



North Sea Region Programme 2016

Citizen Summary

Following the Programme's approval in August 2015, the second year of programme implementation saw a stream of activities that generated significant interest amongst applicants, Lead Beneficiaries, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders.

Calls and allocation of funds: Two calls for applications – call 2 and call 3 - were launched during 2016. Call 2 was open 15 January – 14 March 2016 for Expressions of Interest (Eols) as well as Full Applications. After processing of call 2 applications, the Steering Committee approved 11 Full Applications and 19 Expressions of Interest at its second meeting in Copenhagen in September.

The Programme operates with 4 inter-linked priority axes:

1. Thinking Growth: Supporting growth in the North Sea Region economies.
2. Eco-Innovation: Stimulating the green economy.
3. Sustainable North Sea Region: Protecting against climate change and preserving the environment.
4. Promoting green transport and mobility.

Table 1 shows the distribution of applications and allocation of funds during 2016:

Priority	Applications received	Applications approved	Grants 2016 (ERDF)
1	22 Eols 6 Full Applications	10 Eols 4 Full Applications	34 % (8.8 million €, 4 projects)
2	8 Eols 6 Full Applications	2 Eols 1 Full Application	8 % (2.1 million €, 1 project)
3	9 Eols 9 Full Applications	4 Eols 5 Full Applications	49 % (12.7 million €, 5 projects)
4	7 Eols 4 Full Applications	3 Eols 1 Full Application	9 % (2.2 million €, 1 project)
Total	46 Eols 25 Full Applications	19 Eols 11 Full Applications	100 % (25.8 million €, 11 projects)

Table 1. Call 2 in key figures

Call 3 was open 14 November 2016 - 1 February 2017, and was thus still open by the end of 2016. This call was exclusively for Full Applications based on approved Expressions of Interest.

By the end of 2016, 24 projects in total had been approved; however, due to protracted negotiations, contracting was delayed and consequently no project had reached the deadline for their first progress report by the end of the year. Evaluating indicators and results will thus only be possible from 2017.



Events: In June, the North Sea Conference took place at LEGO's premises in Billund, Denmark, under the theme "Building Blocks", attracting over 350 delegates. A transnational Interwork event was organised in November, focusing on call 3 and 4. In addition, five First Level Control seminars, a Steering Committee meeting and two Monitoring Committee meetings were conducted.

Streamlining efforts: The Programme's Online Monitoring System (OMS) was further developed and improved. Although it is not yet fully functional, the OMS is already bringing benefits in terms of enhanced efficiency for all system users - applicants, on-going projects and Joint Secretariat staff. The OMS improvements and other simplification efforts were well received by stakeholders.

Programme evaluation: An evaluation plan was approved by the Monitoring Committee, with impact evaluation and the two-step application process in focus. The evaluation itself will be executed in 2017, following a tender process.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

A total of 44 expressions of interest and 24 Full Applications were approved by the Steering Committee by the end of 2016. Please see table 2 for details.

Applications	Received	Approved	Approval rate
Expressions of interest	96	44	46%
Full Applications	53	24	45%

Table 2: Key figures for Call 1 and 2 combined

In terms of visibility, the Programme opted for the joint branding of Interreg programmes and adopted a new logo according to a harmonised design. A new website was launched in 2015 and the Programme's social media presence was expanded. Targeted e-guidance videos and other guidance materials were made available to applicants. In addition, projects are now supported in communicating their results through dedicated webspaces – mini-websites integrated into the main Programme website. A large number of training seminars and other events for key stakeholders were organised on a regular basis throughout the programme period.

Overall, the Programme has experienced a satisfactory level of interest from our key stakeholders so far. The Programme has become better supported by streamlined systems for project applications, reporting, and communication. As this is further strengthened, the engagement is set to grow further.



ANNEX:

OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(3)(A) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013) Key information on the implementation of the cooperation programme for the year concerned, including on financial instruments, with relation to the financial and indicator data.

