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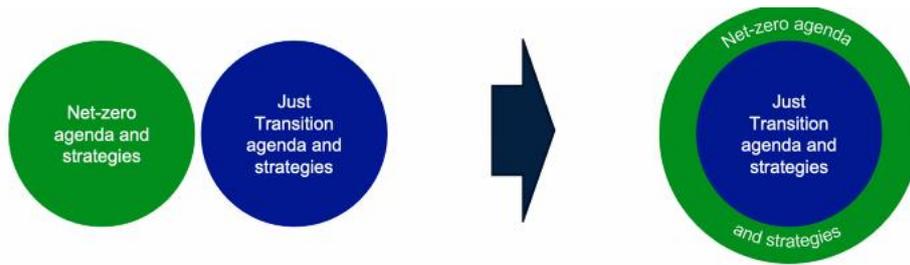
## The role of Territorial Cooperation in supporting Just Transition

### Summary of Discussions

#### 23 March 2022

The Workshop on the role of Territorial Cooperation in supporting Just Transition took place on Zoom on 23 March 2022 gathering representatives across the High North and beyond. The Workshop was organised by the European Policies Research Centre (EPRC) in partnership with the Centre for Sustainable Development (C4SD) of the University of Strathclyde and the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland in Finland. The Workshop was part of a project funded by the Arctic Connections Fund of the Scottish Government.

The Workshop was chaired by **Heidi Vironen** of EPRC, who started the day with a general introduction to the project. The first presentation was given by **Rebecca Ford** of the Centre for Sustainable Development, on “Understanding Just Transition – Insights from the Align project”. Ford argued for the need to embed the Just Transition in the broader net zero agenda and strategies.



Furthermore, Ford suggests the need to go beyond the typical remits of justice (distributional, recognition, procedural, restorative) to a more whole-systems approach in Just Transition that can consider justice and impact over time, at different scales, along energy supply chains and across power structures and hierarchies. An emphasis was placed on the need to see groups working together across silos, and for consistency in visions and longer-term strategies to enable stakeholders to work together in a level playing field.

The discussion that followed had the following inputs:

#### **Alan Whiteside**

- Considers this topic and findings particularly relevant for rural regions, since there are few alternatives for rural regions to have those types of projects after Brexit;
- This highlights the benefits that rural Scotland is missing out on, with not being part of Interreg NPA and similar programmes, by facilitating collaboration with regions tackling the wider opportunities of affordable and clean energy;
- Silos are not just within sectors but between sectors, with rural regions having more to gain from cross-sectoral collaboration as no single sector is dominant in those areas;
- There are major differences between urban and rural innovation, and that needs to be considered.

#### **Rebecca Ford**

- Bottom-up is important, but top-down is important too. In the energy communities, there has been a built demand for change, and over the last five years, the number of suppliers has dropped because the industry and government policies are not in place.
- There is a need for top-down policies to enable local action.

The following presentation was led by **Stefan Kirchner** of the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland, on “Conditions for Just Transition in the High North”. Kirchner discussed the wide range of cooperation in the Arctic that has been in place for the last thirty years. This includes the consensus-based Arctic Council, which brings together eight Arctic Member States and six indigenous representative organisations. The Arctic Council remains relevant, with a sustainable development working group working on the fight against climate change, resilience, mining and infrastructure, though not working directly on the Just Transition. The experience in cross-border cooperation is relevant for the Just Transition efforts in the future. However, questions remain on the future of collaboration with Russia in the Arctic Council, hindering future initiatives tackling these important issues.

The discussion that followed had the following inputs:

#### **Anuschka Miller**

- The work done is driven by people and communities, and established networks. They have been coordinated by the Arctic Council as state players, but there are still people below that. Miller considered whether there is opportunity for cooperation with Russian scientists still, for example, and other more meso- and bottom-levels. She argued with the often cited ‘burning house’ parable of climate change, on whether we can afford to consider the nationality of the fire fighters.

#### **Stefan Kirchner**

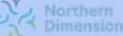
- Many European countries have stopped cooperation with institutions in the Russian federation. This is a major challenge in the long run.
- There is a need for a long-term solution, still.

#### **Adam Stepien**

- Individual level is becoming more difficult. Projects on Arctic observation system also need data from the Russian regions, which constitute almost half of the Arctic.
- These international tensions are spilling over to Arctic cooperation, and before that, that had not been the case. However, what was a bigger issue with Russian partners was the situation within Russia, regarding the crackdown on NGOs, and the Russian foreign agent law. The regime has hardened significantly with the invasion of Ukraine.
- It will be more and more difficult to cooperate with Russian partners also because of the risk for these partners. Organisations are not as autonomous as they used to be in the past.
- Russia is a slightly different world in terms of administration, and this also is affecting Russian partners. They do not see the world that much different when it comes to environmental issues and the Arctic.

- The Arctic Council has been a good influence on the discourse, and this may be lost with less cooperation with Russia.

The following presentation was led by **Irene McMaster** of EPRC, on “Added Value of Territorial Cooperation”. McMaster provided some context on the Just Transition cooperation in the Arctic, namely on the actions being taken at different levels.

