

NORTH SEA COMMISSION – EDUCATION AND RESEARCH GROUP

WORK PROGRAMME 2005-2006

This is a provisional document, which is due to be considered at the Education and Research Group's Small Working Group at a meeting to be held on 17 February 2005. This meeting will produce a Work Programme for consideration at the next full meeting of the Education and Research Group on 31 March 2005, when it will be reviewed and subsequently published for approval at the NSC General Assembly in June 2005

Introduction

The NSC Education and Research Group (ERG) is currently re-addressing its aims and objectives as a result of recent significant developments in European strategies which relate to this thematic area. These developments are indicated in the following:

- Lisbon Strategy (2000)
- Wim Kok report (November 2004)
- Maastricht Communiqué (December 2004)
- Education and Training 2010
- Europe 2010: A partnership for European Renewal
- Working together for Growth and Jobs – a new start for the Lisbon Strategy (February 2005)

European funding programmes from 2007 will reflect the emphasis on "growth and jobs", which has now become a strategic priority for the EU.

In addition, the North Sea Commission is reviewing its purpose and ways of working. The ERG is also taking into account the document to be considered by the NSC Executive Committee (currently in draft form):

- Discussion of the future structure of the NSC

The aims and objectives of the ERG

The emphasis on knowledge and innovation will influence the direction for the ERG and other thematic groups. The ERG recognises the need for further opportunities to learn about these developments, and suggests an event in October 2005 in conjunction with the other thematic groups on "Competence and innovation for 2010".

The ERG aims and objectives of January 2004 are currently under review, and it is planned to make some rapid progress during the next weeks towards a newer structure, way of working and a work programme for the group, to reflect the context of the changes which will inevitably arise from these developments. This process began at the ERG's first conference in Aalborg in September 2004, focusing on the Lifelong Learning aspects of the Lisbon strategy, and Education and Training 2010.

On 31 March the ERG will consider the proposals for revisions to the way it carries out its work. The new work programme will be reviewed and subsequently published for consideration at the NSC General Assembly in June 2005.

Structure

Political focus

The ERG has planned the first meeting of its political chair and vice-chairs, which will take place on 22 March. By the time of this meeting the ERG should have a second vice-chair.

This meeting will consider the potential for a more active role for politicians in the context of Education and Research, and how to engage with current and future political

issues which will have an impact on the work of the group. The NSC discussion on "The future structure of the North Sea Commission" will provide the starting point for the meeting. Common interests will be identified and the possible role of each politician within the ERG will be addressed.

It will also consider the strategies which the group should adopt after the discussions of the NSC Thematic meeting and Executive Committee meeting on 28 February and 1 March.

Working Group

For the first time, the ERG has proposed a small working group to take forward the planning of the work of the group and to make recommendations to the ERG members. The first meeting of this group is on 17 February 2005.

Sub-groups

These are proposed for specific focus work or specific tasks, possibly working with other groups of the NSC. The focus for these sub-groups will be identified from an initial set of proposals, which are likely to include:

- Specific aspects of the Lifelong Learning agenda including skills development
- Support for SMEs to innovate and develop – a number of colleges are actively engaged in supporting SMEs, and these wish to build on their combined expertise to drive this work forwards.
- A schools network, to link with the Economic Development Group's Renewables group, specifically to look at renewable energy and sustainability. This schools' group would work alongside local authorities with an interest in building energy-efficient and sustainable schools.

Funding group

A small group has been proposed to do some specific work to identify sources of funding, pre and post 2007, for the range of activities in which the ERG is likely to engage.

Areas of interest for the ERG

The following areas were identified at the last meeting of the ERG in December 2004:

Common challenges in lifelong learning around the North Sea

Support for innovation and development in SMEs

Private and public sector networking

Developing knowledge and encouraging innovation

Working with non-traditional learners

Employability

Knowledge transfer between education and business/industry

Work experience and work-shadowing – guidelines and initiatives

What is replacing traditional industries and what skills are needed

Reacting to and learning from change

Working with other NSC thematic groups

Working with very small SMEs, looking at the specific difficulties they face

Innovation in food and drink

These broad areas are to be developed in the work plan of the ERG.

Joint work with other thematic groups

The ERG is increasingly working alongside other thematic groups, for example in culinary heritage, with the EDG and the C&T groups.

The ERG actively encourages work with the other groups and this aspect is likely to grow in the context of the Lisbon aims.

NORTH SEA COMMISSION EDUCATION AND RESEARCH GROUP – PROVISIONAL WORK PROGRAMME 2005-2006

Focus area	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Resources	Outputs
1. Identify future significant areas of importance for the NSC member regions in the context of education and research	Take forward the NSC discussion “the future structure of the NSC” in the context of the ERG Identifying the political issues for action in the context of the agenda for 2010 Determine the role for vice-chairs of the ERG	Politicians’ group and co-ordinator	by 31 March 2005	Meeting 22 March, provisionally to be held in Lille. ERG Chair and vice-chairs’ time, ERG Co-ordinator’s time, (supporting officers’ time if required), travel expenses	Defined actions for political interests Roles for the vice-chairs
2. Review and develop the ERG Work Programme	React to and amend if necessary the provisional Work Programme of the ERG Ongoing review and development of actions	Politicians’ group and co-ordinator Small Working Group	22 March 2005 17 February and ongoing	Meeting 22 March, provisionally to be held in Lille. (resource listed above) Meeting 17 February and ongoing ERG Co-ordinator’s time, members’ time	Approval of the Work Programme to be put forward at the ERG meeting on 31 March 2005
3. Maintain and update knowledge about the agenda for 2010 and related matters	Seminar on “Competence and Innovation for 2010” provisional title	ERG and EDG plus any other thematic groups	Seminar to be held in October 2005	To be determined	Updated information and knowledge Revised actions for ERG
4. Collate expertise of group members	Set up database Send out proforma	ERG Co-ordinator	Proforma by early Jan 2005 Responses by end of Jan 2005	ERG Co-ordinator’s time	Database of members’ profiles

5. Improve and strengthen group and sub-group networking and activities	Agree main areas of common interest from those listed Establish subgroups in identified areas	ERG Co-ordinator and group members	by end of June 2005		Areas of activity planned
6. Exchange of employee scheme; work experience, work shadowing	Identification of best practice Addressing issues, innovation and added value training opportunities increase knowledge of European practices	Group members, Fife and others	to be determined	Grundtvig and Leonardo funding possibilities	Increase in employees knowledge Best practice identified Guidelines
7. Supporting SMEs	Research into needs of SMEs Job rotation activity within SMEs Raising awareness of the need for training in very small companies (not their priority)	Group members, Nord Pas de Calais, Dundee and others			
8. Investigate Baltic Sea links	Extension of Fife-Flanders ferry links project				
9. Collaborative work with other thematic groups					

The above Work Programme is provisional only and will be reviewed by the ERG Working Group on 17 February 2005