The next MC meeting (3) took place in Malmö from the 26-27 October 2016. A few highlights: Reorganisation of the JS due to one member of staff being on maternity leave and one on sick leave, discussion of a proposal for apportionment of liabilities, decommitment and a reassurance package, the updated TA budget, follow-up status of the Article 123 Description, update on IVB programme closure, Annual Review of Communication Strategy, update on development of the OMS, changes to Fact Sheets and an update on the evaluation plan with a decision that the ESG could approve the Terms of Reference and initiate procurement. The MC decided that Call 4 should open with a preparation phase from Monday 14 November 2016 and move to the submission phase on 30 June, with a deadline of 28 August 2017. The call-specific guidance will be discussed and approved at MC 4. Call 5 will be open Friday 29 December 2017 – Monday 5 March 2018. Finally, Norway informed the committee that they might be forced to cut their budget for Interreg programmes. This will potentially take place from 2017 when the total Norwegian budget for all Interreg programmes might be cut by 3,6 mil EUR. The cut for the North Sea Region Programme in 2017 would amount to 211,000 EUR. There was still uncertainty as to what the budget cuts would look like in the future.

Additionally, the implementation year of 2016 brought many exciting events and activities. The JS participated in a number of kick-off meetings for both Call 1 and Call 2 projects. Call 3 was launched on 14 November 2016 and the Programme hosted a project development seminar (Interwork event) on 15-16 November in Gothenburg. In parallel, we organised and/or participated in 4 First Level Control Seminars one each in Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany. Furthermore, we hosted the Annual North Sea Conference, finalised the contracting process for most Call 1 projects and brought on board two new staff members.

There is no information to report as yet on delivered indicator achievements for the specific objectives; though by the end of 2016 23 projects had been approved, no progress reports had been submitted to the Programme. Moreover, there are no evaluation results yet as the first evaluations that were supposed to be launched in 2016 have been shifted to 2017.

The first year and a half of implementation has been reasonably positive. Interest in the two calls was quite high and the applications were, in most cases, relevant and of reasonably high quality (other than the result indicator discussed above). There has also been positive feedback about the programme's simplification efforts and its new Online Monitoring System. The new programme website and its direct links with social media



platforms also raised a lot of interest. Work is well under way on the elements still needed to complete implementation arrangements. Interest in the third call seems good and although it is not possible to report many figures as yet, the JS assesses that the Programme has made good first steps towards achieving its main targets.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS Overview of the implementation: Priority 1:

PRIORITY 1: By the end of 2016 after Calls 1 and 2, 8 projects were approved in Priority 1 with a total of € 15.972.286 in ERDF and €1.061.546 in Norwegian funding. This leaves € 30.858.825 in ERDF and € 1.661.858 in Norwegian funding for future projects.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS Overview of the implementation: Priority 3

PRIORITY 3: By the end of 2016, ten projects were approved in Priority 3 with a total of €26.098.688 in ERDF and Norwegian funding. This leaves €11.149.875 in ERDF and €4.009.554 in Norwegian funding for future projects.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS Overview of the implementation:

PRIORITY 1

Since the start of the VB Interreg Programme Priority 1 has approved 8 projects within the 3 Specific Objectives, which cover a variety of different topic/theme areas. The following provides an overview of the projects, their stages of implementation and expected results:

REFRAME: 15 beneficiaries (public and private) from 5 NSR countries (NL, BE, DE, DK, SE) looking to establish a Regional Food Frame (RFF) as an effective set of measures to scale up and accommodate urban food demands and regional supplies. The project was officially launched in 2016 with their kick off meeting was in April 2016 and since then they have been busy with partner meetings and initial project activities.

Create Converge: 9 beneficiaries (public and private) from 5 NSR countries (UK, DE, NL, SE, DK) focusing on getting visualisation and games tech to work together and work with sectors from architecture to science. It brings together partners in five countries of the North Sea Region and taps into their wider networks to deliver on the promise of converging creative technologies (CCTs). The project was launched in 2016 with a delayed start in the contracting process that took them to almost the end of the year. Main activities will be up and running in 2017.



