32 NSC Annual Business Meeting 2023
23rd May 2023, Brest

Minutes of Meeting
## Attendees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>Administration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agder</td>
<td>Beate Johnsen, Ingebjørg Godskesen</td>
<td>Jon Halvard Eide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halland</td>
<td>Elisabet Babic</td>
<td>Ulrika Bertilsson</td>
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<td>Midtjylland (Central Denmark)</td>
<td>Henrik Qvist, Henrik Stensønes, Line Hatmosø Hoem</td>
<td>Peder Bang</td>
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<td>Møre og Romsdal</td>
<td>Henrik Stensønes, Lisbeth Nervik, Olav Fransson Drangeld</td>
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<td>Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony)</td>
<td>Carsten Westerholt</td>
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<td>Noord-Holland</td>
<td>Rosan Kocken, Martijn Lucas, Yolanda Schmal, Ilse Buijs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nordjylland (North Denmark)</td>
<td>Peder Key Kristiansen, Tage Leegaard</td>
<td>Karen Greve Sommerset</td>
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<td>Nord Nederland</td>
<td>Tjisse Stelpstra</td>
<td>Nina Knol, Johan Scholte, Safiya von Amsberg</td>
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<td>Rogaland</td>
<td>Marianne Chesak</td>
<td>Ida Marita Bøe, Poppy Kalesi</td>
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<td>Trøndelag</td>
<td>Peter Meinert</td>
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<td>Vestfold og Telemark</td>
<td>Kåre Pettersen, Liselotte Aune Lee</td>
<td>Lars Haukvik, Dawn Freund</td>
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<td>Vestland</td>
<td>Tor Andre Ljosland, Geir Kjell Andersland</td>
<td>Ingeborg Sofie Sætrevik, Anna Lygre Solvang, Hans-Inge Gloppen, Anne Stine Hovland</td>
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<td>Viken</td>
<td>Andreas Lervik, Camilla Sørensen Eidsvold</td>
<td>Thomas Hansen</td>
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<td>Västra Götaland</td>
<td>Kerstin Brunnström, Birgitta Adolfsson, Conny Bränberg</td>
<td>Robin Stenström, Astrid Burhoi</td>
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<td>West-Vlaanderen</td>
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<td>Ellen Cardoen, Diederik Declercq, Hannelore Maelfait</td>
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<td>Zeeland</td>
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<td>Wieteke Wolterbeek</td>
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<td>Zuid-Holland</td>
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<td>Stephan van Dijk, Arjan van Lindeloof</td>
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**KIMO International:** Jerry Ahlström
**Youth Advisors:** Solveig Vik and Tom Reckmann
Open Remarks

Cllr Tjisse Stelpstra, President of the North Sea Commission (NSC), welcomed all participants to the 32th Annual Business Meeting (ABM), held in person in Brest. He welcomed the invited speakers. And also the young people were especially welcomed.

Cllr Tjisse Stelpstra mentioned that France and the Netherlands in cooperation with the European Commission have jointly organised a DG-meeting on the Integrated Marine and Maritime Policies for the Greater North Sea Basin. The meeting will take place on 22 and 23 May in Paris, France. Advisor Hannelore Maelfait from the Marine Resources group will attend this meeting on behalf of the North Sea Commission.

1. Adoption the agenda

Cllr Tjisse Stelpstra informed that the representative from the CPMR couldn’t come. Furthermore, he suggested to discuss the Final Declaration after agenda item 10 ‘Towards a Circular Economy’.

Decisions:

1. The Annual Business Meeting adopted the adjusted agenda.

2. Approval of the minutes

Decisions:

1. The Annual Business Meeting approved the minutes of the 31th Annual Business Meeting, held in Bruges on 23rd May 2022.

3. Annual Report 2022–2023

The Annual Report 2022-2023 was sent out with the meeting papers.

Cllr. Tjisse Stelpstra, Provincie Drenthe, NSC President, briefly presented the overall achievements and events like the Political Bureau, which was held in Murcia in March 2022. He informed the participants that he has had a meeting with President Cees Loggen on the 22nd of May.

