



Background Paper to the NSC for the Joint Annual Conference & General Assembly 2009 - Sustainable Innovation

Norvision and a Strategic Vision for the North Sea Region?

1. Background

The current discussion about the Baltic Sea Strategy leads to the questions of similar strategies and processes in other areas of Europe. For the North Sea Region the Norvision as a spatial perspective was already introduced in 2000. The Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme Synthesis Report was a follow up on the Norvision but not replacing it. It was introduced in 2005 as a step towards a new spatial agenda for the North Sea Region. Both reports were used as a basis for the Interreg IVB Operational Programme, which was launched in 2007. All reports are available as downloads on the North Sea Region Programme's website.

2. An update for the North Sea Region?

Taking up from the current debate about the Baltic Strategy and taking into account the already available reports for the North Sea Region the question is if an update for the North Sea Region is required and if, in which direction it should go. Even if the direction is quite open at the moment there are some important cornerstones which can be recognized for some general reflections:

2000	Norvision	A Spatial Perspective for the North Sea Region	IIC
2005	Synthesis Report	Towards a New Spatial Agenda for the NSR - Coastal Water Management - Transport and Accessibility - Facilitating Innovation and the Transfer of Knowledge & Technology - Energy - Demographic Change	IIIB
2007	Operational Programme IVB		
2009	Strategic Vision for the North Sea Region?		IVB

2.1 Timeline

Whereas the timeline for the Norvision is up to the year 2020 the horizon for the Synthesis report is 2010. The period of the IVB programme ends in 2013. From a forward looking perspective a strategic vision should aim on a perspective beyond 2020.

2.2 Regional development

The background perspective changed during the programme periods from IIC over IIIB to the current IVB from a spatial development towards a regional development perspective. A strategic vision should take this into account by developing a future perspective for regional development in the North Sea Region.

2.3 Political developments

The political surroundings of the programme are changing continuously. For the development of the IVB programme the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas had been of crucial importance. Since then the Commission presented its Maritime Blue Book to develop a European maritime policy and the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, taking the scope of the enlarged Union with 27 member states into account. In December 2008 the Commission presented its agenda to reduce CO2 emissions until 2020. These are only some of the upcoming political agendas and programmes to be mentioned. And this is just the European level. Developments in the programme's member states have also be taken into account. In addition a new European Parliament has been elected just recently, which will subsequently followed by a new Commission. For a strategic vision it will be important to identify the relevant political processes which will influence the North Sea Region in the long run.

2.4 Transnational cooperation

The Norvision was initiated during the Interreg IIC period with a clear future looking perspective. The Synthesis Report was a result of the IIIB period, with a perspective towards the IVB period. Also a strategic vision should develop a future perspective on transnational cooperation for the North Sea Region.

3. Next steps

It must be emphasized that no decision has been made on the need and the direction for a possible strategic vision for the North Sea Region. The reflections above might help to develop a framework for this. To be successful it will also to be crucial to have a critical mass among all involved institutions and stakeholders within all affected regions of the riparian States around the North Sea.

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