Lean Landings: 27 beneficiaries (public and private) from 6 NSR countries (DK,NL,SE, DE, NO, UK) supporting innovative and value-creating internationalisation efforts and partnerships among SMEs. Launched in 2016 with a delayed start in the contracting process - initial activities have started.

SHINE: 8 beneficiaries (public) from 3 NSR countries (BE, UK, NL) working with integrated business models for the healthcare economy based on the regions' smart specialisation strategy. Launched in 2016 -kick off meeting in January 2016.

In For Care: 16 beneficiaries (public and private) from 6 NSR countries (NL, NO, SE, BE, DK, UK) focusing on developing innovation in service delivery by optimizing informal and formal health care networks. Approved in September 2016 - kick off meeting to take place in February 2017 in Grinstead, NO.

INN2Power: 11 beneficiaries (public and private) from 5 NSR countries (NL, BE, UK, DK, DE) NSR regional clusters and other supporting organisations in the Offshore Wind Industry working closely together on the shared goal of bringing their SMEs across the borders to engage them in innovative business collaboration. Approved in September 2016 and kick off meeting took place in December 2016 in Oostende, BE.

Like! 10 beneficiaries (public) from 5 NSR countries (NL, DE, BE, UK, DK) creating a Local Digital Innovation Culture across the NSR, giving authorities & practitioners new skills and knowledge to deliver innovative services, to develop new ways to engage with communities, and to build more inclusive services. Approved in September 2016 and kick off meeting took place in December 2016 in Groningen, NL.

Northern Connections: 21 beneficiaries (public and private) from all 7 NSR countries (DK, UK, NO, NL, BE, SE, DE) Testing the use of domestic innovation support measures transnationally and address barriers to competition which exist between clusters and regions. Approved in September 2016 and kick off meeting took place in December 2016 in Aarhus, DK.



All projects are up and running and though no reports have been received yet the expectation that the projects will contribute to reaching programme goals are positive. There is a strong focus on strengthening capacity of both knowledge partnerships and authorities/practitioners in relation to innovation in enterprises and innovation in public service delivery. Here are some examples of expected project results from approved projects, which we hope will contribute to this increased capacity:

- Increased turnover and/or export and/or employment in participating SMEs via internationalisation activities by 20% (Lean Landings)
- Delivered concrete marketable new products, services or processes - target of 160 (Lean Landings)
- Transnational networking in healthcare innovation - The number of follow-up contacts between businesses (SMEs) and/or research partners and/or innovation centres resulting from the mini trade missions and embedded in the strategic network established by the project partners. Target of 15 (SHINE)
- NSR Competitiveness - Increase on marginal turnover of SMEs involved in project by 20% (Create Converge)
- Converging Creative Technologies Competitiveness - Increase in NSR CCT jobs for SMEs involved in the project by 20% (Create Converge)
- Enterprises in partner regions collaborating with innovation partners outside their own country – target of a 10% increase. (Northern Connections)
- Deliver the next generation of smart services (with the use of data, digitization, co-design) to support increased customer value across the NSR: target – 10% increase in customer satisfaction of end users per new, redesigned or digitized service (Like!)



PRIORITY 2

Dual Ports aims to decarbonise regional entrepreneurial ports resources through a shared eco-innovation port programme that minimises their environmental footprint. It is a project whose partnership consists of 10 public authorities and companies from five North Sea Region countries – Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and the UK. Together they are exploring how to enhance ports' energy efficiency and performance, facilitating low carbonisation at reduced cost, with added value in terms of knowledge and investment. The partners held their kick-off meeting in Præstø, Denmark in November 2016. Since then they have moved quickly to get pilots started.

SCALE-UP (Supporting Clean-tech innovators in Accessing Large Enterprises through Unlocking Procurement) has been hard at developing, implementing and promoting clean tech innovators to establish 5 clusters across the North Sea Region. Paving the way for new transnational business development services and take up of 25 green products to be adopted by the market. The SCALE-UP partnership consists of 8 public and private partners from the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, and the UK. Among other activities, they ran workshops and seminars promoting 50 tailored "Meet the Buyer" events in which 50 large technology buyers meets up to 250 relevant clean tech innovators with high potential of commercial use, providing specialized technical skills training to innovators and setting up a voucher scheme that reduce barriers for international business development.

