



78th NSC Executive Committee meeting 11th October 2018, Brussels

Minutes

78th NSC Executive Committee, 11th October 2018, Brussels

Formalities

Welcome by the President of the CPMR North Sea Commission

Presentation of our newest member West-Vlaanderen by **Liesbet Lefevere**

1. Approval of the agenda
2. Approval of the minutes from the 77th Executive Committee Meeting, 13th June 2018, Fredrikstad

Reports on NSR 2020 priority areas

3. Managing Maritime Space by Cllr **Anders Fasth**, Chair of Marine Resources Group
4. Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport by Cllr **Preben Friis-Hauge**, Chair of Transport Group
5. Tackling Climate Change by Cllr **Jimmy Gray**, Chair of Energy and Climate Change Group
6. Attractive and Sustainable Communities by Cllr **Barney Crockett**, Chair of Smart Regions Group

Other strategic issues

7. Brexit developments by Cllr **Nienke Homan**, Chair of Brexit Taskforce
8. Update from CPMR by **Eleni Marianou**, CPMR Secretary General
9. Interreg NSR State of play by **Sarah Holsen**, Interreg North Sea Secretariat

External presentation

10. North Seas energy cooperation by **Frederik Deloof**, Benelux Secretariat
11. Future of European Territorial Cooperation by **Pekka Jounila**, DG Regio, European Commission

Reports from member regions

12. Reports on North Sea related issues in member regions by **national representatives**

Internal issues

13. Post 2020 NSR strategy by **Magnus Engelbrektsson**, Executive Secretary
14. Statement of accounts by **Magnus Engelbrektsson**, Executive Secretary
15. Member fee model from 2020 – follow-up discussions in Kiel
16. Venue and time for the 28th Annual Business Meeting and North Sea Conference 2019
17. Next Executive Committee meeting(s)
18. Election of Chair of the Brexit Task Force
19. AOB



78th NSC Executive Committee Meeting
11th October 2018
Brussels

Attending

President

Vice President

Vice President

Danish Representative

Dutch Representative

English Representative

French Representative

German Representative

Norwegian Representative

Scottish Representative

Swedish Representative

Kerstin Brunnström

Andreas Lervik

John Lamb

Preben Friis-Hauge (substitute)

Nienke Homan

See Vice President

not present

Antje Grotheer

Marianne Chesak

Peter Argyle

Dag Hultefors

NSC Thematic Groups Chairs/Vice Chairs

Energy and Climate Change

Marine Resources

Transport

Smart Regions

Jimmy Gray

Anders Fasth

See Danish Representative

not present

NSC Secretariat

Executive Secretary

Assistant Executive Secretary

Magnus Engelbrektsson

Irma Ganibegovic

NSC Thematic Group Advisors

Energy and Climate Change

Marine Resources

Transport

Smart Regions

Paulien Kooistra

Yolanda Schmal

Jon Halvard Eide

Geir Sør-Reime

Supporting Officers

Martin Brebner, Aberdeenshire

Kia Sofie Abildtrup, Syddanmark

Torsten Raff, Bremen

Thomas André Hansen, Østfold

Lisbet Lefevere, Ves-Vlaanderen

Elmer Koole, Groningen

Maria Olsson, Västra Götaland

Speakers

Eleni Marianou, CPMR

Pekka Jounila, DG REGIO, European Commission

Sarah Holsen, Interreg North Sea Programme

Frederik Deloof, Benelux Secretariat

Jan Molema, Benelux Secretariat

Kerstin Brunnström, NSC President, welcomes the Executive Committee members and speakers to the 78th Executive Committee meeting. A special thanks to Region Västra Götaland for hosting the meeting and a warm welcome Liesbet Lefevere, West-Vlaanderen, our newest member.

Liesbet Lefevere extends apologies on behalf of the political representative of West-Vlaanderen who could not attend today's meeting because of regional elections.

