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## **Meeting of the Strategic Committee 05.11.09 in Brussels.**

### **Participants:**

Gunn Marit Helgesen, Rinske Kruisinga, Annelie Stark, Lisa Belfrage, Martin Brebner and Lars Haukvik

### **Invited:**

Christian Bruns, link to the CoR Intercom Group for the English Channel and the North Sea.

### **Appologies:**

Sandy Cluness and Sally Spence

### **Intoduction:**

Gunn Marit Helgesen informed about her meeting with Interreg and their conclusion to take part in the work to make a North Sea Strategy and the North Sea Strategy seminar during the Open Days 09.

Martin Brebner informed from the meeting of the writing group 4 November (minutes enclosed)

Lars Haukvik informed about his discussion with Colin Wolfe of DG Regio about the North Sea Strategy

### **Conclutions:**

The date for the Stakeholder conference was set to 13 April 2010 in the premises of CoR in Brussels.

The meeting agreed the need to give some more emphasis Innovation and research in the paper, but agreed to keep the paper in general terms until the Stakeholder conference 13 April 2010. The conference will be important to decide for the aims and priorities for the strategy and the implementation of the strategy.

Today there are two papers'; the NSC paper and the one of the CoR Intercom group (both papers enclosed). NSC ExCom will discuss the papers at their meeting 30 November – 1 December and the CoR intercom group at their meeting later same week. If both organisations agree there will be a joint paper for the Stakeholder conference. A joint invitation letter describing the strategy must be prepared.

The Stakeholder conference will be crucial for the future work on the strategy, to get acceptance for the strategy and the priorities. The invitations to the conference must be wide and the aim is to get participant from public and private sector European, national, regional and local. The funding of the conference must be identified, but organising committee has got positive response for funding from the UK Government

The working title for the strategy is for the moment North Sea Strategy, if needed the name can include the channel.

It was agreed to use the opportunity to apply for ESPON funding for the strategy.

*Note; the application to ESPON was sent within the deadline 11 November.*

Next meeting will be 12 January 2010in Brussels.



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## **Meeting of NSC Writing Group and CoR Intercom Brussels, 4 November 2009**

Michelle Armstrong - EERA  
Lisa Belfrage - Västra Götaland  
Alexander van den Bosch – Zuid Holland  
Michael Braam – Noord Holland  
Martin Brebner - Aberdeenshire  
Christian Bruns – Bremen  
Emma Harvey – One North East  
Haleh Lindqvist – West Sweden  
Constanze Ripke – Bremen

Apologies – Lenneke Joosen, Zuid Holland

This meeting aimed to explore the work of the NSC and CoR on the development of a macro-regional Strategy for the North Sea Region.

The first items discussed were papers from the European Commission on macro-regional strategies (DG Regio) and progress in implementing the European Maritime Policy (DG MARE). The difference in positions between the 2 DGs was noted (DG Regio looking for a limited number of strategies targeted on specific issues and DG MARE looking at sea-basin strategies). While recognising that DG MARE may be more supportive of a North Sea Strategy than DG Regio, the Group felt that it was important to liaise with DG REGIO with a view to targeting structural funds post-2013 and to take into account that not all regions are coastal regions. It was also noted that the INTERREG North Sea Region Secretariat should be involved.

Updates on the CoR and NSC papers were given. In general, there have been positive reactions to both papers. It was noted that there should be more emphasis on innovation, research and social policy in the NSC corporate paper, and that transport issues are not covered by the CoR paper. The CoR paper is to be considered by the INTERCOM group on 6 December and the NSC paper by the Strategic Committee on 5 November. It was suggested that the CoR paper be amended from a position paper to an initiative to give it more political weight. Some participants felt that the papers should be broadened, but it was recognised that there needs to be a degree of focus for a strategy to work (as found with the Baltic Sea Strategy).

Consideration should also be given to why we want a strategy to assist with lobbying. It could be helpful to consider the benefits so that we can ‘sell’ the strategy to decision-makers and stakeholders. This could be set out in an internal background paper to help politicians to lobby their national governments, MEPs and the Commission. This could perhaps also help inform discussions for the stakeholder conference planned. These were identified as key targets for lobbying. A decision on whether or not there would be a water-focussed group of the European Parliament is expected on 10 December. If it is set up, it could be a useful focus for lobbying.