Cllr. Henrik Stensønes, Møre og Romsdal, vice-chair of Marine Resources Group, highlighted some of the achievements over the past year. First of all, he excused the chair, Cllr. Ann Bell. She wasn’t able to attend the meeting due to personal circumstances. The group has a function as facilitator for regions and partners within the North Sea region to collaborate interregional on the defined topics in the action plan. Furthermore, the group wants to work even more project driven. Common challenges can lead to project development. For example, in several NSC regions fishery and transition is a big topic. The right skills and the right education are essential for further development of this sector. By working together this transition could be accelerated. As a consequence the Action plan 2022-2024 will be even more output driven. The four priorities of the group are healthy marine environment, marine spatial planning, sustainable aquaculture and fisheries and sustainable blue economy.

The Marine Resources group has had a discussion on PFAS. Cllr. Tage Leegard will inform the NSC more about it later in this meeting. The group concluded that at the moment there is too little knowledge about the long-term effects of PFAS. KIMO has written a statement, which will be put to vote during this meeting. The next steps for the group are tracking several INTERREG projects, like TREASURE, focus on innovation in regards to the removal of litter out of the water, and strengthen the international cooperation with key-stakeholders like KIMO.

Regarding marine spatial planning the Marine Resources group uses its voice within the North Sea Energy Cooperation to work towards a North Sea basin strategy. Cllr. Henrik Stensønes informed that advisor
Hannelore Maelfait is attending a high level meeting in that regards. Furthermore, the group is looking forward to work together with the Youth advisors. Finally, the Marine Resources group will work together with the CPMR Atlantic Arc commission on sustainable blue economy within the AspBAN project. The next step will be a discussion on blue skills during meeting in September.

Clir Elizabet Babic, Halland, Chair of Energy and Climate Change Group, presented the highlights of the work of the group and asked if there are members who want to become vice-chair of the group. At the moment, besides the chair, Clir. Geir Kjell Andersland as vice-chair. Poppy Kalesi is the advisor of the group. Clir. Elizabet Babic informed the ABM that the group wants to focus more and the focus will be on energy efficiency and climate adaptation. During the last meetings the group has been working on a renewed action plan and divided the tasks between the members of the group, which results in a lot of engagement between the North Sea regions. Nevertheless, the group still needs active members!

Clir. Elizabet Babic informed that Västra Götaland will together with two other regions co-lead the CPMR Energy working group. It is vital that the North Sea Commission will work closely together with this CPMR Energy working group. During the next meeting in September the group will discuss the national action plans regarding the European Energy program.

Jon Halvard Eide, Agder, Advisor of Transport Group, presented an overview of the activities of the group. He excused the chair of the group is Clir. Preben Friis-Hauge (South Denmark). During the past year, the group has exchanged information and experiences on recent transport developments in member regions. In the next 2 years the Transport group will focus on ‘Transnational accessibility’, ‘Clean shipping, climate neutral and inclusive transport’ and ‘Intelligent transport solutions’.

At the moment the group has besides the chair, two vice-chairs: Clir. Stuart Adams (Aberdeenshire) and Kåre Pettersen (Vestfold og Telemark). Mr. Eide mentioned that the Transport group would like to have more members from Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands.

The group have had ordinary business meetings in Brussels, Örebrö and the most recent meeting was in Møre og Romsdal, where the group got a good insight into the infrastructure going from one island to another.

During this meetint the group had a discussion on how to use report on intelligent and innovative transport solution in support of political resolutions and EU projects. Furthermore, the group discussed the cooperation with the other thematic groups (for instance a combined webinar) and also the cooperation with the regional offices of the North Sea Commission members in Brussels in order to highlight the work of the North Sea Commission and to get better connected with European networks. Mr. Eide asked the NSC secretariat to help the group with this.

The group contributed to the CPMR lobby strategy on the TEN-T revision and translated the NSC position paper on the revised TEN-T regulation into specific amendments towards European Parlement and Council. The group also promoted the position at the EU TEN-T Days in Lyon on 28 – 29 June 2022.

