



# Working together for the future



Interreg North Sea Programme & North Sea Commission  
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## Towards a New Spatial Agenda for the North Sea Region

In mid 2004 the Programme Monitoring Committee for the Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme decided that there should be a selective update to NorVision\* to have valuable strategic input for the future cooperation in North Sea Region. They considered that the original NorVision document continues to be relevant and should not be evaluated or reworked. The new spatial agenda, as is has become known, should focus on issues, which have become more urgent or important in recent years or which have not been thoroughly addressed in the original document.

A Working Group consisting of one national and one regional representative per country was set up and discussed the procedure and topics to be addressed. The idea is not to have a complete analysis of the subject concerned, but to develop a more focused approach, which could be used as the basis for developing future projects in the North Sea Region.

The following themes were agreed upon:

- **Coastal Water Management**

Coastal zones and their immediate vicinity contain a high level of economic activity such as trade and tourism. Human activity puts pressure on the coastal zones and this increases the risk of destroying habitats and the resource base of the coast. Until now, the focus was mainly on the landside. The study will look at the coast from a seaside perspective, i.e. coastal waters. There is also a need, but little experience, for more spatial coordination regarding the North Sea itself: wind farms, shipping needs, environmental concerns require a balanced transnational approach to weigh the different interests in the exclusive economic zones.

- **Transport and Accessibility**

The extension of the European Union to the East and raised sensitivity of the risks of maritime shipping have changed the picture of transport in the region during the last years. Other topics to be looked at are the potential role of secondary hubs, the slow response to short sea shipping or the increasing allocation of external and infrastructure costs to the respective transport modes, which will lead to cost and price increases for road transport. .

- **Facilitating innovation and the transfer of knowledge and technology**

Facilitating innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology has often previously been linked to ICT and technological innovation. The extent to which other sectors had been explored in the fields relevant to Interreg and spatial development remains limited. Additionally, during the last five years innovation and transfer has moved into the centre of the European Agenda (Lisbon Agenda). The study will re-cap the current strengths and weaknesses in the North Sea region and identify new opportunities not yet tapped into. Showing what role transnational cooperation can play here is a particularly important outcome of the study.

- **Energy**

The North Sea Region is a European region with unique characteristics as far as energy supply is concerned (oil, gas, wind power, CO<sub>2</sub> storage, ...). The study will elaborate on the energy trends facing the region and show how transnational cooperation can improve the energy supply situation, i.e. lower the need for unsustainable sources and decrease the dependency of foreign supply.



- **Demographic change**

Ageing population and migration will continue to affect spatial development in the North Sea Region. Questions to be addressed are i.e. what are the main impacts, how do the different countries and regions react and how can unwanted effects be averted through transnational cooperation?

Studies are currently underway for all themes. They will identify the main future spatial challenges for the North Sea Region, show how they can be addressed in a future transnational programme and identify potential projects and partnerships. All studies follow a highly communicative and interactive approach and involve key players at different stages. Seminars at the Annual Conference will offer the opportunity to discuss first results and will kick-off the consultation process in the North Sea countries.

\* The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), adopted in May 1999, identifies key themes and suggested measures for the future sustainable spatial development of the European Union. NorVision – A Spatial Perspective for the North Sea Region, adopted a year later, relates the ESDP to the context of the North Sea Region. Norvision is a key advisory document, which has strongly influenced territorial cooperation in the North Sea Region. It describes the existing state of spatial development and suggests directions for future. Projects that have been developed under INTERREG IIIB NSR put many of them into practice.