1. Approval of the Agenda

Magnus Engelbrektsson, NSC Executive Secretary, informs that there is a last-minute change to the agenda, the addition of "18. Election of a Chair of the Brexit Task Force".

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee approves the revised agenda.

2. Approval of the minutes from the 77th Executive Committee meeting

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee approves the minutes of the 77th Executive Committee meeting, 13th June 2018, Fredrikstad (Norway).

3. Managing Maritime Space

An oral report was delivered by Cllr Anders Fasth, Chair of Marine Resources Group, and Yolanda Schmal, Advisor of the Marine Resources Group, on the work of the group. Fasth and Schmal highlighted the MRG's work with marine litter mentioning the beach cleaning exercise in Fredrikstad during the Annual Business Meeting and the joint meeting with the Energy and Climate Change Group in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, 2-3 October. The group worked on their action plan for marine litter during the meeting in Aberdeenshire and the members were encouraged to report during the next group meeting on what actions the members have carried out in their own regions.

Cllr Preben Friis-Hauge informed that the cooperation agreement between NSC and KIMO International was officially signed by both parts during KIMO's Annual Business Meeting, in Aalborg on the 5th of October, and that it is good to see that the cooperation has already begun with the MRG. Cllr Kerstin Brunnström added that she was happy to attend the KIMO ABM and sign the cooperation agreement.

Cllr Anders Fasth also announced that he will step down as Chair of the MRG as he chose not to run for re-election in this year's Swedish regional election. He gave a warm thank you to the members of the Executive Committee, the Presidency and the Secretariat and a special thanks to current and previous advisors of the MRG.

The members of the Executive Committee thanked Anders Fasth for his many years of engaging and impressive work as Chair of the Marine Resources Group.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

4. Increasing Accessibility and Clean Transport

An oral report was delivered by Cllr Preben Friis-Hauge, Chair of Transport Group, and Jon Halvard Eide, Advisor of the Transport Group, on the work of the group. Friis-Hauge and Eide highlighted the group's efforts in putting forward proposals and amendments to the European Parliament on transport in cohesion policy and CEF post 2020.

The Transport Group has met with the Cruise Line International Association of Europe, on June 19th, to follow up on the NSC resolution on shoreside power in the cruise industry that was adopted by the ABM. The Danish Minister of Environment informed two days ago that he will look at this issue, and therefore the Transport Group initiated to send a short information letter to inform that there are many stakeholders and actors from different sectors that are interested in the issue on shoreside power.

Cllr Jimmy Gray brings up the question on whether there are links between the different North Sea ports on this issue and informs that he will report back if he finds any information on this. Cllr John Lamb adds that this is a global issue, concerning not only the North Sea and therefore asks Eleni Marianou whether the CPMR can raise the question on shoreside power in the cruise industry. Marianou responds that other geographical commissions in the CPMR are already working on this issue, but that she can make sure that this issue is raised in the relevant working group.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

5. Tackling Climate Change

An oral report was delivered by Cllr Jimmy Gray, Chair of the Energy and Climate Change Group, on the work of the group. Gray highlighted the group's work on developing a NSC hydrogen position and the continuous work on updating the member regions factsheets on energy transition. The joint meeting with the MRG in Aberdeenshire, 4-5 October, focused on climate change adaptation, and Gray showed the groups brochure that they have produced, "Climate Change Adaptation in the North Sea Region".

