



Fylkeshuset,
3706 Skien, Norway
Tel: +47 35 58 42 00
Fax: +47 35 52 90 44
nsc@northsea.org
www.northsea.org

NSC – Transport group -Annual report 2005 - 2006

Introduction

This report summarises the work of the NSC Transport group since the last NSC General Assembly in Zeeland in June 2005.

The Transport group in brief

The main aim of the group is to improve cohesion, accessibility and competitiveness in the North Sea Region (NSR) through the development of sustainable and efficient transport solutions.

Current key issues of the group: Sustainable transport, sea transport, influencing EU transport policies, promoting the role of transport in a future Interreg North Sea Programme.

Main roles and functions of Transport group

- Monitoring key developments in the industry and within policies at all levels
- Facilitating co-operation and partnerships among relevant stakeholders
- Liaison between industry actors (i.e. businesses, transport users) and policy makers
- Forum for the exchange of information and experience among relevant stakeholders
- Understanding the needs of different transport users and convey the needs to policy makers at relevant levels
- Developing Interreg and other projects
- Disseminating knowledge through conferences, seminars and studies
- Synthesising and disseminating findings from Interreg & other projects
- Influencing EU and national transport policies
- Adviser and secretariat for the NSC Executive Committee on transport issues
- Co-operation with other NSC thematic groups
- Interaction with the CPMR and other geographical Commissions

Leadership and administration

Chair: Councillor Jan Hallberg Västra Götaland region Sweden (resigned in March 2006)

Chair: Councillor Leif Blomqvist, Västra Götaland region Sweden (appointed 1 March 2006)

Co-ordinator: Jon Halvard Eide, Vest-Agder Norway (appointed October 2000)

Vice-Chair: Councillor Tor Ottar Karlsen, Buskerud, Norway (appointed in October 2003)

Vice Chair: Charles King, Highland Council Scotland (appointed 1 March 2006)

Membership

The group has got about 30 registered members. In addition, a number of regions are on a correspondence list receiving information about the activities of the group.



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Group meetings

The group has held three ordinary meetings since the last General Assembly:

- Trollhättan, Västra Götaland region, 28 October 2005
- Brussels, 10 March 2006
- Southend, UK, 16 May 2006

The meeting in Brussels was organised as a thematic seminar on Motorways of the Sea. The meeting in Southend was organised as a thematic seminar in co-operation with the Interreg 3B project SustAccess. The main themes were: transport issues in the future Objective 3 Territorial Co-operation programme and public-private partnerships in the transport sector.

Attendance

On average, about 8 – 10 persons have attended the meetings of the group. It should be noticed that the level of attendance has decreased somewhat compared with the 2004-2005 season. No members from Scotland and France have attended any group meetings, which could be due to change of staff and responsibilities in the regions in question. The current reorganisation at the regional level in Denmark has probably also affected the attendance negatively. The same goes for Germany's uncertain future in the NSC.

Participation in other NSC meetings, contribution to general NSC activities

The Co-ordinator attended a NSC meeting in Brussels on 4 July 2005 on the future organisation of the NSC

A member of the group attended a Lisbon seminar planning meeting in Scotland in August 2005.

The Co-ordinator and several group members attended the Lisbon seminar in Trollhättan on 26 - 27 October 2005. The Co-ordinator and another member of the group made presentations in two of the parallel sessions.

The Co-ordinator has attended and reported at two meetings of the Executive Committee (in Trollhättan on 28 October 2005 and in Ipswich on 1 March 2006.

The Co-ordinator took part in a meeting in Aviemore, Highlands on 8 February on the planning and preparation of the 2006 General Assembly & Annual Conference.

The Co-ordinator met with the new and outgoing Chair in Gothenburg on 31 March 2006 as a way of preparing the new Chair for his mission.

The Co-ordinator attended a meeting of the Strategic Committee in Aberdeenshire on 20 April 2006, contributing to the discussion on future re-structuring of the NSC

The Co-ordinator attended a meeting on Baltic Sea – North Sea Commission co-operation in Aberdeenshire on 20 – 21 April 2006



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The Transport group has provided a relatively comprehensive input to the NSC position paper on EU Maritime policy

Co-operation with other NSC thematic groups

The group co-operated with the other NSC thematic groups in conjunction with the preparation and organisation of the Lisbon-seminar in October 2005

Involvement in “external” events of relevance to the group

The Co-ordinator attended and gave a speech at the annual conference of the SustAccess project in Papenburg, Germany, on 12 September 2005. This speech also included a presentation and promotion of the work of the NSC Transport group.

