Greater North Sea Basin Initiative

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Background of the North Sea Basin Initiative

› Rethinking the current landscape of cooperation in and around the North Sea: is it fit for purpose? can we improve on this? to reach our common objectives?

› In light of the European Green Deal ambitions (a.o. clean energy, biodiversity, sustainable blue economy and zero-pollution)

› In light of some key developments in the Netherlands marine policy:
  - the Dutch National North Sea Agreement and the
  - The updated Policy Programme for 2022-2027 available since 16 November;


› NL pursuing a North Sea Basin Initiative is now politically backed, with the aim to draw conclusions during the European Maritime Days in Brest, May 2023.
Organisational cooperation North Sea in 2021

- shipping
- nature
- clean energy
- fisheries

Art 18. RAC Scheveningen group

NSMSPCG (art 11. EU MSP Directive)
Emerging topics for an integrated North Sea wide dialogue

1. *Transition 1*: Energy transition to net-zero by 2050;
2. *Transition 2*: Reinforcing nature and restoring biodiversity
3. *Transition 3*: Transition in the marine food supply;
4. These transitions take place in the context of an overarching transformation to a truly sustainable Blue Economy, as also proposed by the EC, impacting multiple human activities at sea;
5. This is to be supported by a joint backbone of knowledge, science and evidence base, which can help foster this transformation
1. Energy Transition towards zero emissions by 2050

- National planning processes … But basin wide questions related to
- Interconnectivity of offshore wind farms across borders
- Grid-connections and landing the energy on-shore
- Ecological limits could become a bottle-neck in relation to 2050 offshore wind ambitions (200GW combined; currently 70 GW in planning stage);
- Requires advancement of monitoring/research into ecological effects;
- How does wind relate to other options for renewable marine energy (wave, solar) and planning/development of green hydrogen.
2. Reinforcing nature, restoring biodiversity & protection

• Main drivers include the European Biodiversity Strategy, and the UN Decade of Restoration;

• Expanding the network of Marine Protected Areas (30%), protecting a third strictly;

• Multiple nature restoration projects ongoing and planned in the entire North Sea: oyster beds / reefs and sea grass;
  - Netherlands has planned 100 km2 oyster bed restoration in Frisian Front;

• Combining project development (eg for offshore wind) with reinforcements for nature is becoming a common practise (for birds and fish) in various North Sea countries.
3. Marine food production and sustainable fisheries

› Drivers:
  – European Farm-2-Fork Strategy (incl Common fisheries policy / guidelines on sustainable aqua- and mari-culture);
  – and competition for space (impacting notably the fisheries sector);

› Focus on: research and innovation for sustainable fishing techniques,

› Development of techniques marine food production in cohabitation with wind farms; eg on seaweed cultivation is ongoing around the North Sea, and a community of businesses, research institutes and governments is growing.
4. A truly sustainable blue economy

- **Aim:** An overarching approach where all activities take place *without* harmful emissions, including noise, and a focus on responsible production and with a *circular* design. It is a “house” in which several of before mentioned transitions take place.

- Achieving a full sustainable blue economy is challenging and will require *major* investments and innovations. We see that businesses, entrepreneurs and research organizations are gearing up for it;

- EU support by the *Blue Invest programme*: leverage for scaling up market driven investments;

- A topic of particular interest for the *North Sea regions*. Ports and local communities and the activities happening there – it’s a new dynamic in the economy.
5. A joint knowledge base through research and exchange

› Increased monitoring and research lead to more data and better understanding of our marine environment and maritime activities.

› Digital transformation underway and information crucial for future planning and adaptive management;

› The sharing of data and information through a joint knowledge base can be improved;
Next steps in the North Sea Basin Initiative which can be envisaged

› Dialogues with national authorities;
› Building on the national plans and agenda’s and under the existing cooperation mechanisms;
› Understanding the common ground for strengthened cooperation;
› Dialogue with the European Commission;
› Follow-up talks with North Sea Commission working groups;
› Reaching out to other stakeholders;
› Deciding on a mid-term ‘event’ on the North Sea Basin Initiative somewhere in 2022;
› Working towards May 2023.
Thank you for listening

For questions and reactions – please contact
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