

Reactions from the thematic group Culture and Tourism to *Implementation of Consultancy Exercise Recommendations*.

The Excom asked the thematic groups to give their reaction on the recommendations of the above mentioned Implementation.

The Culture and Tourism Group values this consultation. In this paper we send our contributions.

In general we notice that the recommendations on some points will not strengthen our group, nor the way we work and our results. In our reaction we therefore try to come up with solutions that will meet the required (political) outcomes and strengthens the groups.

The implementation focuses on three strands:

- North Sea Brand
- Ways of Working
- A corporate/strategic approach

A. The North Sea Brand

Recommendations

1. Professional marketing experts (internal or external) are identified and commissioned to develop the North Sea Commission Brand
2. Publicity materials, including templates, presentations, banners, leaflets and a newsletter are updated/produced, based on the NSC brand
3. A members survey of the current website is undertaken to guide the development of the revised NSC website
4. The NSC brand should be supported through the website through strengthening the homepage and developing separate sections on the outcomes of the consultancy exercise and a link to the NSC corporate presentation
5. A section of profiles on NSC Executive Committee members is included in the revised website
6. The structure of NSC meetings should be examined to identify means of incorporating networking sessions with local Politicians, groups and media contacts in the hosting regions.
7. A North Sea Commission Communications Strategy, setting out protocols for publicising the organisation, is developed.

Reaction

It is surprising that it is already clear how the North Sea Brand will be communicated, before it is clear what the North Sea Brand is and contains. Communication should be taken into account while developing the product. Most elements of the communication concern their form (website, paper etc). Nr.6 is a strange element for it is focussed on the meetings. Next to that it is not clear if this recommendation

concerns all meetings or just Excom meetings. It would be better to place it under part B. Ways of working Recommendation number 1. What is missing, but should be priority number 1, is keeping the information on the website up to date.

B. Ways of Working

I. Reviewing the ways of working to see what steps could be taken to make it easier for politicians to take part, including those, whose English is not so strong

Recommendations

1. Promotion of NSC activities - making the NSC more known among regional politicians
2. Joint organisation of thematic meetings
3. Good and timely preparation of meetings
4. More focussed thematic work plans
5. Educational activities (language and substance)

Reaction

Ad 2. It is proposed that all groups should meet the afternoon before each Excom meeting. This is already the case before the General Assembly and a joint meeting could be included. We do not approve however of other meetings the afternoon before each Excom meeting. This means that all groups should meet three times a year and that all dates are set by the Excom. This implicates that we all should spend more time on meetings and agenda problems can be foreseen. This will frustrate more political involvement.

Ad 4. This recommendation on the thematic work plans is entirely focussed on political priorities, to achieve more political involvement. Participation of officers would no longer be needed. Our workplan does contain various political items but we do not agree on a fully political agenda. Next to the (vice) chairs no politicians attend the meetings. Unfortunately we have learned in the last years that the more the meetings are focussed on political items, the less officers attend the meetings. This does not mean however that politicians decided to join. In the case of our thematic group culture and tourism this has diminished our group in a serious way. Politicians will only join the thematic groups if they provide added value. This added value is however at least on short notice mainly achieved by knowledge exchange and projects. A combination of both projects and political items is therefore preferable. The Excom should focus on how to provide added value in a political way see Corporate/Strategic approach. Evaluation of the group can only take place if we agree on the foreseen outcomes.

Ad 5. We are not at all convinced that English lessons or lessons on the European agenda will persuade politicians to join.

II. Using the new NSC website as a knowledge exchange for the NSC including a system of alerts, sharing of tools, techniques and reference materials etc.

Recommendation

1. Much more realtime information on what is important at the moment and issues the organisation should deal with should be provided.
2. Wiki/blog aspects for the new NSC website should be investigated in the revamp of the website.