COBEN, which stands for 'Delivering Community Benefits of Civic Energy', is a project whose partnership consists of 9 public authorities and institutions of higher learning from 6 North Sea Region countries – Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and the UK. Together they are exploring how to improve climate and civic energy uptake. This is mainly being done by facilitating transnational cooperation on local energy promotion within a collaborative civic energy network. The partners held their kick-off meeting Osnabrück, Germany in December 2016. Since then they have moved quickly to get pilots started.



The results these three projects are aiming to achieve during their life time are:

- Cost reduction by concretely implementing low carbon solutions by 20% (Dual Ports)
- Carbon reduction by piloting and / or adopting tangible low carbon products and green technologies that improve utilities in ports by 10% (Dual Ports)
- Take-up of 25 green products to be adopted by the market within eco-innovation across the North Sea Region (SCALE-UP)
- 20% civic energy uptake – percentage of the North Sea Region area served by civic energy due to the adoption of one of the COBEN Civic Energy Business Models by 2030
- Community CO2 reductions – target is 300; Number of NSR communities exhibiting reduction in CO2 emissions up against the 2016 values due to adoption of COBEN's climate-energy models by the year 2030.



PRIORITY 3

Under Priority 3 10 projects has been approved since the start of the VB Interreg Programme, within the priority's two specific objectives on adaption to climate change and on long-term sustainable management of natural resources in the programme area. The 10 projects cover a variety of different topics and theme areas. The following provides an overview of the projects, there stages of implementation and expected results:

NorthSEE - A North Sea Perspective on Shipping, Energy and Environment Aspects in Maritime Spatial Planning - MSP (Call 1): The NorthSEE project aims at achieving greater coherence in MSP across the NSR for three transnational topics: environmental aspects, shipping routes and energy infrastructure. Planners compare existing national MSP plans and approaches. Improved information basis allows planners to identify current and future synergies and mismatches of national planning solutions and approaches as well as to come to planning solutions for selected sites with incompatibilities. NorthSEE findings will be

- synthesised in reports and maps to inform national MSP processes
- recommendations on an transnational MSP coordination processes in the NSR
- the basis for an ongoing transnational MSP dialogue beyond the project's lifetime.

The partners are 8 MSP authorities representing 6 countries (BE, NL, DE, SE, NO, UK Scotland) and 5 research institutions (DE, NL, NO, SE, DK) with strong expertise in marine environment, maritime matters and spatial planning. Partners are all public institutions.

BwN - Building with Nature (Call1): The overall objective of the BwN project is to make coasts, estuaries and catchments of the NSR more adaptable and resilient to the effects of climate change. BwN will demonstrate BwN based climate change adaptation solutions at 7 coastal target sites in NL, D, DK, SE (sand nourishment at North Sea Coasts and Wadden Sea barrier islands) and at 6 catchment scale sites in B, NL, SE, UK (e.g. river restoration). The partnership is consisting of 15 partners from all countries of the programme area and the International Common Wadden Sea Secretariat.



FAIR - Flood infrastructure Asset management and Investment in Renovation, adaptation and maintenance (Call 1): The overall objective of the FAIR project is to reduce flood risk across the NSR by demonstrating climate change adaptation solutions to improve the performance of flood protection infrastructure. FAIR demonstrates improved approaches for cost-effective upgrading and maintenance, optimising investments across national-system-asset levels, as well as applying adaptive, innovative technical designs. The partnership consists of 12 partners from all countries of the programme area.

TOPSOIL - Top soil and water - The climate challenge in the near subsurface (Call 1): The project has identified five shared climate adaptation challenges related to the top soil and groundwater - such as groundwater flooding in towns and agricultural areas, saltwater intrusion into freshwater reserves, the need for a groundwater buffer to store excess rain water for later use and better management of soil conditions, to strengthen the resilience to extreme rain events and improve water quality. The project will i.a. improve protection against groundwater flooding and groundwater storage for irrigation and drinking for water inland and coastal areas. There is 24 partners in the Topsoil project from 5 countries (DE, NL, BE, UK, DE).