With regards to stakeholder engagement, the stakeholder conference was discussed. The Committee of the Regions has agreed to host a conference, which could be a joint conference with the NSC, OSPAR etc. It was agreed that the conference should take place around March next year, but would need to take account of dates of CoR and European Parliament plenary sessions. Participants felt it would be helpful



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to meet to discuss this in more detail (and also how the CoR and NSC can work together effectively), perhaps at the next NSC Executive Committee in Kiel on 30 November/1 December or the NSC Advisers meeting in Aberdeen on 25 November. It was noted that a number of stakeholder organisations (e.g. oil and gas, offshore energy, OSPAR and UK Government agencies) had been approached and are interested in participating. Martin agreed to raise these ideas with Ann Bell, who is leading NSC work on organising a stakeholder conference, but was unable to attend the meeting.

It is important to monitor other related activities at the European level, such as the ROTOPI group and CPMR working group which are both looking at the future of territorial co-operation.

The suggested ESPON application was discussed and the participants supported it being submitted in principle. It would involve submitting an expression of interest to ESPON to ask them to provide funding for social, economic and environmental research on our behalf. If approved by ESPON, a call for proposals would be issued for researchers to respond to. However, it may be difficult to get a formal commitment by the deadline of 11 November. It is hoped that the minimum of three stakeholders could sign up by the deadline and that others could join later. Funding for other strategy activities was discussed, with the INTERREG programmes worthy of further exploration.

Key next steps are to progress the ESPON application and begin work on the stakeholder conference.

MB 4/11/2009



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## **Board of the Intergroup “North Sea–English Channel” Brussels, 11 September 09**

### **DRAFT**

#### **Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel”:**

##### **On the way to a North Sea Strategy - Priorities regarding the future cooperation**

The CoR-Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel” takes part in the OPEN DAYS 2009 by organising a workshop entitled “Advanced Cooperation in the North Sea- English Channel”. During this workshop, representatives from the European Commission, the Swedish EU Presidency, the CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions) and the Intergroup “Baltic Sea Regions” will discuss the usefulness and necessity of a North Sea Strategy.

The Board of the Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel” presents with this paper a proposal on how to deal with this matter and asks to discuss it during the next Intergroup-meeting on 6 October 2009. It should be presented and discussed in the context of the OPEN DAYS-workshop.

#### **Reasons for a closer cooperation in the North Sea-English Channel area**

The states around the North Sea and the English-Channel Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom are not only facing big challenges, but also have various common interests and have to define the same objectives. For centuries, the development of these countries’ coastal regions has been closely linked to the North Sea. Apart from the traditional economic sectors, the seaports, the shipping- and shipbuilding-industries as well as fishing-related industries, new issues have recently become the focus of attention: tourism, the sustainable use of the seas and oceans, the further development of renewable energies, integrated coastal management and maritime research. All these aspects make a closer cooperation in the North Sea-English Channel area useful and necessary. It should most notably have the following objectives:

- Protection of the North Sea as an ecological system
- Adaptation on Climate Change
- Use of the economic potentials of the area
- Development of maritime resources, f. ex. maritime research

With its action plan for an integrated maritime policy, the European Commission suggests the introduction of a horizontal and cross-sector maritime policy which comprises all aspects of human action related to the seas and oceans. Since major changes in the North Sea have an impact on all North Sea and English Channel regions, it is in our interest to participate actively in the debate on, and in the implementation of, the European maritime policy and to exercise a collective influence upon it.

With the foundation of the CoR-Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel” in January 2009, we have broadened the basis for a closer and deeper cooperation in the North Sea area on European level. Before the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> term of the CoR on 26 January 2010, we express common objectives as a result of our previous work for our future cooperation and propose the following steps for their implementation.

#### **Development of a North Sea Strategy**

On 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009, the European Commission presented the Baltic Sea Strategy. This strategy has model character for the EU as it allows the creation of a new political level between the supranational community and the member states.