Reaction

Ad 1. See the remark on updating the website

Ad 2. We expect Wiki/blog aspects will be used by officers, much less by politicians

III. Adopting the Benefits Delivery System model as a tool for assessing the performance of the NSC.

Recommendation

1. Follow through work to its conclusion
2. Communications Strategy

Reaction

We look forward to a Strategic plan

IV. Agreeing arrangements to review the structure and the remit of the thematic groups.

Recommendations

1. A review schedule - that a review should be carried out as a routine once a year irrespective of the items below
2. Performance indicators (both attendance, activities and results). If The performance drops on one or several indicators the Executive should initiate a review
3. Changes in "external" environments such as in the CPMR, the North Sea Programme and in EU policy. A review should be initiated if important changes take place in one of these environments.
4. Restructure Thematic Groups

Reaction:

A proposal for the restructuring the thematic groups can be found in the appendix. Three groups a political one on influencing the European agenda, one for projects and one for dissemination (conferences aso). Unfortunately the Excom rejected this proposal. Alternatively working groups with a representation from the various thematic groups could be established, for example on important European strategies and policy papers (Maritime policy, territorial cohesion, Lissabon and Göteborg).

V. Other proposals for improving

Recommendations

1. consider to embark on road shows presenting the NSC in less active member countries (e.g Germany and France) and regions.
2. Assign national members of the Executive with specific Responsibilities
3. Long term rotation system for filling NSC positions and offices
4. The home region of the Vice-Presidents allocate some resources to the NSC Secretariat

Reaction

1-2:

We look forward to proposals.

3-4

We fully agree, but not only a rotation in regions, preferably all positions and offices should be succeeded by a region from another country.

3. Corporate/Strategic Approach

I. Developing more of a corporate business approach for the NSC with a sounder basis for resourcing the work of the thematic groups.

Recommendations

1. Greater co-ordination of thematic group work by Strategic and Executive Committees
2. Consider participating in an INTERREG project on maritime governance, with cross-sectoral working across the Thematic Groups

Reaction

Recommendation 1 is mainly focussed on the working plans. See the reaction above

We agree on 2. This could stimulate cooperation

II. Seeking discussions with the INTERREG IVB North Sea Programme Secretariat on ways of strengthening the links between the NSC and The Programme.

Recommendation

1. institutionalise the cooperation between the thematic Advisers and the NSP Secretariat organising joint meetings and seminars on a regular basis (e.g. corresponding to the thematic / project development seminars currently being organised under the programme) .
2. Arrange a meeting with the NSP Secretariat to agree on common priorities and operational modalities
3. Strengthened links with the NSP could also be supported through participation in a joint (NSC) maritime governance project (see above) or through individual projects.

Reaction

This is a good idea: Cooperation with the Interreg secretariat strengthens the added value for the regions: more involvement in knowledge exchange, projects and seminars

III. Ensuring that opportunities for strengthening and resourcing of the NSC are pursued as part of the current review of the CPMR.

Recommendations

Ensure that this point is clearly made through the NSC response to the CPMR review .

Exploit possibilities for CPMR funding of conferences and projects more systematically

Consider to post a NSC representative in the CPMR Secretariat on a permanent basis

Reaction

The relation between CPMR and NSC is very unclear for outsiders. Membership of NSC is only possible through membership of the CPMR, while that does not give any (visible) added value to the regions nor the NSC. It therefore is a better construction to pay the membership fee directly to the NSC. The NSC on its turn is then able to pay a contribution to those activities that the CPMR undertakes as the umbrella organisation. The rest of the money is then available for NSC-activities. This is much more clear and legitimate and regions can see what they are paying for.

IV) Strengthen monitoring of EU agenda, relations with EU institutions

A large part of NSC activities are geared towards the EU.

One should therefore explore the feasibility of establishing a permanent NSC mission in Brussels through one of the offices of the member regions:

preferably one of the offices of the bigger member regions such as Schleswig

Holstein, East of England, West Sweden (Västra Götaland) or Noord-Holland to improve the ability to monitor and respond to the EU agenda.

Reaction

Monitoring from Brussels is indeed far much better than from Telemarken, especially since Norway is not a member of the EU. Next to that it is far more favorable to get this position paid for by the CPMR. This will guarantee more continuance. North Holland and Västra Götaland are mentioned to host. They would however have to pay a disproportionate contribution to NSC-activities if they also have to allocate resources for the secretariat (home regions of the vice chairs) .