Cllr John Lamb raised the question on whether there has been work done on a cost benefit analysis on the whole lifecycle of hydrogen vs. electricity. Cllr Nienke Homan informs that there is a study on the subject done by a university in the Netherlands, and that she can make sure to communicate it to the members of the Executive Committee.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

6. Attractive and Sustainable Communities

An oral report was delivered by Geir Sør-Reime, Advisor of the Smart Regions Group, on the work of the group. Sør-Reime extended apologies from the Chair and Vice Chairs of the SRG as they were not able to attend the meeting. Sør-Reime highlighted the SRG's work with appointing member regions to be task holders for the different key action areas where they are expected to report during group meetings on the activities that have been carried out as well as informing about relevant policy initiatives in their areas.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

7. Brexit developments

A presentation was given by Cllr Nienke Homan, Chair of the Brexit Task Force, on the current status of the Brexit negotiations and the work of the NSC Brexit Task Force. The Brexit negotiations have reached a crucial timing where a withdrawal deal should be finalized before the European Council meeting on the 17th October in order for the deal to be approved by the European Parliament and the UK Parliament in time for the exit on the 29th March. However, it seems that they will not be able to make it in time, and the member states are prepared for an extra European Council meeting in mid-November.

Around 80 % of the withdrawal deal is already agreed but the remaining part seems to be the most difficult to agree upon, in particular the border with Northern Ireland. Negotiations on future cooperation will not start until the UK has left the Union, and here the toughest parts to agree upon will be the customs union as well as the Single Market. In the meantime, the UK Labor Party has opened the discussions for another referendum.

Cllr John Lamb informs that he believes that UK will have a Brexit in March and that the Prime Minister has stated clearly that there will not be another referendum. The UK Parliament are firm in their belief and will rather have a no deal Brexit than a bad deal Brexit.

Cllr Peter Argyle adds that there are more views on the situation and that the UK Parliament is openly divided and there is a growing demand on another referendum because the outcome of Brexit is not the deal that was promised two years earlier. The situation has become more complicated than anyone could have expected. Adding to the question of the border with Northern Ireland, it's not only the issue of customs and trade but the issue of people commuting and crossing the border daily which has not been as much discussed as customs and trade.

Several members of the Executive Committee highlight the issue of Brexit and that it is discussed on every level in the member states. Germany is preparing for the effects of Brexit in the fisheries sector as well as the cooperation between universities in Germany and UK. Norway is

content with the news that UK can begin discussions with EFTA countries. It could be problematic for Norway if UK becomes an EEA country which might lead to changes in the EEA agreement – for this reason it is positive that UK can already start the discussions with EFTA.

Eleni Marianou adds that CPMR has met with Michel Barnier, EU's Head Negotiator, and that he is optimistic with the prospects of having a deal with UK after Brexit. CPMR has informed Barnier that we wish to continue cooperation with UK regions after Brexit, and there is an initiative in CPMR, initiated by North-Holland, of friendship agreements between UK regions and CPMR member regions. CPMR will work to establish another meeting with Barnier in November where the idea is to inform him about the regions' interest, for example cooperation in Horizon Europe, Erasmus+ and other relevant cooperation programmes where we wish to see UK as a partner in the future.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

8. Update from CPMR

A presentation was given by Eleni Marianou, CPMR Secretary General, on the current work of the CPMR. Marianou highlighted CPMR's cooperation and close dialogue with the European Commission on cohesion policy, programme regulations and other important policy areas and programmes, ensuring that they are sufficient and eligible for all member regions.

Marianou encouraged member regions to contact their national governments as we need more member states who are willing to vote for a budget that is in line with the regions' ambitions. As for macro-regional strategies, Marianou informs that there are some member states against and some in favour of a macro-regional strategy in the North Sea. However, we need to see beyond the strategy of the paper and look at what is the added value of the strategy and ensure an alignment with EU funding.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

9. Interreg North Sea Region state of play

A presentation was given by Sarah Holsen, Project Advisor, Interreg North Sea Secretariat, on the state of play in the Interreg North Sea Programme. Holsen informed that there are currently 150 expressions of interest (Stage 1), 48 approved projects, 620 partners, 107 million euro allocated and that there is 58 million euro for new projects.

Holsen also highlighted two Interreg NS projects called REFRAMED and ShareNorth.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

10. Reports on North Sea related issues in member regions

A presentation was given by the national representatives on developments in their respective countries and regions that is of relevance for the North Sea Commission.

