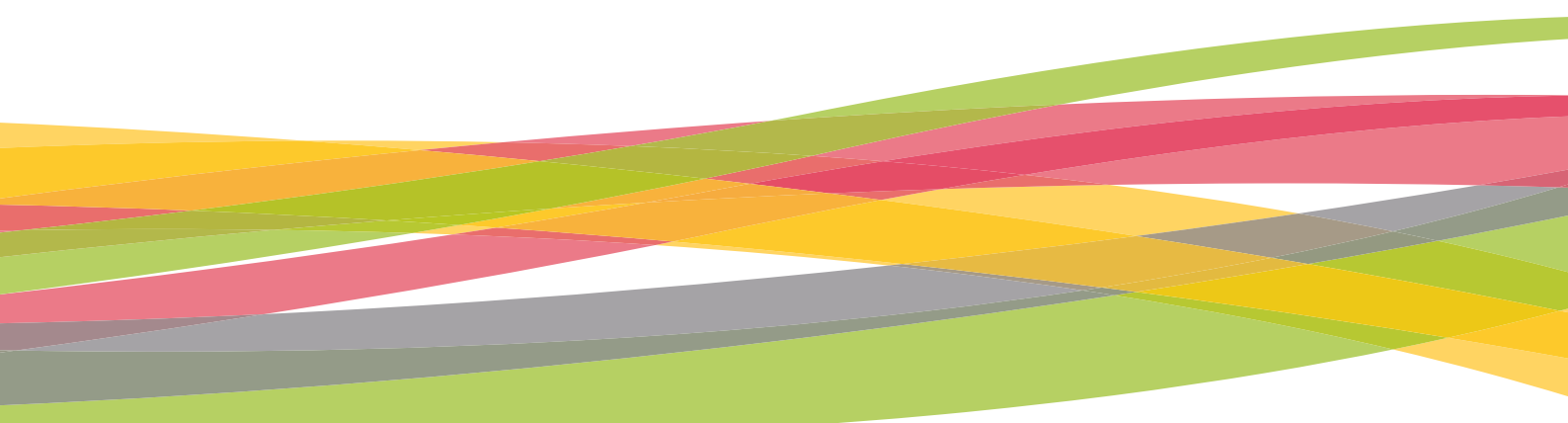




Overview of strategy and priorities

Since the start of the first North Sea Region Programme, cooperation in the region has matured and intensified. This has meant that with each programme period it has been possible to raise ambitions for the impact and durability of the projects funded, and the new North Sea Region Programme continues this progression in 2014-2020.

Thematically, the programme builds on positions of strength, developing on proven successes and complementing these with new themes based on the current analysis.





Priority 1: Thinking Growth: Supporting growth in North Sea Region economies

Strengthening research, technological development and innovation

There is a recognised need to:

- + Strengthen the knowledge economy to generate growth and jobs especially in SMEs
- + Improve the commercial take-up of research results
- + Improve framework conditions for new and expanding companies

- + Ensure that all parts of the region actively develop their innovation potential based on their own positions of strength
- + Stimulate innovation in public service delivery
- + Ensure that public administrations where possible use public investments as a driver for innovation

The success of existing measures on these themes varies widely. Transnational cooperation will allow an exchange on why the best innovation measures succeed and how these lessons can be transferred. Transnational cooperation should also internationalize regional innovation activities to ensure that businesses across the NSR can access the best innovation partners in their field.

Develop new or improved knowledge partnerships between businesses, knowledge institutions, public administrations and end users with a view to long-term cooperation (post project) on developing products and services.
Enhance regional innovation support capacity to in-

crease long-term innovation levels and support smart specialization strategies.
Stimulate the public sector to generate innovation demand and innovative solutions for improving public service delivery.



Priority 2: Eco-innovation: Stimulating the green economy

Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency

The countries of the North Sea Region have amongst the highest resource consumption levels in the world with correspondingly high carbon emissions. The aim of this objective is to identify measures to improve the environmental footprint of the NSR economy and wider society including carbon and resource use. For example, many businesses already focus on reducing packaging and try to use local,

renewable and biodegradable materials. The same actions reduce carbon and resource use. The same dual benefit can be obtained from modifying the way we use water, raw materials, recycling of heat and energy, energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy sources etc.

The NSR is a leader in developing and piloting new approaches in these fields and this priority will build on this strength.

Activities under this objective will not just focus on technologies but can also address working practices and lifestyle changes where these can provide significant carbon reduction.

