

North Sea Region 2020

Progress to date:

- 1) 51st Executive Committee – Decision made to develop a North Sea Strategy, led by Strategic Committee.
- 2) The Strategic Committee agreed to set up two working groups – a Writing Group (to prepare reports) and a Planning Group (to organise a conference) and endorsed three priorities:
 - Managing Maritime Space
 - Increasing Accessibility and Attractiveness
 - Tackling Climate Change
- 3) 52nd Executive Committee – supported work so far and planned conference to be held in Newcastle in March 2010 and Committee of the Regions event in April 2010.
- 4) Letter sent to NSC President from Chairs of Innovation & Education and Sustainable Development Groups calling for:
 - Closer correlation with the themes of the North Sea Programme and other EU transnational funding Programmes
 - Clearer identification of how the North Sea Strategy will work in collaboration with EU policy aims and targets such as those outlined in the EU 2020 Strategy.
 - Clearer identification of local, regional and national competencies in taking a strategy forward and a means of ensuring broad buy in from all sectors.
 - Aims and targets articulated through a clear time frame.
- 5) Application to ESPON to undertake research to provide an evidence base for North Sea Strategy submitted but rejected on a technicality.
- 6) The Strategic Committee asked that two additional priorities be added to the three agreed previously:
 - Promoting Innovation and Excellence
 - Sustaining Liveable Communities
- 7) Stakeholder conference “Working together to Manage the Marine Resources of the North Sea Region” held in Newcastle on 17 and 18 March.
- 8) 53rd Executive Committee supported the additional 2 priorities, agreed that the NSC should participate in the European Maritime Day event in May 2010, changed the name of the North Sea Strategy to North Sea Region 2020 and agreed that a consultation with members should be held.

9) The 2010 Annual Business Meeting was presented with the results of the Members' consultation and endorsed the five themes for North Sea Region 2020 (but changing Sustaining Liveable Communities to Sustainable Communities) and the recommendation from the Writing Group to follow a 3-stage approach:

- 1) Contribute to DG MARE's North Sea Basin Strategy consultation
- 2) Influence the next INTERREG programme
- 3) Finalise a full macro-regional strategy

10) Letter sent to Executive Committee from Chairs of Culture and Tourism, Innovation and Education and Sustainable Development Groups calling for:

- identify challenges & opportunities
- provide a political framework for INTERREG V
- coordinate different sector policies
- should cover both land and sea based activities and be open to all regions bordering the North Sea
- there should be no specific channel dimension, but co-operation and involvement as appropriate
- and create a flexible and issue-based approach

11) Full report of Members' consultation highlights:

- NSC Members support the idea of North Sea Region 2020
- It should cover both land and sea-based activities
- North Sea Region 2020 should cover all regions bordering the North Sea (and perhaps be flexible in its geographical coverage)
- The NSC and DG Regio need to work together, with the NSC perhaps undertaking the preparatory work and handing over to DG Regio later
- All relevant stakeholders should be consulted and involved in the development and implementation of North Sea Region 2020
- The 5 themes identified by the NSC are broadly supported, but require further elaboration and definition
- North Sea Region 2020 must link with Europe 2020
- An analysis of existing initiatives/strategies/legislation etc. is required so that gaps and the added value of North Sea Region 2020 can be identified
- North Sea Region 2020 should be developed/implemented as soon as realistically possible, with the implementation phase likely to start in 2014
- EU funding needs to be made available to implement North Sea Region 2020

12) 54th Executive Committee accepts findings from consultation and agrees to set up an ad-hoc North Sea Region 2020 Steering Group to give political direction for this work.

Existing Analyses and Strategies

There are a vast number of studies/strategies available on different sectors and territories within the North Sea Region. The challenge is to identify the key documents and draw together conclusions from them.

European

1) Europe 2020

Setting out a political framework for the EU for the next decade. Europe 2020 will be based on three themes:

Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.

Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

- Europe 2020 proposes the following targets for 2020:
- 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed.
- 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D.
- The "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right).
- The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree.
- 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

To achieve these targets, the EU will create 7 flagship initiatives:

"Innovation Union" to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation so as to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs.

"Youth on the move" to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market.

"A digital agenda for Europe" to speed up the roll-out of high-speed internet and reap the benefits of a digital single market for households and firms.

"Resource efficient Europe" to help decouple economic growth from the use of resources, support the shift towards a low carbon economy, increase the use of renewable energy sources, modernise our transport sector and promote energy efficiency.

"An industrial policy for the globalisation era" to improve the business environment, notably for SMEs, and to support the development of a strong and sustainable industrial base able to compete globally.