John Lamb, England, informs that there is a Brexit aspect to everything that is going on in the UK right now. A lot of work is focused on UK's position in fisheries after the UK leaves the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

Nienke Homan, Netherlands, informed that the supreme court in the Netherlands has decided that the carbon-dioxide emissions must be reduced by 20 % by the year of 2020. This decision signals that necessary steps need to be taken now. In December there will be a meeting on climate change and experiences on this from the Netherlands. Homan will report on this during the next Executive Committee meeting in Groningen in January, which she is looking forward to hosting.

Marianne Chesak, Norway, informed that the regional reform is moving forward, merging 19 regions to 11, but the question on the role and mandate of the regions is still not decided. Chesak also informed that a new facility for shore side electricity has been opened in the port of Kristiansand, co-funded by Horizon 2020.

Preben Friis-Hauge, Denmark, informed that Cllr Otto Kjaer-Larsen unfortunately couldn't attend due to personal reasons. Like Norway, Denmark is in the middle of a regional reform. Regions will no longer work with business development. The regional and structural funds will be managed by state level, but the regions can still participate in some EU funded programmes. The government will probably during this month announce a reform on health care, which the regional level is responsible for today. The threat against regions has never been this concrete before in Denmark. Furthermore, the association of Danish regions and the government is deeply concerned that the maritime cross border programmes might disappear.

Peter Argyle, Scotland, informed that Brexit shadows everything they do. The important fisheries sectors are divided about Brexit, where the fishermen are in favor of Brexit and the processors against for obvious reasons. The farming sector is worried about what will happen when the agricultural funding programmes disappear from the UK due to Brexit. In Aberdeenshire, there are approx. 11 500 EU citizens working, with little information about what the future holds for them. Aberdeenshire Council recently declared its support for another Brexit referendum.

Aberdeenshire is still committed to keep working with the NSC and CPMR. Orkney Council is in the process of leaving the CPMR, and as we have Scottish members who have left CPMR before we need to discuss how we can encourage UK and Scottish regions to become members in the NSC and CPMR.

Argyle also informed that on the 21st September there was a Europarc Federation conference held in Aberdeenshire, adopting a Europarc Youth Manifesto to engage young people to be active in society. Argyle finished his report by encouraging the members to be a part of the manifesto.

Dag Hultefors, Sweden, informed that there has been a general election on national, regional and local level on the 9th September. There is still no national government, but negotiations are ongoing. The Sweden Democrats, a nationalist and far-right party, strengthened their position across the country on all three levels and are now the third biggest party on national level. The Social Democrats and the Moderate Conservatives, remain the two biggest parties even if they were weakened. On the regional level, more regions will be governed by the centre-right alliance. For example, in Halland the centre-right coalition managed to get a majority of the votes in the council.

Antje Grotheer, Germany, informed that Bremen will have elections on the same day as the European Parliament election in May 2019. Last week they arranged an international congress in Bremen where space and astronomy were discussed with members of parliament. EU Commissioner Bienkowska attended the meeting.

Lisbet Lefevere, Belgium, informed that they are currently appointing political representatives who are going to represent West-Vlaanderen in NSC and CPMR. There have been reforms in the council, for example reducing the number of Councillors to half but also a shift in some competences to municipal and provincial level and some to Flemish level. In December there will be a new council.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

11. North Seas energy cooperation

A presentation was given by Jan Molema and Frederik Deloof, Benelux Union Secretariat. The North Seas energy cooperation was formed in 2016 when Belgium, France, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and later also UK) signed a political declaration to strengthen cooperation and harmonisation on four axes to reduce costs in offshore wind and coordinate offshore grid development.