Promote the development and adoption of products, services and processes to accelerate greening of the North Sea Region economy.

Stimulate the adoption of new products, services and processes to reduce the environmental footprint of regions around the North Sea



Priority 3: Sustainable North Sea Region: Protecting against climate change and preserving the environment

Protecting against climate change and preserving the environment

With so many low-lying areas, the greatest climate change impact for the North Sea Region will be the increased risk of severe flooding. There is a need to bolster flood defences but also to accept the limits of conventional solutions and take a lead on developing adaptation techniques that can prevent disasters and limit the impact of unavoidable events. Climate change also has many other effects beyond flooding from local drought and outbreaks of new plant and animal diseases to species invasions and breakdown of industrial cooling systems.

Action under this priority should therefore monitor and predict such changes in all sectors and ensure that es-

sential preventative actions are taken so that the climate change threat can be properly managed in the NSR. This should include the spread of effective solutions from existing centres of expertise, and action to reduce barriers to initiating adaptation projects (cost, public resistance etc.). The NSR environment has been heavily affected by human activity. Habitat and biodiversity loss are continuing.

There is a need to:

- + Protect plant and animal species
- + Reduce pollutants such as TBTs and PCBs in the marine

environment, copper and other heavy metals, excessive nitrogen and phosphorus, particulate air pollution, antibiotic residues and hydrocarbons

- + Develop green spaces, corridors and other green infrastructure esp. in urban areas

Promote work on challenges like water quality, biodiversity loss and soil degradation so that action on major environmental issues like climate change also effectively integrates other ecosystem services and ensures the environmental quality of areas set aside for e.g. floodwater retention

Demonstrate new and/or improved methods for improving the climate resilience of target sites.

Develop new methods for the long-term sustainable management of North Sea ecosystems.



Priority 4: Promoting green transport and mobility

Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures

In the North Sea Region transport sector there is a recognized need to:

- + Reduce Green House Gases to tackle climate change
- + Reduce pollution to improve air quality and public health
- + Reduce congestion to maintain competitiveness and free flow of goods and people

As an important maritime transport hub, the NSR should include shipping in these actions.

The programme will tackle these issues through cooperation on:

- + Promoting effective, more sustainable freight and logistics systems including actions on shipping, fuels, technologies, harbours, hubs and new IT solutions

- + Encouraging concrete actions that move freight off the roads to more environmentally friendly solutions
- + Promoting environmentally friendly passenger transport solutions
- + Encouraging the use of zero or low carbon fuels in the transport sector

Develop demonstrations of innovative and/or improved transport and logistics solutions with potential to move large volumes of freight away from long-distance road transportation

Stimulate the take-up and application of green transport solutions for regional freight and personal transport

VB projects will be:

Based on the shared or complementary needs of all partners

Projects should be built around a clearly defined and agreed set of needs with a clear definition of the requirements and skills that each partner brings into the partnership. Projects allow all participating regions to pool the resources used on their particular challenges – and completing these with new themes based on the current analysis of the programme area.

Reliant on joint implementation

The value of cooperation lies in bringing in knowledge and new perspectives from other partners. Results should be based on joint action.

Focused on delivering progress on core programme goals

Every programme objective has a clear output and a related programme target. These targets give a clear direction for all activities and the results expected, but leave freedom for projects to define their precise activities based on partner needs and the evolving situation in the programme area.

Implementing EU policy

Projects should give practical shape to European policy by developing synergies with existing national and regional initiatives and also integrating the outputs of relevant projects under other Interreg programmes and all other funding programmes.

Innovative

Some projects work directly with “innovation” by supporting the development of new products and services for the market. All projects are expected to be ‘innovative’ by rethinking standard approaches and using the skills, knowledge and experience available in the partnership to develop completely new approaches.

Based on demonstrating and proving what is possible

Research is an important part of the programme, but it is important to stress that the programme focus is on demonstrating practical developments for the North Sea Region and working through the barriers to making these developments a reality. Projects must therefore focus on demonstrating and testing new ideas.

Limited and specific in the changes they wish to generate

Projects should carefully define the need they will address, even where this means that other important issues must be left out.

Inspiring national and regional policy and practices

Programme funding is limited, but its ambition is to positively influence the whole programme area. This requires that the positive effects of results are not limited to the project partnership, but are communicated to the most important stakeholders in order to secure a durable legacy after the end of the project.