The Baltic Sea Strategy focuses on the topics environment, economy, infrastructure, and civil security. Already upon publication, the Commission underlined that the Baltic Sea Strategy could inspire similar approaches in European areas.

For the states around the North Sea-English Channel area, this development on European level is an opportunity to concentrate their common aims and interests, to coordinate them with their regional neighbours and to make the common concerns public at European level. It has to be considered that the North Sea-English Channel area – still – cannot rely on cooperation structures such as those that have grown in the Baltic Sea area over several decades. Neither the characteristic cooperation between the old and new EU member states nor the institutionalized cooperation with Russia can be transferred to the North Sea-English Channel area. Natural features, history as well as economic and social structures are not comparable. Therefore, a possible North Sea Strategy would clearly differ from the Baltic Sea strategy by following its own priorities. We believe that the cooperation in the fields of the integrated maritime policy is extremely important and will be successful.

It is the task of the Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel” to advance and promote the process towards the establishment of a North Sea Strategy. Therefore, it is important that the Intergroup-members commit themselves to initiate supporting political decisions at the level of the local or regional authorities they are representing at the CoR. The engagement and the experience of the Intergroup-members provide a good basis for the realization of this ambitious aim.

### Proposals for Future Proceeding

We propose that the Chair of the Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel” applies for an own-initiative opinion in the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> term of the CoR regarding a North Sea Strategy so that the ideas and proposals of the regions of the North Sea and English Channel area can be included into the development process as early as possible.

- **The Swedish EU-Presidency**

A first impulse towards the creation of a North Sea strategy shall be implemented through the Swedish EU-presidency. This impulse will be followed further in 2010 and will – if possible - be continued officially during the Belgian EU-presidency in the second half of 2010. In order to get a basic decision by the European Council with respect to a North Sea strategy, it is important that the member states promote and support the idea of this strategy in their countries, too.

- **Involvement of the Members of European Parliament**

The Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel” will contact “their” MEPs as soon as possible in order to invite them to a joint meeting. The objective is to stimulate the cooperation with and inside the European Parliament.

- **Cooperation with the CPMR**

Some members of the Intergroup “North Sea-English Channel” are members of the CPMR respectively its “North Sea Commission” as well. Just like the Intergroup the NSC discusses the possibility of an implementation of a North Sea Strategy. The Intergroup explicitly welcomes this development and appreciates a close and detailed cooperation between the CoR-Intergroup and the NSC to develop the framework of a North Sea Strategy.

- **Funding of territorial cooperation**

Against the background of a closer cooperation, the regions of the North Sea-English Channel area will use the existing funding-instruments for European territorial cooperation (INTERREG) more intensively to realize common projects. In the context of the discussion for the future cohesion policy, they will concentrate their efforts on the increase of the funding for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.



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# A Strategy for the North Sea

## Introduction

The North Sea region is a major economic entity in Europe which has great potential to contribute to the achievement of the European Union's Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas. In order to develop this potential, the 54 regions of the North Sea Commission (NSC) would like the European Union to launch a strategy for our region – the North Sea Region.

## Europe needs a North Sea Strategy!

A **North Sea Strategy** is needed because a better co-ordination of the programmes, initiatives and EU Directives will lead to more efficient co-operation and harmonised policies, as well as stimulating the sustainable development of the North Sea Region. There is a need for consensus when it comes to managing shared space, such as the North Sea. Greater co-ordination of activities and further investment into the North Sea Region could help solve challenges for the entire European Union such as climate change and the global economic crisis. The process of developing a Baltic Sea Strategy has illustrated how efficient and transparent regional co-operation can help to support balanced regional development. Learning from this example, but focusing on our own challenges, it is anticipated that a North Sea Strategy could make a real difference to the North Sea Region.

## Key Challenges

### 1) Managing Maritime Space

The North Sea is a **very complex and open marine ecosystem**, providing a nursery for fish and a migratory and wintering area for many species of birds. It is also one of the most heavily-used seas, supporting fishing, shipping, trade, energy, sand mining, defence and recreation. Increasing economic activity in the sea, such as growing shipping traffic and the development of offshore wind farms, is leading to more and more competition between users of the sea.

