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“The important policy areas for NSC in the future”

1. Introduction:

As a political organisation NSC needs long term priorities, to give the organisation the route ahead. Also this gives the organisation a more clear identity and gives the members a better overview of the work carried out by NSC. Further there is a request from the thematic groups to get some clear guidance from the Executive Committee on the political priorities of the organisation.

The last years the priorities were:

- Territorial Cooperation
- Maritime Policy
- NSC-BSC cooperation on Transport, Fisheries, Sustainable Development

Now the new Interreg programmes start up during 2007 and the consultation process for the Maritime Policy ends 30. June 2007, there is a need to find the important policy areas for the future. The cooperation between NSC and BSC will continue, the meeting between the commissions on 12 April confirmed the wish for further cooperation. Areas for cooperation were decided to:

- Fisheries
- Transport
- Sustainable Development and specific Energy
- Innovation and Education

2. Focus areas for future work:

What describes all focus areas are the fact they all are cross-sectoral and need involvement of several thematic groups. For this reason close cooperation between the groups are necessary, and the Executive Committee has the responsibility to monitor this. Even if there is one responsible thematic group for each theme the involvement of all groups is necessary to make the best result.

The **cooperation with the BSC** must be a long term commitment and continue as both commissions' benefits from a close link between them, both politically and on the administrative level. The annual meetings between the commissions must determine the level of cooperation and the issues for cooperation. NSC has for the last years had one of the members of the ExCom responsible for the NSC-BSC cooperation; it is wise to continue this arrangement for the future.

Looking at the European agenda there are a few issues that will be important for many years;

Sustainable Development especially focused on Energy; will an important issue and there is a lot of activity in this field. Looking at the future European and Global energy challenges the regions has a role to play and it's important the regions are prepared for the future discussions. Energy is important for the NSC-BSC cooperation, CPMR has an Energy Intercom group and NSC has for some years had an Energy sub group. NSC needs to clarify its position in the energy field and how to promote our views. The Sustainable Development Group is the responsible group for this issue.



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Food; the importance and demand local food and quality food will be important for the future. The Food conference in August 2006 showed a need for the need for a greater consciousness on this matter. The conference concluded this included several policy areas, and then a matter for several of our thematic groups. There was a need for cross sectoral cooperation and making of a project. The Innovation & Education Group is the responsible group for this issue.

Innovation & Education; follow up of the Lisbon strategy, and an issue that involves all our thematic groups. The implementation of the strategy is one of the major tasks for the EU for the years to come. The Northsea region (NSR) must be one of the regions in Europe to be able to implement the strategy more easy and the NSC should be the major regional organisation to make this happen. It will be important to use the new Interreg programme to establish projects between NSC member regions. The Innovation and Education Group has a responsibility to lead this process within NSC, and there is a need to look at different themes for projects. Examples are food, media and tourism are areas where the Lisbon agenda requires cross-sectoral co-operation, and where most of the thematic groups should be involved

Cultural Agenda and Experiential Tourism; The European Commission has launched an initiative for a European Cultural Agenda, and has released a report on the economic importance of cultural industries. It has been acknowledged that culture and cultural tourism/experiential tourism represent two important driving forces for economic growth in Europe, thus linking culture and tourism to the Lisbon strategy. There is a strong link between culture/cultural tourism and business development, sustainability and local community development in these initiatives. The NSC will follow up these initiatives both on its own and through the CPMR. The Culture & Tourism Group is the responsible group for this issue.

The Maritime Policy needs to be followed up. A thorough and well prepared response to the consultation has been made from the NSC, now we need to make sure our ideas for projects and best practice together with our suggestions for implementation of the policy will be taken forward. The NSC has lot of experience and needs to promote ourselves in this matte both direct to DG Fish and to the CPMR. The Marine Resources Group has the responsibility to take this issue to the next phase, and to challenge the other groups and the Executive Committee to actions. In regard to Motorways of the Seas and other transport issues the Transport Group is the responsible group for this issue.

3. Recommendations:

- The Thematic Groups must continue to strengthen their internal and external networks, both for politicians and for officers.
- The Thematic Groups must investigate the possibilities for using projects/external funding as a tool for their work.
- The Executive Committee must then ensure the links between the groups, to avoid double work and to prioritise what to do.
- The thematic groups are responsible for the follow-up the development of their issues and report to the Executive Committee when needed.
- Continue with cross sectoral conferences in a cooperation between the thematic groups.