

Report: Evaluating the joint action -Creating a meeting place and MLG model on Sustainable energy and transport infrastructure/land use planning, Sweden

Context and rationale

Jokkmokk municipality is one of the Northern communities that face risks associated with climate change, not at least for the tourism sector and the Sami Reindeer Herders. At the same time, Jokkmokk is a centre of climate-friendly energy production (11 hydropower station, producing 12.5 TWh/year while the own energy consumption is less than 0,5 TWh) and even a centre of energy related vocational education in cooperation with energy business.

The origin of the joint action is related to two different activities:



- 1) The sparsely populated county of Norrbotten needs meeting places related to energy and climate to facilitate trust between stakeholders, networking and experience exchange. Jokkmokk municipality expressed a clear will to become one of these established meeting places, building upon its energy expertise and its active participation in the Covenant of Mayors and the Swedish ecomunicipality network.
- 2) In 2013, an intensive phase of exploration of iron ore deposit started in Jokkmokk. It became obvious that establishing an iron ore mine in Jokkmokk demands a great deal of energy and transport related infrastructure investments. This would also have impacts on reaching the targets of the regional SEAP. In this context, a joint action has been developed under COOPENERGY to develop a collaboration model on energy planning related to the establishment of a mine.

Description of the Joint Action

The joint action started with high ambitions. It was based on an existing initiative in establishing a regional meeting place on energy and climate, a yearly youth conference on energy and climate change, Jokkmokk Winter Conference (JWC). However, the working process showed clearly, that the municipality is facing a difficult economic situation, e.g. due to increased cost on elderly care and home-care service. There are only limited external funding sources available. Both factors together made it in the current situation impossible for the municipality to establish the planned regional energy & climate meeting place. However, Jokkmokk municipality became the place in which the 2 COOPENERGY regional Energy Info Days were held, building upon and collaborating with JWC.

The part of the joint action on establishing a sustainable energy and transport infrastructure and land use planning was closely linked to the establishment of an iron ore mine. The rapid and drastically collapse of iron ore prices between 2013 and 2015 resulted in a delay in all planning work, which made it difficult to reach any concrete result. However, Jokkmokk municipality commissioned in a close collaboration with regional authorities a research study to get a better understanding on impacts of a mining establishment on the economy in the area.



How we collaborated

- Nenet worked with the regional authority prior to launching the working group to ensure best results;
- A Local Working Group has been set up, with participants from the regional authority, the regional energy agency and local representatives;
- 2 meetings of the local working group have been held. Nenet and local members of the LWG participated. However, the regional authority could not join the meeting due to limited resources.

Lessons learned and success factors

- Long distances and sparsely population make collaboration difficult and time- and cost intensive.
- Especially small municipalities are vulnerable to changing framework conditions. Targets and issues need to be adapted due to that.
- MLG models need to be flexible, understandable and easy to join.
- Due to limited resources, more time might be needed to reach targets.

Barriers and proposed solutions

- Local and regional authorities' resources in the County are very limited in terms of staff working on strategic energy planning, specifically after the national funding scheme for strategic energy and climate work on local and regional level has ended. Already limited resources are now even more limited. Proposed solution: Influence Swedish policy makers to re-introduce a long-term support scheme on strategic energy- and climate work on regional and local level.
- Long distances in the county made meetings very time-intensive. It was impossible to find a date for a working group meeting where all members of the group could participate. As MLG-processes need a certain level of trust and confidence of all involved parties, and demand a certain level of personal contact, this was a strong barrier. However, an increased use of web-based meetings is helpful and can be part of a future MLG process.

Resources

- Building MLG collaboration models within energy planning between the regional and the local level is demanding a relatively high amount of resources in terms of staff, time and travel. Under the current framework conditions, it's difficult to afford these resources for both levels. As climate and energy strategic work are not obligatory and no general funding scheme exists, this is a real barrier.

Perspectives, continuation of the action

- Jokkmokk municipality is committed to the CoM and to working on a regional meeting place on sustainability. Norrbotten County Council as regional CoM supporting structure commissioned Nenet to collaborate with municipalities on the CoM, and the dialogue initiated under COOPENERGY between regional authorities, Nenet and Jokkmokk will continue. Joint efforts will be made to ensure a long-term funding for strategic work on energy and climate in the region.
- The municipality will work to develop Jokkmokk Winter Conference further and aims at coming back with a new concept for a regional, national and international conference from 2017 onwards.
- Results from the research study will be part of a sustainability concept for a future mine establishment in case of rising iron ore prices.

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