Clir Beate Marie Johnsen, Agder, Chair of Smart Regions Group, gave un update on the group’s activities and relevant European initiatives such as the proposal on the new Battery directive. Unfortunately the vice-chair, Clir. Birgitta Adolfson (Västra Götaland), will leave the group. Also her supporting officer Olle Jonäng (Västra Götaland) will leave as well. Clir. Johnsen thanked them both for the work they have done for many years now.

The Smart Regions group has three focus areas: 1) Smart Specialisation Strategies, 2) Skills/competences and mobility of researchers, students and the work force and 3) Circular use of resources. A new Focus coordinator has joined. This is Ingeborg Sofie Saetrevik from the region Vestland.
Mrs. Johnsen informed the ABM about the several activities which have been done per focus area. Regarding the sustainable production, re-use and recycling of electric batteries in the transport sector in the NSC member regions the group made the following recommendations:

1) NSC member regions could revise their strategies and introduce action plans with specific measures to promote sustainable production, re-use and recycling of electric batteries.

2) NSC member regions should dedicate more funding to business and research institutions to improve the design of batteries in order to make them easy to be disassembled, repaired, re-used and recycled. The aspect of circularity across the entire battery life cycle should be considered from the very beginning of the design process.

3) NSC member regions could promote the re-use of electric batteries on a larger scale, for example for energy storage. Respective regulations on the second life of electric batteries (e.g. purchase, handing over to third parties, issues of liability) could be improved and unified.

The next steps will be developing a project initiative: bringing together various stakeholders in the battery sector to ensure closer cooperation between the NSC member regions, and propose a NSC resolution to raise awareness among political leaders across NSC member regions.

Mrs. Johnsen informed the ABM that the Smart Regions group will keep on working on the priorities and activities as stated in the Action Plan 2023-2025, cooperate with the other thematic groups and the project development initiative, involve youth and attract new members to the group. She expressed the group’s desire to recruit members from the Netherlands and Denmark, to the group.

Lastly, the President, Tjisse Stelpstra, thanked all the groups for their presentations, which demonstrated all the good work which had been done in the groups. He especially supported the interaction between the thematic groups. He also mentioned that there have been several meetings with the Baltic Sea Commission in which there have been discussing about these topics as well.

Decisions:

4. Country reports

President Tjisse Stelpstra informed the ABM about the country reports and mentioned the elections in the Netherlands. The BBB (BoerBurgerBeweging) has become the biggest in all the provinces.

Decisions:
1. The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information

5. Proposal on working group and country reports

President Tjisse Stelpstra presented the proposal on working group and country reports. There has been a discussion in the last meeting of the Executive Committee regarding these reports, the wishes from the NSC members and the way these reports need to address the North Sea Region 2030 strategy. Cllr. Rosan Kocken, Provincie Noord-Holland, mentioned that the reports should be shorter and more focused on what the ABM needs to know. She agreed with reporting twice a year.

Cllr. Elisabet Babic also agreed with reporting twice a year and shorter reports. She asked if it would be possible that the Presidency could ask the thematic groups what they would want to know. This way all groups will give the same type of information.

Mr. Stelpstra concluded that the ABM agreed with reporting twice a year and he suggested that the Presidency and the NSC secretariat will bring more focus in the reports.
Decisions:
1. The Annual Business Meeting approved the proposal to report twice a year.
2. The Annual Business Meeting approved the proposal to bring more focus in the reports.

6. Financial documents

Financial documents were sent out with the meeting documents, including a report on the accounts for 2022, the financial situation by April 2023, and a proposal for budget and member fees for 2024. Vice-President, Cllr. Andreas Lervik, presented the financial document and the raise of the membership fees. Furthermore, he suggested to draft a proposal how to support the Youth more sustainable. For 2024 there are 5 new Norwegian regions joining the North Sea Commission due to the split up of the regions Vestfold og Telemark and Viken (scenario 1).

Decisions:
The Annual Business Meeting

   1. Approved the accounts for 2022
   2. Took note of the financial report by 18 April 2023
   3. Approved the adjusted budget proposal for 2023
   4. Adopted the proposed budget and membership fees for 2024.