"An agenda for new skills and jobs" to modernise labour markets and empower people by developing their skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility.

"European platform against poverty" to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

2) Macro-regions

Both DG MARE and DG REGIO have indicated interest in developing macro-regional strategies where they can add value. DG Regio has already developed a strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. There is a political commitment from the European Council for strategies for the Danube and Atlantic areas. DG MARE is looking at sea basin approaches for the physical management of the seas based on regional seas such as the North Sea.

3) 5th Cohesion Report

While not formally due for publication until 3 November, draft conclusions from the 5th Cohesion Report (which will set the framework behind future EU funding programmes such as INTERREG) has been leaked. The document supports greater transnational co-operation which could support the development of macro-regional strategies. Funding is likely to be more closely linked with innovation in future, as well as the Europe 2020 priorities. A broad definition of 'innovation' is likely to be taken, with the concept of 'social innovation' a new priority. The draft conclusions are also supportive of integrated local development initiatives, suggesting support for territory-based integrated funding programmes.

4) Sectoral Strategies – further work is required to identify the most relevant policies for North Sea Region 2020. Relevance will depend on the priorities selected for the initiative.

Macro-Regional

1) Norvision

Norvision was published in 2002 and aimed to provide a spatial perspective for the North Sea Region as well as influence the development of the INTERREG IIIB North Sea Region Programme. The Vision takes a long-term perspective of around 20 years and seeks to achieve:

- A North Sea Region well integrated into the development of the European Space and into the world economy;
- A North Sea Region with a balanced spatial structure;
- The North Sea Region – a model for democratic and co-operative planning;
- The North Sea Region, which takes care of its natural resources and ecological equilibrium and its cultural heritage;
- Urban regions in the North Sea Region developing in an environmentally friendly way;
- Urban regions as motors of economic regional development
- Urban regions which promote social integration;
- Urban regions which are attractive places for their populations and visitors;
- Human activities which are in harmony with nature;
- Rural populations participate fully in economic and social progress.

Norvision was followed up by a Synthesis Report in 2005 which aimed to inform the development of the INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme. Five update studies were published and identified updated priorities including:

Coastal Water Management:

- Strengthen Integrated Coastal Zone Management and broaden it to encompass sea users;
- Co-ordinate the future use of coastal waters;
- Manage risks in coastal waters and open seas;
- Produce and make available better cross-country information.

Transport

- Manage transport growth;
- Deliver improved sustainability;
- Foster geographical cohesion, integration and equality.

Innovation and the Transfer of Knowledge

- Realize the potential of cross-country collaboration between business clusters in the North Sea Region's strong sectors;
- Use knowledge created in urban centres to boost development in less densely populated areas.

Energy

- Maximise renewable energy production, particularly through strengthening the capacity of transnational systems for controlling the location of offshore wind turbines and production of biomass;
- Apply change in the nature of power plants, particularly decentralisation of production from renewable sources;
- Development of new energy carrier infrastructure, for hydrogen and other forms.

Demographic Change

- Provide infrastructure to support working women with young families;
- Respond to different requirements of the ageing population for homes infrastructure and public services;
- Respond to lifestyle requirements (e.g. for smaller homes);
- Cascade down the higher growth rates and attractions of city life to adjoining areas;
- Support the economic and social integration of international migrants.

2) INTERREG North Sea Region Operational Programme

Any future reports/studies used to analyse the success of INTERREG IVB and prepare for INTERREG VB could be useful and would need to be integrated into North Sea Region 2020.

National and Regional Strategies

It would be advisable for a representative from each country/region to identify their key national strategies which would need to be taken into account with regards to North Sea Region 2020.

Potential actions

- 1) **Commission a study/analysis on existing strategies/programmes/policies already in place in the North Sea Region** within the context of the 5 North Sea Region 2020 strategy priorities. This could perhaps be undertaken by ESPON.
- 2) **Identify the added value of North Sea Region 2020.** How can it make policies/funds more efficient, fill gaps and reduce duplication?
- 3) **Consult stakeholders through thematic conferences** to identify what the priorities for co-operation should be.
- 4) **Rationalise the priorities** to ensure that North Sea Region 2020 has a clear focus, remit and is action-orientated.
- 5) **Align priorities and actions to key strategies**, whether European, national, regional, local or thematic.
- 6) **Develop a timetable of actions** to set milestones/targets and assign responsibility for their achievement within the NSC Thematic Groups.
- 7) **Lobby key actors** in the Member States and European Institutions
- 8) Consider how to **better link the work of the NSC and CoR.**