigenous people's rights, cultural ties

The issue of ensuring the rights of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic is relevant both for Russia and for Finland, which is reflected in the Arctic strategies of both countries. In this regard, promising areas of cooperation are the preservation of the indigenous culture, the use and popularization of their language (within the region), the possibility of teaching it, and the support of indigenous and traditional crafts. Such projects can be organized within the framework of the Arctic Council since the organizations of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic (the Sámi Union, the International Gwich'in Council, the Arctic Athabaskan Council, the Aleutian International Association, the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation) are permanent participants of the Arctic Council.

In addition, it is possible to hold new cultural events, such as the Finnish Autumn Culture Week in Murmansk⁶⁷, the Finnish Cinema Week in St. Petersburg⁶⁸. Cooperation in this area relates to SDG 4 — Quality Education and SDG 16 — Peace, Justice, and Effective Institutions.

Human capital

Another promising area of Russian-Finnish cooperation in the Arctic is human capital, which matters due to the migration outflow from the Arctic to more developed areas. Russia intends to take measures to improve the quality of life in the Arctic, which is also enshrined in the Program of Russian Chairmanship in the Arctic Council⁶⁹ and can contribute to the achievement of SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities. In this regard, it is necessary to focus on strengthening the scientific potential of the region, developing scientific exchange. This could be achieved through establishing new scientific centers in the Arctic and holding joint scientific conferences under existing institutions in order to work out new creative approaches to the region management.

In addition, Russia and Finland can implement joint projects in the field of medicine and healthcare since these factors have a significant impact on the attractiveness of the region.

⁶⁷ The week of culture "Finnish Autumn in Murmansk" opens with the exhibition "Innovations in Finnish Design". (2019). Government of the Murmansk region. Retrieved from https://gov-murman.ru/info/news/321617/?sphrase_id=4644596

⁶⁸ XXXI Finnish Cinema Week. (2021). Finnish Film Week. Retrieved from <https://finnishfilmweek.ru/murmansk>

⁶⁹ Arctic Council. Russia's Chairmanship in the Arctic Council 2021-2023. Retrieved from <https://arctic-council.org/ru/about/russian-chairmanship-2/>



Business and innovation

Finland's significant expertise in innovation can become a growth driver for the Russian regional economy in the Arctic, which enables joint work in achieving SDG 8 — Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 9 — Industrialization, Innovation, and Infrastructure. Improving the investment climate, stimulating the development of small and medium-sized businesses, attracting new technologies and innovations to existing and new industries will help unlock the potential of the Arctic region.

However, due to the remoteness of the region from the centers of business and financial activity, population, and capital flow to more progressive regions, and at the same time, the logistics costs of enterprises increase. Creation of startups and accelerators based on European and Russian agencies and business incubators⁷⁰, as well as the promotion of benefits and preferences for entrepreneurs in the Russian Arctic⁷¹ could work as incentives for entrepreneurial activity and vectors of cooperation.

Mechanisms of cooperation

The most effective platform for cooperation on sustainable development issues is the Arctic Council. A cross-cutting priority outlined in the Program of the Russian Chairmanship in the Arctic Council is "Responsible Governance for Sustainable Arctic"⁷², therefore most of the projects under the Russian Chairmanship can be conducted by the Sustainable Development Working Group. For example, there may be projects related to the population of the Arctic, environmental protection and climate change, socio-economic development of the region⁷³. Some of the business projects in the field of regional sustainable development can be overseen by the Arctic Economic Council.

In addition, Russia plans to strengthen the Arctic Council, make it a universal platform for international cooperation in the Arctic, which opens opportunities for expanding the scale and areas of cooperation. Moreover, the potential of Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), which includes both Russia and Finland, has not been fully reached. There are several working groups within the framework of the BEAC, which work on projects on forest management, nature and water resources protection, transport, rescue cooperation. Moreover, due to the parallel chairmanships of Russia in the Arctic Council and Finland in the Barents / Euro-Arctic Council new opportunities are opening up for synchronizing the Arctic agenda, deepening co-

⁷⁰ Map of accelerators and business incubators of the Russian Federation. Association of Accelerators and Business Incubators. Retrieved from <http://www.oneup.ru/analytics/innomap>

⁷¹ Far East and Arctic Development Corporation. About the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. Retrieved from <https://erdc.ru/about-azrf/>

⁷² Arctic Council. Russia's Chairmanship in the Arctic Council 2021-2023. Retrieved from <https://arctic-council.org/ru/about/russian-chairmanship-2/>

⁷³ Ibid



operation in the field of sustainable development, in particular in the development of a circular economy, transport and logistics. New projects on environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation can be launched. Moreover, the potential of Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), which includes both Russia and Finland, has not been fully reached. There are several working groups within the framework of the BEAC, which work on projects on forest management, nature and water resources protection, transport, rescue cooperation. Moreover, due to the parallel chairmanships of Russia in the Arctic Council and Finland in the Barents / Euro-Arctic Council new opportunities are opening up for synchronizing the Arctic agenda, deepening cooperation in the field of sustainable development, in particular in the development of a circular economy, transport and logistics. New projects on environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation can be launched.

