

# Communities' response and resilience to corona virus19/ CRR-COVID19 project

The CRR/COVID19 (Communities' response and resilience to corona virus 19, CRR for short) project and was funded by the Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) programme. It addressed impacts of and responses of the partner regions to the 1st wave of COVID19. It was submitted under the COVID19 call "Theme D: Citizens engagement / Community response. Small, peripheral communities are more self- sufficient, what lessons can they share? CRR deals with impact, resilience, & responses to COVID19".

The CRR project brought together seven partners, six organisations from the NPA and one organisation from the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). Impacts and responses were recorded through field interviews & online options. We received 890 answers, from across the partner area and a little beyond, including Denmark (Bornholm) and also the Northern and Western Regional Assembly in Ireland.

Project partner	Region	Member State
PP1 Regional Council of Kainuu	Kainuu	Finland
PP2 University of Oulu	Kainuu	Finland
PP3 Rural Area Partnership in Derry Ltd (RAPID)	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
PP4 Leitrim County Council	Leitrim	Ireland
PP5 NHS West Isles	West Isles, Scotland	United Kingdom
PP6 British Red Cross	Shetland, Scotland	United Kingdom
PP7 Baltic Sea Cluster Development Centre	Brought in Faroe Islands	Denmark

The CRR project approach is structured into four (4) community groups (CG) with respective questionnaires.

- (1) CG1: Citizens' responses including human rights considerations.
- (2) CG2: Families and schooling, their readiness for tele-solutions.
- (3) CG3: Health-care providers' and users' readiness for tele-solutions and practical arrangement to secure safe healthcare.
- (4) CG4: Regional / county authorities assessing the impact of COVID19 and policy responses aiming at sustainable recovery.

NPA communities cover a range of (relatively) small urban centres, semi-urban communities and rural communities. As a result of this structure, there can be especially poignant health-care challenges, technological and organisational. Field research collected 890 answers to the four types of questionnaires. Responses reveal a common path of impacts<sup>1</sup>, while responses to this impact have been diversified between emergency and structural measures:

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion please see CRR Recommendations report,

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J8iormSOUZkGHj9uRmUFeusphyS2Rr9E/view?usp=sharing> .



## Communities' response and resilience to corona virus 19/*CRR project*

- [1]. **Impacts on the structure of the regional economies:** COVID19 is recognised to have resulted in a significant overall slowdown of aggregate demand<sup>2</sup>. The impacts and responses of this slow-down, are still unfolding and affect various sectors. Localised micro economy has re-oriented fast to better serving local customers, transport has seen a lot of challenges, and the worst impact was on tourism. At the same time, activity patterns might be re-orienting, e.g. from international to domestic tourism flows. One question is, can domestic demand replace international demand in terms of economic growth and sustainability. The expected further slow-down in trade and global demand will hit peripheral areas economies maybe more severely given their higher reliance on tradable activities, such as mining and tourism<sup>3</sup>. Corresponding impacts also on labour market patterns. For example, a high share of workers cannot do their tasks from home (e.g. in agriculture, food processing, ...).
- [2]. **Impacts on individual lives:** Depression, loneliness and exacerbation of internal family problems have been the most striking of impacts. On the other hand, many respondents also stressed that "We need to recall how to be individually more resilient, how to be more autonomous".
- [3]. **Virtual life:** (3.1) Tele-schooling requires much more. In spite of the fact that challenges mentioned relate to access to technological tools and ICT infrastructure, social parameters, e.g. family space "vs" learning space availability within families are also very important. On the other hand, interregional learning platforms, allowing access to curricula and specialisations not available locally were profiled as opportunities, and we believe they are. These could be part of a next project. (3.2) Tele-medicine, both end users and providers prefer face to face meetings, and if that does not work, to have interactive. technological options. This insight, too, could be the focus of a next project.
- [4]. **Importance of the quality of government and governance/ the importance of local communities as well functioning structures:** it is important to issue emergency measures and ensure their localisation and the readiness of local communities to support people in difficult times.
- [5]. **Strategic reactions of regions are important:** regional economic resilience has been tested in depth, especially when the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> waves broke up. Regions have responded in different ways to that, for example, Ireland (Northern & Western Regional Assembly) and Kainuu are stressing investments for innovation, digital transformation and "green" change relevant technologies; re-population of value chains; interregional and transnational platform-based collaborations. Other regions (e.g. Denmark) focused more on sustainable tourism. It would be interesting to work along such lines of objectives in new projects.
- [6]. **Synergies identification & exploration potential:** (6.1) with *COVID19 theme C project*: Innovation response should be strategic not reactive; (6.2) with *COVID19 theme E project*: re-definition of tourism strategy for northern communities, two options were profiled: sustainable tourism, serving local communities and / or thematic tourism as a priority with leisure tourism as an 'add on'; (6.3) we have reviewed COVID19 impacts also in other programmes (Alpine Region for example, bringing together AT, FR, DE, IT), national (SITRA<sup>4</sup>) and regional studies, Helsinki University Graduate School of Economics (GSE) report for Helsinki-Uusimaa in Finland, <https://www.uudenmaanliitto.fi/tietopalvelut/tilastotorstaj>, information also in English <https://vnk.fi/en/press-releases>).

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<sup>2</sup> OECD (2020). Policy Implications of Coronavirus Crisis for Rural Development. Tackling coronavirus-19, 16.6.2020.oecd.org/coronavirus.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sitra.fi/en/publications/lifestyles-after-lockdown/>

<https://www.sitra.fi/en/events/impact-on-sustainable-behaviour-case-covid-19/>

<https://www.sitra.fi/en/articles/sitras-statement-on-the-deployment-of-a-covid-19-tracking-application/>

<http://www.interreq-npa.eu/news/new-npa-project-approved-communities-response-and-resilience-to-corona-virus-19/>