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*Draft Resolution*

*From Member Counties of The Regional Council of Western Norway.*

### **Maritime Policy Challenges in the North Sea Region.**

- ***The North Sea Commission welcomes the EU Green Paper on Maritime Policy. There is a great potential of future economic growth in the North Sea Region if resources are being managed in a concerted and sustainable way. There is a need for long – term thinking on global changes, both in economic and environmental terms.***
- The North Sea is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Norwegian Sea, with ecosystems crossing EU borders. A future European Maritime policy must include close co – operation with countries outside the European Union. Therefore, it is positive that other countries, for example Norway, have been contributors to the Green Paper process.
- Our common maritime resources must be managed in a competitive and sustainable way. Maritime transportation, fisheries and fish – farming, energy production etc must be carried out in harmony with the marine environment, supported by research and innovative actions.
- Also in the future it will be necessary to intensify initiatives for a cleaner North Sea. For example: clear concern has repeatedly been expressed from the North Sea Commission about discharges of radioactive waste to sea, particularly from the reprocessing plants in Sellafield. The British Government must fulfil the promised moratorium on discharges at the earliest possible date. The THORP plant, which was closed after a heavy leakage last year, must not be put in operation again.
- Sustainability also means a sound basis of income for the coastal population. In this context, the further development of maritime clusters is important – linking businesses to research and training.
- The debate on the Green Paper will provide an opportunity to review a number of sectoral policies. From a regional and democratic perspective, it is important that local communities, and especially people living in coastal areas, are being invited to take an active part in the consultation and policy shaping process.
- The expected development in north-west Russia is important also for the North Sea Region. The logistic pattern, for example, will undergo fundamental changes. Therefore, the establishment of a Northern Maritime Corridor is important, also for areas outside the North Sea.
- It is noted that the European Commission, under the Trans – European Transport Network, has established Motorways of the Sea in several areas, but not yet in the North Sea. The North Sea Commission will urge Member States Governments to raise this issue within EU. The expected increase in goods volume means a sharpened focus on better sea transportation and intermodality in the future.



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- Up to now, the INTERREG programmes have been a useful instrument to support maritime policy in the North Sea Area, resulting in a number of important projects. In the new Objective 3 North Sea Programme (2007-2013), the maritime dimension should be emphasized. The Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation, initiated by the INTERREG North Sea Region, should be developed into a pan – European instrument.
- In order for the Maritime Policy to fulfil its aims and objectives it must support the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas. Furthermore, there is a need for co – ordination with a number of EU initiatives, like the Motorways of the Sea, Short Sea Shipping, the Maritime Safety Packages and the Marine Environmental Policy. Finally, common actions between all levels of administration are necessary to secure sustainable development in the North Sea Area.