7. Election of the Vice-President

According to the NSC Charter “the President and two Vice-Presidents shall be elected by the Annual Business Meeting for a period of two years which is renewable”. To avoid the risk of a change on all three positions at the same time, elections of President and one Vice-President are held in even years and of the other Vice-President in odd years. A call for candidates was issued in an email to all member regions. The current Vice-President, Cllr. Marianne Chesak (Rogaland), has decided that she will not seek re-election. One application has been received for the position of Vice-President:).
President Tjisse Stelpstra presented Cllr. Elisabet Babic (Halland) as the applicant and asked the ABM to vote by acclamation.
Mr. Stelpstra thanked Cllr. Marianne Chesak for her work as Vice-President.

Decisions:

1. The Annual Business Meeting elected Cllr. Elisabet Babic as Vice-President for two years of the North Sea Commission for the period from the Annual Business Meeting 2023 until the Annual Business Meeting 2025

8. Statement on fisheries and wind energy

The Marine Resources Group has been working on a statement on fisheries and wind energy. This statement has been discussed by the members of the Marine Resources Group during their meeting in Aberdeenshire on March 31.
Cllr. Henrik Stensønes presented the statement. He informed the ABM that the goal is to bring fishery and wind energy production together. Background for this is the fact that a lot of activities are taking place at the sea and more are to come. Fisheries have no fora to make their voices heard. With this statement the North Sea Commission tries to have every stakeholder heard equally.
Cllr. Kerstin Brunnström (Västra Götaland) presented the following amendment on the first paragraph: *North Sea Regional and Local Authorities recognize the urgent need for safer cleaner energy, since the green transition of the industry is key and the need for electricity is expected to double by 2030 and thus understand the need for expanding the offshore infrastructure, whilst also realizing the urgent need for sustainable, high protein food.*

Furthermore, she presented the following amendment on the third paragraph: *Socio-cultural knowledge is essential to draft Marine Spatial Plans that respect all actors equally.* Mrs. Brunnström also asked if Marine Spatial Plans is the correct wording.

Cllr. Henrik Stensønes answered that it should indeed be Maritime Spatial Plans. He agreed with the first amendment but did insist on keeping the word ‘equally’. After a short discussion the region of (Västra Götaland) withdrew this amendment.

**Decisions:**

1. The Annual Business Meeting approved the amendment from Västra Götaland regarding the first paragraph.
2. The Annual Business Meeting adopted the statement on fisheries and wind energy with the amendment of Västra Götaland.

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**9. Towards a circular economy**

During the Annual Business Meeting in Bruges (2022), President of Ex’Tax, Femke Groothuis presented the principles of a tax shift. The ABM discussed the principles and a dedicated NSC Task Force “Towards a Circular Economy” was initiated. Goal of the Task Force is to learn more about one of the main barriers towards a circular economy and to start working on a joint North Sea Commission Resolution to be tabled at the NSC Annual Business Meeting in Brest 2023.

Cllr. Rosan Kocken, Provincie Noord-Holland presented the NSC resolution “Towards a Circular Economy” on behalf of the Task Force. She concluded that:

1. Acknowledging the fact, we the NSC, support the transition to a circular economy as described in our North Sea Region Strategy 2030;
2. Considering the fact that our current tax systems are in line with (and even support) a linear economic model;
3. Accepting the fact, that it’s not a quick fix but requires a lot of time;
4. Recognizing that even though regions do not have jurisdiction, regions play a vital role in creating well-functioning labour markets, a skilled workforce and secure employment in our regions;
5. And since taxes have a fundamental impact on investment, employment and consumption decisions, they should be aligned with the goals of an inclusive circular economy.

The joint NSC Resolution is a starting point to deepen our knowledge of what is needed for a fully circular economy and what we as regions can do to help achieve this.

Not only within the North Sea Commission but also the Baltic Sea Commission have shown interest in this resolution.

The province of West-Vlaanderen abstained.

**Decisions:**

1. The Annual Business Meeting adopted the NSC resolution on Circular Economy
10. Final Declaration

The final declaration was sent out with the meeting papers. President Tjisse Stelpstra presented the Brest Declaration. Amendments have been proposed by Agder, Västra Götaland, Nordsjylland and Lower Saxony. Advisor Jon Halvard Eide has asked Västra Götaland why they have made their first amendment at point 3. Cllr. Kerstin Brunnström answered that Västra Götaland does not want to narrow it down to these factors. Cllr. Henrik Stensønes replied that he doesn’t agree with the region Västra Götaland.

