

North Sea Commission
Culture and Tourism Group

The Way Ahead – for the NSC and the C&T group

Discussion paper

New President, New Chair, New Policy

The NSC has a new President and the C&T has a new Chair. They, with the full support of the Executive Committee want to strengthen the NSC as a vehicle to promote North Sea interests on the European scene, and they also want to increase co-operation between member regions to strengthen the North Sea as a strong region of Europe.

New Role for Thematic Groups?

All parts of the organisation therefore need to look at themselves and their role in the NSC in the years ahead.

The Executive would like a more political agenda, and they would also like a stronger involvement of elected members on all levels of the organisation.

The role of the co-ordinators and that of the thematic groups should also reflect this dedication.

From Coordinators to Advisors?

The Executive would like to transform the co-ordinator positions into advisor positions, to underline their role as advisors both to the Executive and to the Thematic Groups. At the same time, the Executive would see new ways of financing these Advisors, to enable them to assist the NSC in the best possible way. Today, financial strains prevent some of the co-ordinators from dedicating required time to NSC work.

The New Role of the Culture and Tourism Group

The C&T group has been important as a forum for developing ideas and actions relating to concrete cultural co-operation between the member regions of the NSC. Less focus has been on issues on the European political agenda, although the group has in fact produced a number of position papers relating to the Culture 2000 programme and to the development of the Interreg programmes.

New Organisation of the Culture and Tourism Group – A Task for Everyone

The current co-ordinator will not be able to dedicate much more time to C&T work. There are however, a number of options to pursue:

- there could be a new co-ordinator with more time available for acting as a NSC advisor
- members of the thematic group could participate more actively in the work of the group and for instance prepare position papers for discussion, monitor current issues in the EU etc.
- existing networks like our Brussels offices, our international/European departments etc could also contribute more actively to the working of all thematic groups

It is suggested that for the coming year, we try a model retaining the current coordinator, using more of the infrastructure of both the region of the Chair (Västra Götaland) and also seeking more active support from member regions and members of the group.

Merging of groups?

Another question is if it would be wise to merge the Culture and Tourism Group with other groups. Focusing more on the political side of culture, culture's role for regional development is being more stressed, and maybe a new group on Regional Development, combining the C&T group, the Education and Research Group and the Economic Development Group could be an alternative.

Subgroups?

In that case, but probably in any case, the C&T group would need subgroups working on specific themes. Currently, three themes are on the agenda:

- the new cultural framework programme, Culture 2007
- the new generation Interreg programmes
- the North Sea Tourism Framework project

It is suggested that subgroups are established for these three themes.

In addition, subgroups on

- culinary heritage
- culture and lifelong learning

could be established.

New meetings schedule?

If subgroups are established, a possibility is to have subgroup meetings during spring, and combine subgroups and plenary meeting of the group in the autumn.

The various subgroups may also need additional meetings (for instance with key persons in Brussels).

The finance of increased activities will pose a problem, however.

Priorities

In any case, the C&T group needs to make new priorities. We must identify what is on the European agenda concerning arts, youth, leisure, tourism etc., and which of these issues have a particular relevance to the North Sea region.

We should not forget however, the real strength of the group: its ability to identify, develop and support concrete co-operation projects.