

2. Current Status of the North Sea Programme

Background

The North Sea Programme had a very successful 2004, in which significant progress was made on a number of key issues. The purpose of this paper is to provide the committee members with a quick guide to the highlights of 2004 and to draw attention to some the key issues for 2005.

ERDF at Programme level

- The de-commitment of funds was avoided in 2004 and the take up of funds by projects under the North Sea Programme exceeded the programme spending targets by €3.5 m.
- In 2005 no de-commitment is anticipated at this stage. As illustrated in [enclosure 2:1] the project spending targets exceed the programme spending target by € 2.5 m.

The projects

- Following Steering Committee meeting no 5 a total of 54 projects were approved under the North Sea Programme. A total budget of €126.7 m was allocated leaving a total of €10.5 m available for additional projects.
- The first 2 projects were completed in 2004 and additional 14 projects will be complete by the end of 2005.
- By the end of 2005, approximately 19% of the funds allocated to projects will be spent.
- Several projects on the strategic topics identified for the 4th and 5th calls have started. Among these are projects, which address issues on offshore wind power, maritime safety, improved accessibility of rural and peripheral areas, and urban regeneration.

The focused call

- The focused call took place in the autumn 2004 with the resulting 6 project applications submitted to SC7. The focused call was of limited success.
- Subject to the funds available, the secretariat is proposing that an open call should take place in the autumn of 2005 across all measures but with a low fixed upper grant limit. It is proposed that the applications are in preparation for a future programme.

Funding from the Commission

- The North Sea Programme received 3 tranches of funding from the Commission in 2004. In addition to this a final claim of €8,078,563 for 2004 was made on 16 December 2004, this claim has not been finally processed by the Commission at this stage.
- In 2004 the programme claimed a total of € 29,205,535 and has received funding worth of €21,126,972 to date.

The TA-budget

- The approved TA-budget for 2004 was €2,418,964
- In 2004 all National Authorities made their full contribution based on the TA budget and split between the participating countries by way of a pro-rata calculation in accordance with the principles agreed by the Monitoring Committee and confirmed at MC6.

Maritime Safety

- The Maritime Safety co-operation was initiated in 2004 (Paper 7) and will be operational at least until the end of 2006. At this stage the operation covers 3 transnational programme areas (North Sea, NWE and Northern Periphery) and 3 more programmes are expected to join during 2005.
- DG REGIO has been informed at each stage of development and has been involved in a consultative capacity at various stages of development.
- A project coordinator has been employed and by January 2005 the Maritime Safety operation was fully operational.

The Interact Point for Qualification and Transfer

- The work plan for 2005 has been approved by the MSC (Paper 6)
- The administrative framework has been established and the first payment for activity received.

The Staff of the Joint Technical Secretariat

- There are currently 12 members of staff employed in the secretariat with 2 students expected to join on a 6 month basis during the coming weeks.
- The Maritime Umbrella project employs one full time officer and a project officer to assist in the delivery of the work programme who is soon to be appointed on secondment.
- The Interact Point for Qualification and transfer employs 3 full time members of staff.

Recommendations:

The Monitoring Committee is asked to:

- note the content of this paper.

Decisions:

Enclosures:

2:1 Commitment and spending under the North Sea Programme