The Co-ordinator attended and gave a presentation on Motorways of the Sea at a meeting of the CPMR Intercom group on Transport in Brussels 20 September. The meeting was attended by representatives of the other geographical Commissions and a representative of DG TREN.

The Co-ordinator attended the CPMR General Assembly in Madeira on 2 – 4 November 2005, where he took the opportunity to have talks with the Transport Director of the CPMR as well as with representatives of other geographical commissions.

The Co-ordinator met with DGTREN, Unit for MoS & Intermodality on 30 November as a part of a delegation from the Northern Maritime Corridor project. The NMC delegation introduced the idea of establishing a Task Force on MoS for the North Sea & Northern Seas with the task of working out a Master Plan for these areas (as has already been done for the Baltic Sea area). The DGTREN staff was in favour of this idea provided support from the EU member states in this area.

The Co-ordinator has on three occasions presented NSC positions & activities on Motorways of the Sea at events organised by Interreg projects in Stockholm, Brussels and Umeå. DG TREN officials were represented at these events.

The Co-ordinator attended and gave a presentation on NSC policies and activities on Motorways of the Sea at a CPMR seminar on this subject in Sevilla, Spain, on 15 May.

Current issues & priorities of the group

Developing the Motorways of the Sea (MoS) concept in the North Sea Region

The group has been monitoring EU policies and processes on MoS.

NSC policies on the MoS have on several occasions been presented to the EU Commission



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The group has collected information on the outcome of the first TEN-T call on MoS projects, and the projects approved under this call have been studied through the NMC II project with a view of identifying core criteria for success.

The group organised a thematic seminar on MoS in Brussels on 10 March 2006, attended by about 30 persons from 10 different countries – representing the European Commission, national governments (from UK), regional authorities, Interregional organisations (CPMR, NSC, Mediterranean Commission), transnational projects (Interreg projects), ports, port companies, research organisations, regional representations in Brussels and business development organisations. The purpose of the seminar was to get a better understanding of the MoS concept, as well as to get an update on current developments and future plans within this area. The meeting also intended to explore the possibilities for co-operation between different sea areas (i.e. North Sea - Baltic Sea – Atlantic - Mediterranean), and to discuss the potential for public-private co-operation in the development of MoS. The role of the regions in relation to MoS was another important aspect of the seminar.

The group has provided input to a joint CPMR position paper on the MoS

The group has exchanged information and views on MoS with representatives of the Baltic Sea Commission

Air transport

The Co-ordinator has presented a draft proposal for a CPMR working programme on air transport to the Transport Director at the Secretariat in Rennes, on the basis of input from the Seaplane-project. The draft is proposing to conduct an analysis of air transport needs in the various CPMR regions, as well as to monitor EU consultations within this sector.

Sustainable transport

The speeches and good practice presentations from the NSC- NTN conference on sustainable transport in Kristiansand in May last year have been uploaded to the NSC web site

Ideas for transport projects in future Territorial co-operation programmes

This topic was discussed in a joint meeting with the SustAccess project on 16 May. Transport projects will be addressed under the broad heading of “challenging accessibility” in the Objective 3 Territorial Co-operation programme for the North Sea Region. The group agrees with the main profile of the programme, with a focus on improving intermodality and interoperability, optimising transport capacity, harmonising framework conditions (administrative, legal, financial) between modes, developing the role of secondary hubs and stimulating technological developments. The group recommends that transport projects under the new programme should be broad in terms of actor categories and the number of partners, strategic – addressing the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas and the TEN-T, as well as building upon the knowledge produced by projects under the current North Sea Programme. The group also believes that the NSC should have a more institutionalised role in relation to the new North Sea Programme as a project developer, forum of co-operation & co-ordination and as a channel of dissemination.



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Development of strategic role and promotion of the Transport group

A revised Terms of Reference was adopted at the meeting in Trollhättan 28 October 2005. The group has decided to focus on fewer and more strategic issues, and at the same time highlight its usefulness for the NSC member regions as a forum for the exchange of information and good practice in the transport sector. The group would also like to improve the understanding of the needs of transport users and providers – acting as a link between these stakeholders and the political decision makers.

The role and activities of the Transport group were presented and promoted in the aforementioned speech to the annual conference of the SustAccess project in September and in the joint meeting with the project in May, with a particular emphasis on our potential for acting as a vehicle of co-ordination and dissemination, as well as a political channel in relation to Interreg projects.

Kristiansand, 22 May 2006,

Jon Halvard Eide
Co-ordinator, NSC Transport group