1. Maritime Spatial Planning
2. Grid development and regulation
3. Support schemes and financing
4. Standards and technical rules

In June 2019 there will be a ministerial meeting to approve the deliverables of the first North Sea energy cooperation work plan and to agree on the next phase.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

12. The future of European territorial cooperation

A presentation was given by Pekka Jounila, DG REGIO, European Commission, on the future of European territorial cooperation.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

13. Post 2020 North Sea Region strategy

A presentation was given by Magnus Engelbrektsson, Executive Secretary, on the process of developing a post 2020 North Sea Region strategy. The Strategy Task Force, which consists of the Secretariat, advisors and a representative from each country, had a first meeting on the 21st September. The group discussed the current strategy as well as the way forward and compiled a list of challenges and opportunities. The Secretariat is currently mapping and analyzing relevant strategies/plans of all the members regions as well as the responsibilities of all the members. This is to ensure that the strategy is in line and relevant for all members and will also be in line with the future Interreg North Sea Programme, CPMR strategic plan, Agenda 2030 and other relevant EU policies.

The Executive Committee meeting in January 2019 is planned to focus entirely on the strategy work. The Executive Committee will

- Define the scope and aim of the strategy
- Discuss the list of challenges and opportunities and make priorities
- Identify how to work with each of the priorities (lobby, exchange of information between members, develop projects, raise awareness...)

Clr Antje Grotheer stresses the importance of the new strategy being aligned with the future Interreg North Sea Programme, and Engelbrektsson adds that the Presidency will send a letter to the Interreg North Sea Monitoring Committee about how we can collaborate during this process.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

14. Statement of accounts by 12 September 2018

A presentation was given by Magnus Engelbrektsson, Executive Secretary, on the statement of accounts. Currently two members have not paid the member fee for 2018. One of them, Hauts-de-France, have not paid the fee for three years and the CPMR has a dialogue with them regarding their membership.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee takes note of the information.

15. Member fee model from 2020 – follow-up discussions from Kiel

Magnus Engelbrektsson gave a short summary from the Executive Committee meeting in Kiel. The national representatives from Norway and Denmark express their support for the proposed fee model. Cllr Antje Grotheer, national representative of Germany, supports the proposal but suggests that the increase should be done in two steps instead of one, ensuring that all members have time to adjust to the change. Cllr Andreas Lervik means that this has been on the table for some time, and if the members of the Executive Committee support the proposal in principle there is no reason for us to wait and prolong the process of implementing the model fee proposal.

Jon Halvard Eide asks the Secretariat to estimate what the member fees would need to be in order to cover the entire costs of hosting the Secretariat, as several politicians from his home regions have raised the question.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee adopts the proposed model for calculation of member fee for 2020.

16. Venue and time for the 28th Annual Business Meeting and North Sea Conference 2019

Magnus Engelbrektsson, Executive Secretary, informs that Region Västra Götaland has offered to host the Annual Business Meeting and North Sea Conference 2019. The newest member, West-Vlaanderen has offered to host the ABM in 2020.

Decisions and conclusions

The Executive Committee

1. Discussed its time preferences for the ABM and North Sea Conference 2019.
2. Gives a mandate to the Presidency to take the final decision on date for the ABM after consultation with the host region and the Interreg North Sea Secretariat.

17. Next Executive Committee meeting(s)

The next Executive Committee will take place in Groningen, 11th January 2019, with arrival and possible study visit and dinner on the 10th January. Southend-on-Sea has kindly invited the Executive Committee to the Spring meeting, and the Presidency has discussed two possible dates, 4-5th April or 11-12th April.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee adopts the proposed timetable for the next meetings, 11th January and 4-5th April 2019

18. Election of Chair of the Brexit Task Force

Cllr Nienke Homan informs that she does not have the time required to continue as Chair of the NSC Brexit Task Force due to commitments in her home region. The Executive Committee therefore needs to elect a new Chair. Cllr Michel Rijsberman, Flevoland, has expressed interest in becoming Chair of the Brexit Task Force. Rijsberman is also Vice President of the Committee of Regions Brexit Task Force.

Decisions and conclusions

1. The Executive Committee elects Rijsberman as Chair of the Brexit Task Force