The coupling of Finnish and Russian strategies in the Arctic will enable to implement projects in the field of sustainable development and determine new potential areas for cooperation in order to ensure the careful development of the Arctic territories and the preservation of the unique ecosystem of this global region.

Furthermore, close cooperation may probably go within the framework of the Barents Regional Council⁷⁴ since in 2021 Finland became a Chairman of the BEAC, and Nenets Autonomous District chairs the Barents Regional Council for 2021-2023. As a result, projects related to human capital, building a favorable business environment, and new transport networks can be implemented within the framework of the BEAC.

Finally, cooperation will continue under the Cross-Border Cooperation programs "Kolarctic", "Karelia", and "South-East Finland – Russia" because the programs have been extended up to 2027. However, the content of these programs is still uncertain. According to the available drafts, the areas of cooperation will cover the goals of sustainable development in the field of environmental protection, low-carbon transition, and human capital development. In this regard, joint projects on carbon-free energy, protection of forests and water resources, creation of joint national parks, and support of small and medium-sized businesses are of interest.

This material is prepared for the Conference "Russian-Finnish Cooperation in the Field of Sustainable Development in the Arctic Region", which was held on the 29th of November 2021, in a hybrid format.

The event was devoted to the current state and the prospects of Russian-Finnish cooperation in the Arctic on its way to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the light of the Russian chairmanship in the Arctic Council during 2021-2023.

⁷⁴ Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council passed to Finland. (2021). TASS. Retrieved from <https://tass.ru/politika/12765433>



The discussion covered the opportunities and limitations of the Russian-Finnish cooperation in the Arctic, the effectiveness of existing platforms and formats of interaction, as well as priority areas for strengthening cooperation in the field of sustainable development in the Arctic.

The results of the Conference will further become a part of an analytical report on international cooperation in the field of sustainable development between Russia and Arctic and Non-arctic States. The results of the project will be presented at the high-level panels at international Arctic Forums in April of 2022 and 2023.

The conference was scheduled to be an opening event of the ThinkArctic Project – a series of ten conferences on bilateral Russian cooperation with Arctic and Non-arctic states in the area of sustainable development, organized by the Roscongress Foundation, the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies, and the Analytical Center for the Government of the Russian Federation. ThinkArctic Project will be conducted within the Program of the Russian Chairmanship in the Arctic Council during 2021-2023.

Experts, representatives of public authorities and business of Finland and Russia participated in the conference.

Speakers from Russia:

- Kashin Vasily: PhD, Head of the Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies, HSE University
- Likhacheva Anastasia: PhD, Dean of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University
- Mikhnevich Sergey: PhD, Managing Director, Department of the International Multilateral Cooperation and Integration, Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs
- Ryabova Larisa: PhD, Deputy Head for Scientific Work, Luzin Institute for Economic Studies, Kola Science Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences
- Stepanov Ilya: PhD, Deputy Head of the Laboratory for Climate Change Economics, Head of the Arctic Project at the Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies, HSE University
- Velikikh Grigory: Roscongress Foundation Deputy CEO for Expert Analytics
- Zaikov Konstantin: PhD, Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Information Policy, Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov



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2021-2023

ARCTIC COUNCIL
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Speakers from Finland:

- Heinenen Lassi: PhD, Professor of Arctic Politics in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lapland, an Adjunct Professor, University of Oulu
- Helanterä Antti: Finnish Ambassador to Russia in Moscow
- Koivurova Timo: PhD, Research professor, Director of Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland
- Niini Mikko: CEO of the Vientistrategit Oy, Arctic & Maritime Consultancy; Chairman of the Navidom Ltd and Rauma Marine Constructions Ltd
- Nystén-Haarala Soili: Professor of Commercial Law, Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Lapland
- Parviainen Sinikka: PhD, Senior analyst at the East Office of Finnish Industries in Helsinki
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