 <p><b>Arctic Council</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main international governance body</li> <li>• High level governmental participation</li> <li>• Working groups (e.g. Sustainable development)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Barents Euro-Arctic Council</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Platform for intergovernmental and interregional cooperation</li> <li>• New funding for small scale cooperation projects</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Northern Dimension</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ND policy provides a platform for practical cooperation via its thematic partnerships: environment, transport and logistics, culture, and public health and social well-being.</li> <li>• Suspended until further notice all activities of the Northern Dimension policy which involve Russia and Belarus..</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Interreg</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured, strategic programmes</li> <li>• Funding and access to experienced partners</li> <li>• Access to wider EU networks</li> <li>• Administrative complexity</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Nordic/Nora</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nordic Council of Ministers and Nordic Council</li> <li>• Aim to make Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated in the world <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nora: Develop integrated cross-sectoral approaches to territorial needs</li> <li>• Mix of formal programme-based cooperation, governmental and regional/local level initiatives</li> <li>• Capacity to reflect specific territorial interests/approaches</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
 <p><b>Nordic/Arctic Scottish</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nordic Scottish - long standing cooperation (pre dating Interreg Nordic-Scottish Cooperation in place)</li> <li>• Scottish Government - Arctic Policy Framework</li> <li>• Arctic - Small project Funding and wider collaboration</li> </ul>

Challenges and opportunities were emphasised, namely on:

- Unknowns related to changes linked to climate change, COVID, and international relations;
- Raft of policy initiatives and commitments;
- Commitment to future cooperation;
- Need for new thinking.

The added value of territorial cooperation depends on the programme and its complexity, but include:

- Action and results address specific area needs;
- Cross-sectoral working;
- Achieve scale, critical mass and profile;
- Scope to initiate and extend innovation and competitiveness;
- Productive networking and exchanges;
- Supporting foresight and forward planning activities.

The second part of the workshop kicked off with a presentation by **Adam Stepien** of the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland on “Examples of delivering Just Transition through Arctic cooperation”. Stepien highlighted that the Arctic economies are heavily based on primary extraction resources, like fossil fuels, with alternative development pathways potentially not being open to certain communities, as it would demand a huge investment. Nonetheless, there is increased pressure to pursue renewable pathways, and to pursue extraction of critical minerals that are necessary for the low carbon transition (e.g. wind power technologies, solar panels). The Arctic Council is not yet utilising Just Transition vocabulary but it considers the need for multiple and simultaneous drivers of change, such as the communities, and this is especially important when considering renewable energy projects.

This was followed by a presentation by **Kirsti Mijnhijmer** on “Delivering Just Transition through the Interreg NPA”. While it is one of the smallest transnational programmes in terms of funding, it covers a large area. It has several priorities, such as innovation, entrepreneurship, renewables and energy efficiency and natural and cultural heritage. The NPA incorporates Just Transition through:

- Innovation projects developing solutions to reduce pollution, and increase local business opportunities;
- Renewable energy projects, with a focus on small-scale solutions and increased energy knowledge in the community, or specifically addressing fuel poverty;
- Capacity building projects using local input to balance environmental, social and economic needs.

The 2021-27 NPA programme will have priorities on strengthening innovation, climate change adaptation and resource sufficiency and organisational capacity.

**Magnus Davidson**, from the University of Highlands and Islands, sent a video contribution to the workshop, which delved on the Scottish participation in the territorial cooperation programmes, such as the NPA. Davidson emphasises cooperation as a tool to facilitate two-way learning. In particular, rural areas are not as attractive in terms of funding as other areas, and places like the Highlands and Islands have done very well in this cooperative approach. The approach of the University of Highlands and Islands to the development of its region is aligned with that of Just Transition, with a huge number of projects being led by territorial cooperation. Scotland has all the tools and resources to get to net zero, but Davidson highlights this needs to be done in a systematic way.

The last presentation of the Workshop was given by **Kairi Pääsuke** who provided an outlook on the experiences of the Interreg Nord programme, as well as of the new programme Interreg Aurora, and the role of the indigenous Sápmi community in both. The development strategy of the Sápmi in Sweden considers the transmission of traditional knowledge, a sustainable and resilient environment, and balanced development. This aligns with the priorities of both programmes, focused on research and innovation, sustainable growth, culture, and others.

The discussion that followed had the following inputs:

**Adam Stepien**

- Many of the programmes are based on the exchange of good practice between companies and municipalities. Are these best practices being exchanged and implemented, and what is the long-term impact on the ways these companies operate?

**Kirsti Mijnhijmer**

- They have started looking at the impact of the NPA projects, because they do more than the exchange of knowledge and are strong in concrete project outputs.

**Kairi Pääsuke**

- They have noticed an increased “greening” of the programmes. Academics and cooperation between universities in the Arctic is increasingly oriented more towards these issues. But municipalities and citizens are not quite there yet.
- They know they have potential, despite the difficulties in operationalising some of their objectives.

Finally, **Irene McMaster** concluded the workshop with some key takeaways:

- It is difficult to define impact, and the focus can be quite narrow, with the risk for missing associated impacts. But there is a lot of impact happening even after project closure;
- Need for a place-based response;
- Widening of the application and use of the term Just Transition, and how it can be applied to understand a broader range of needs, actions and policy interventions;
- Clear benefit for remote and extremely isolated rural communities which predominate across the Arctic, as well as for taking a territorially-sensitive and adapted approach to understanding the Just Transition;
- Value of cooperation, and need for external support and engagement;
- Need for knowledge, skills development and capacity-building.