The need for **Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and comprehensive resource management** is therefore urgent. Harmonised policies would lead to more effective use of space and the available resources. The challenge for the North Sea is to fully exploit the sea without affecting the fragile ecosystem, while also preserving the economic and socio-economic importance of fisheries to our region. Moreover, the revision of the Common Fisheries Policy offers a real possibility to include MSP in the sustainable management of the maritime resources in the North Sea.

### 2) Increasing Accessibility and Attractiveness

As one of the busiest sea basins of the world with some 260,000 ship movements per year (and estimated to grow by 14-31% in the coming years), the North Sea is a prime location for maritime pilot projects with global implications to improve **environmental and safety standards of maritime transport and the promotion of Short Sea Shipping**. Particular concerns exist regarding the impacts of offshore energy infrastructure, such as cables, pipelines, wind and CO2 sites, on safe shipping and the ecosystem. The North Sea, with its network of ports and commercial shipping, as well as public agencies operating in national contexts, is an ideal testing ground for solutions which can be applied world-wide through collaboration with shipping institutes such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO). More understanding of the risks and an improvement of safety in the North Sea will become more and more important given the increasing pressure on space. Moreover, the full implementation of the European Maritime Space without Barriers and the Maritime Transport Strategy for 2018 can make the 'Motorways of the Sea' a reality and exploit the potential of intra-European Short Sea Shipping.



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North Sea ports are important hubs for the export/import of goods and provide access to business locations and Europe's hinterland, stimulating **economic development** in our region. Further globalisation of the economy and an increase in the global population is likely to increase traffic. It is essential to ensure free passage in the North Sea and a good flow to the hinterland. As such, improvements must be made to multi-modal logistics chains to facilitate more and better trans-European movement of people and goods. It is also important that shipping becomes more sustainable and environmentally-friendly so that it remains a reliable and cost effective mode of transport.

The North Sea Region must be equipped to respond to the **global economic crisis** to allow our industries and communities to prosper. The fisheries and shipping sectors have been affected by decreasing demand for goods and services, putting jobs at risk. It is important that these sectors can emerge from the crisis stronger and more resilient than before. The potential of emerging sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, research and innovation should also be nurtured through a North Sea Strategy. Through increasing the diversity and knowledge-base of our economy, the North Sea Region can better compete globally.

### 3) Tackling Climate Change

One of the main challenges facing the North Sea Region is **climate change**, with adaptation and mitigation measures required. Increased precipitation and flooding in the North, coupled with increased temperatures and aridity in the South will cause significant changes to both physical and human geography in Europe. Exhaustion of fossil fuels and the resulting increase in fuel prices will be another challenge for the region. With challenges come opportunities, and a North Sea Strategy can position the North Sea Region to adapt to a new climate and build industries around this. The North Sea Region could be an invaluable asset to Europe as a whole through contributing strongly to securing domestic energy supply and recreational tourism activities.

Taking advantage of a natural shift towards **renewable energy** as fossil resources become depleted, the North Sea region is ideal for large-scale wind, wave and tidal energy projects given its natural assets and technological expertise. The region could therefore substantially contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. Depleted oil and gas fields may also have the potential to be used to store greenhouse gases. A co-ordinated approach in the North Sea Region in response to the growth and demand for renewable energy could lead to economies of scale, making renewable energy more accessible to all of Europe. The cost of renewable energy technologies remains high and a joint strategy could boost their development and competitiveness. A joined-up and cross-sectoral approach could help to ensure that developments such as wind parks can complement and enhance, rather than threaten other maritime activities.

#### How are we going to achieve this?

The foreseen participants in the development of a North Sea Strategy are a wide range of stakeholders, co-ordinated by the **North Sea Commission** in the first instance. The North Sea Commission was founded in 1989 to facilitate and enhance partnerships between regions which manage the challenges and opportunities presented by the North Sea. Furthermore, to promote the North Sea Basin as a major economic entity within Europe, by encouraging joint development initiatives and political lobbying at the European level. The North Sea Commission plans to support the development of the strategy by co-ordinating stakeholder input and setting out principles for a European Union strategy.

#### Timeline