President Tjisse Stelpstra concluded at point 1 that the amendment from Agder include the other two amendments made by Västra Götaland and Nordsjylland at point 1. The ABM agreed with the President. The Amendment from Agder at point 1 was adopted. The amendment from Agder at point 2 was adopted. The first amendment from Västra Götaland at point 3 were not adopted. The second amendment from Västra Götaland at point 3 was adopted. The amendments from Nordsjylland in regards to point 5 was adopted with the addition ‘fossil fuels from’. The amendment proposed by the Västra Götaland and Agder at point 6 were both adopted. The amendments proposed by the Västra Götaland at point 7 and 8 have both been adopted. The amendments from Agder to propose extra points 10 and 11 to the final declaration were both adopted. The amendment at point 14 made by Västra Götaland has been adopted. The amendment from Lower Saxony at point 15 has been discussed. President Tjisse Stelpstra proposed to split up this amendment. The amendment was adopted without the deletion of ‘as a frontrunner’. The amendment from Västra Götaland at point 15 was adopted. The amendment from Agder at point 17 has been adopted. The amendments from Västra Götaland and Nordsjylland at point 19 were both adopted. The amendment from Västra Götaland at point 20 was adopted.

The amendments from Västra Götaland to propose extra points 21 and 22 were both adopted. Regarding the Final Declaration Lower Saxony abstained.

Decisions:

1. The Annual Business Meeting adopted the final declaration with the adopted amendments.

11. Youth introduction

Solveig Vik (Rogaland) and Tom Reckmann (Lower Saxony) introduced themselves.

Decisions:

1. The Annual Business Meeting took note of the introduction
2. The Annual Business Meeting welcomed the new Youth advisors to the North Sea Commission.

12. INTERREG North Sea Region Programme

Executive-Secretary Nina Knol gave an update on the INTERREG North Sea Region Programme. The joint annual conference will be held on 29 and 30 November in Rotterdam (The Netherlands). The North Sea Commission will have their Executive Committee meeting on 29 November.

Decisions:

1. The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information
13. **KIMO**

Jerry Ahlström, *President of KIMO International*, gave an overall presentation of KIMO and its priorities. KIMO is an international network organization on the marine environment with more than 80 local authorities as members. Lobbying and actions related to marine litter and its impacts on fishing and biodiversity are emphasized. The organization cooperate with stakeholders, e.g., the fishing industry, ports and harbours, when addressing the issue. KIMO and the North Sea Commission concluded a cooperation agreement in 2018, and the two organizations have later cooperated on marine litter, for example in the Waste-free rivers webinar, and have also adopted a joint resolution on the issue of lost containers at sea. KIMO International participated in the last Marine Resources Group meeting in Aberdeenshire. KIMO International adopted a resolution on PFAS in October 2022. During the Marine Resources Group meeting, the resolution was discussed. It was also decided that the resolution would be sent to the ABM to make it a joint statement from KIMO and the North Sea Commission. Mr. Ahlström presented the statement.

Cllr. Beate Johansen asked if the municipalities are involved in regards to the KIMO resolutions. Mr. Ahlström answered that the work regarding these resolutions are prepared in cooperation with the municipalities. Wieteke Wolterbeek mentioned that the Netherlands has, together with 4 other European countries, prepared a European ban on PFAS that is currently under consultation. She suggested that the North Sea Commission and KIMO should jointly support this ban as it is fully in line with the proposed resolution. Cllr. Tage Leegaard mentioned that PFAS is a serious problem in Denmark. He proposed that PFAS should be completely phased out, because PFAS is an environmental poison just like DDT is. He urges the North Sea Commission to adopt the joint statement.

**Decisions:**

1. The Annual Business Meeting took note of the information.
2. The Annual Business Meeting adopted a joint statement with KIMO International on PFAS

President Tjisse Stelpstra thanked the participants for attending the Annual Business Meeting.