

Joint Annual Conference and General Assembly 2010

- North Sea Region 2020 -

Concept Paper

22-03-2010

As an outcome of a number of discussions within the Programme and with the North Sea Commission the set-up of the conference will be reshaped towards an integrated programme and an interactive approach to get the participants more involved.

This is necessary to keep the conference interesting for all participants, taking into consideration that the programme transits from a project generating phase into a project implementation phase. In addition the former concept, having been successful for many years, was beginning to outlive itself and therefore in need to be rethought.

The coming conference will follow a joint concept, 'a blended approach', meaning that the conference programme during the first and second day will be developed and organised jointly between the North Sea Commission and the Programme. Therefore a joint organisation meeting took place on 10 March in Copenhagen, which developed the following concept:

Timing

The conference will be organised as a lunch to lunch event, followed by study tours. In the morning of the first day there will be time for individual sessions of the North Sea Commission and the Programme. Each of the two days will be followed by a dinner, the first hosted by the Programme and the second by Rogaland County Council and the North Sea Commission. During the third day the North Sea Commission's General Assembly and Executive Committee will take place.

Theme and Aim of the Conference

The theme of the conference will be 'North Sea Region 2020'. The theme was chosen to reflect and react on a number of ongoing processes as there are the discussions about the need and possibilities of a North Sea Strategy and the recently launched 2020 strategy by the European Commission and its impacts on the North Sea region.

Besides this more broad perspective the theme was also chosen to reflect on the ongoing and very concrete work of the 39 current projects in the programme. As part of their work they are asked to make contributions towards ongoing EU policy initiatives and to generate long lasting results with a potential to impact on the North Sea region.

The conference will give them a possibility to make concrete links between their work and future perspectives. The aim of the conference is to collect the different expectations and to formulate key challenges the stakeholders perceive for the development of the North Sea region towards 2020.

The outcomes will be presented as conclusions of the conference and will be published on the Programme's and the North Sea Commission's websites, and beyond as relevant.

The Programme will present these conclusions at its next Stakeholder seminar for discussion, which is planned for early autumn 2010 (date and place, tbc). The North Sea Commission has also expressed its interest in discussing these conclusions at their

General Assembly.

Agenda

In order to achieve the ambitious aim for the conference a participative approach has been chosen to include all stakeholders and to give room for interaction. This approach has been named 'Clusters Café'. Before this part of the programme finally starts, all participants will be welcomed in a plenary session.

The speakers will be asked to make reference to their expectations for the North Sea region towards 2020. At the end of the plenary the chair of the conference will introduce him/herself and present expectations. The chair will visit different sessions during the café and facilitate the final plenary on the second day to agree on the final conclusions of the conference.

Clusters Café

After a coffee break the café sessions will start. For the sessions five main themes have been chosen. Each theme will include two sub-themes. They are an outcome of the working group discussions and reflect the different themes the North Sea Commission is working on and the priorities and themes the 39 projects of the programme are working on. The themes were chosen for their relevance now and in looking forward to 2020. To help bring a degree of focus and make discussion more meaningful (and manageable), sub themes have been identified. The chosen themes and sub themes are:

Theme	Sub-Theme
Climate	Adaptive Measures Sustainable Energy
Culture & Tourism	Creative Industries Storytelling
Innovation	Entrepreneurship Public-Private Interaction
Maritime Management	Resource Management Safety (Coordination and Emergency)
Sustainable Communities	Connectivity Governance

This set-up leads to 10 different sessions - clusters. Each session will be facilitated – the Programme and the North Sea Commission will come up with a list of potential facilitators. With an expected number of participants of around 300, each session will have an average of 30 visitors, varying of course on the topic.

The Programme will ask its projects, linking to one or more of the themes to make short statements, one sentence each, in terms of their expectations and foreseeable challenges reflecting on their work. These will be displayed and used to start each of the session. In the following session the facilitator will ask the participants for their comments, collect them on a flip chart and open for discussion. Finally each session will conclude on a number of expectations and challenges for the North Sea region towards 2020.

The café sessions will run twice: once during the first and again on the second day. There are several options for the set-up and running of the cafes.

Option 1

At registration for the conference the participants will be asked to choose one clusters session. Arriving at the conference they will get a random number for the second clusters session. The random number will mean that they will be allocated to a pre-selected session during the first day. This approach was chosen to get very different stakeholder mixes for each of the first sessions, not necessarily experts in the field. They might arrive at completely surprising and new ideas, which might not be the ones discussed by experts. These outcomes will be used for input for the second day where we expect that, due to signing up beforehand, we might get a more expert-like, interested in the topic kind of audience, which will be confronted with the first day's outcome to start their session. The facilitation will be the same as at the first day, but informed by the first day's sessions, again arriving at final conclusions.

Option 2

At registration for the conference the participants will be asked to choose one clusters session for the two days. During the clusters session on day 1 the participants will be asked to brainstorm one of the sub topics and there will be forum for discussion. On day 2 the same facilitator and participants will return to finish off discussion and make final conclusions. An advantage of using this approach would be that the groups would be kept consistent and that there would be a reduction in delays that can occur as a result of the changing participants e.g. time used for establishing group dynamics. Adopting this option would mean that less time would be needed on day 2 for wrapping up/ final conclusions. Instead of the second session running for 2 hours, it could run for an hour and a half instead. This would in turn create more room for networking (longer coffee break etc.) at the end of the session.

During the following coffee-break the facilitators will present the conclusions to the chair to decide how to present them at the final plenary. At the plenary there will be time to discuss the different conclusions.

The conclusions from the workgroup should already present the final conclusions for the conference. A final step for the plenary will be to group/clusters them if and where appropriate. E.g. along the five main themes instead of the 10 sub-themes or along other at this point obvious criteria. It would be counter-productive to discuss new conclusions or to decide which are the most important ones.

Dinner

Both dinners are important networking events. For the first dinner the Programme will discuss to re-invent the starfish award. A video team will produce a news reel of the first day, reflecting on the clusters café sessions. The video will be presented during the dinner and posted on the web. The chef will introduce the different courses. The dinner will take place in the conference centre.

The second dinner will be hosted by the Rogaland County Council and North Sea Commission. If possible a second video news reel will be shown, but this is pending the facilities. This dinner will start with a boat-tour and take place on a small Island.

Exhibition

The success and interest of an exhibition at the Annual Conference relies heavily on relevant results from projects. Although a few early projects are well underway and will close soon, most projects have not come into their main delivery phase and still have some time to go before real results and outcomes can be identified and collected.

For this reason it was discussed not to have a traditional project exhibition this year but to postpone it to next year. Instead there will be a smaller exhibition in the lunch and breakfast area, where projects will be invited to showcase their materials.

The projects will also be asked to give input for the clusters café (as described above) and will this way have a direct influence on the content of the event.

Study Tours

The study tours will be organised for the afternoon of the second day of the conference by the North Sea Commission. The tours will be linked to the conference's theme. The tours will be outlined and presented in a separated paper.