



ETC programme for the North Sea region 2021-2027

2019-10-16

Director Lena Andersson Pench
(CC) Jean-Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit
(CC) Pekka Jounila, Coordinator for the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region

Dear Director Andersson Pench,

The North Sea Commission would like to express its **strong support for a continuation of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programme for the North Sea Region** in the next programming period (2021-2027), with sufficient resources to address common challenges and strengthen cooperation across internal and external borders of the EU.

Societies and regional authorities across the North Sea Region face similar challenges: Managing **global competition** through increased innovation and smart specialisation; Promote **sustainable transport** and invest in good infrastructure; Preventing and managing the short- and long-term effects of **climate change** on biodiversity, weather conditions, sea levels, sea and land temperatures, health, etc; **Engaging citizens**, in particular the young generation, in decision-making and public debate; Maintaining and increasing **social and territorial cohesion and general welfare** in urban as well as rural areas in a situation of urbanisation, migration and ageing populations.

The regional governments across the North Sea Region, represented in the North Sea Commission, are committed to work across national and administrative borders and sectors, to tackle these challenges, which will require a **high degree of transnational cooperation**.

There is a close link between the priorities of the regional governments as expressed in the Strategy of the North Sea Commission and the cooperation programme for the Interreg VB North Sea Region Programme. This fosters active participation of regional governments in the programme, directly or through co-financing of projects, and enables mobilisation of stakeholders, such as the jointly organised annual conference where common priorities are discussed and partnerships formed. This leads to more **targeted investments** and stronger **impact of cohesion policy in the North Sea Region** by securing regional ownership.

The North Sea Region programme has been **vital for boosting cooperation** in the region. For more than 20 years the programme has attracted and brought together actors from public administrations, knowledge institutions, business- and non-governmental organisations to help the region prosper through transnational cooperation. Only in this programming period over 68 partnerships have been formed, with more than 900 partners around the North Sea Region, **generating new knowledge and innovative solutions**. The programme is also expected to reach full allocation of funding by the end

of the year. Its **positive effects and added value** for a stable and sustainable development of the North Sea itself and of the North Sea macro-region in general are clear.

The programme also serves as an **important framework for cooperation with non-EU countries**, as demonstrated by the participation of Norway. With the United Kingdom (UK), an important partner for the North Sea Cooperation, leaving the EU, it is of utmost importance to maintain a dedicated programme for the North Sea Region. With sufficient resources, the programme would help to ensure a **continued smooth cooperation between the regions in the EU, UK and Norway** and minimise the damaging effects of Brexit on the regions with the most exchange with the UK today.

The North Sea Region brings important added value to sustainable development, innovation and competitiveness in Europe and the Interreg North Sea Region programme is a key factor for strengthening cohesion and increasing collaboration in this region. The North Sea Commission therefore calls on the European Commission and the North Sea member states to maintain the programme in the next funding period.

The North Sea Commission welcomes continued dialogue with the European Commission and the participating states on the setting-up of the programme, aligning the priorities of the North Sea Commission Strategy for 2030, which is currently being developed, with the objectives of the future ETC programme.

Yours Sincerely,



Kerstin Brunnström,
President of the North Sea Commission

The CPMR North Sea Commission

The CPMR North Sea Commission represents 32 regional authorities in Denmark, England, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland and Sweden. We have been working since 1989 to create partnerships between our members and to promote the interests of the North Sea Region in Europe, specifically in the fields of marine resources, accessibility and sustainable transport, energy and climate change and prosperous and sustainable communities. We are part of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions, a leading regional interest organisation and think tank with 160 member regions across Europe.