WaterCoG - Water Co-Governance for sustainable ecosystems (Call 1): The project will demonstrate through the adoption of new participatory, ecosystem service based approaches that implementation and integration of different water management frameworks can be achieved at the same time as providing additional social, economic and environmental benefits not currently being realised. The project aims for a change in working practice that will improve the integration between top-down implementation of European and national water directives and bottom-up, participatory developed solutions for improving the water quality and sustainable management strategies of NSR ecosystems. The partnership consist of 9 partners from 5 countries (UK, DK, SE, DE, NL).

BEGIN - Blue Green Infrastructure through Social Innovation Call 2): Blue and Green Infrastructure (BGI) supports existing grey infrastructure in cities to cope with extreme weather events and improves urban liveability. The BEGIN project helps cities to overcome implementation barriers for BGI's through Social Innovation (SI) that empowers multiple stakeholders to contribute to the design, construction and maintenance of BGIs. SI requires a new way of working for cities and valuation of multiple benefits together with communities. The pilots of the project will demonstrate how BGI and SI can generate effective climate change adaptation solutions that are financially feasible and can be incorporated in urban planning approaches. The partners are mainly 16 cities and research institutions from 6 countries in the programme area (UK, SE, DE, NL, BE, NO).



FRAMES - Flood Resilient Areas by Multi-layered Safety (Call 2): The FRAMES project addresses that on-going climate change results in increasing sea levels and extreme rainfall patterns for areas and communities in the North Sea Region. The project wants to combine resilience measures in the Multi-Layer Safety (MLS) concept. The MLS concept is a strategy that integrates measures for: prevention, mitigation via spatial planning and emergency response. Through MLS, institutional and sectorial barriers are lifted and the stakeholders jointly apply the most effective combination of solutions to realize sustainable strategies and improve the capacity of authorities and society to cope with flooding. There is 16 partners from 5 countries in the programme area (UK, DK, DE, BE, NL) participating in the FRAMES project.

NuReDrain - Nutrients Removal and Recovery from Drainage Water (Call 2): The North Sea region is recognized as an intensive farming area and nutrient inputs from land have resulted in eutrophication in rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal zones. The NuReDrain project aims at developing a technology for trapping phosphorus and nitrogen in agricultural waste streams such as drainage discharges and greenhouse effluents. The effectiveness of phosphorus and nitrogen removal of many of these technologies has been proven on lab- and small pilot scale. The project wants to stimulate joint development of cost-effective filter technologies, targeting nutrients removal for different situations and regions, reuse the recovered P for agricultural purposes and eventually work out implementation guidelines for the North Sea Region. The partnership consists of 11 partners from 3 countries (BE, DE, DK) in the programme area.

PARTRIDGE - Protecting the Area's Resources Through Researched Innovative Demonstration of Good Examples (Call 2): The overall project objective is to bring about a change in behaviours and working practices, in particular in regards to the uptake of agri-environment schemes, for the long-term sustainable management of farmland ecosystems. The project will show-case best practice models at 10 farmland demonstration sites in four NSR nations to show how new management solutions can improve biodiversity and ecosystem services by up 30% in four years, and how these can be transferred across all regions of the NSR and the EU. The project will work and interact with a wide range of rural key stakeholders, build capacity among all regional and national environment agencies of the NSR, and promote information exchange between them. The partnership is containing 11 partners from 4 countries (UK, DE, NL, BE) in the programme area.



Sullied Sediments - Sediment Assessment and Clean Up Pilots in Inland Waterways in the North Sea Region (Call 2): This project delivers better assessment, better treatment and better prevention of contamination of sediments in pilot NSR waterways by the new EU 'Watch List' (WL) chemicals, emerging drugs, and nutrients, which are not subject to EU monitoring laws until 2020, but are building up in sediments in these waterways. The project will provide the tools for better risk assessment of sediments and reduce economic costs, pilot innovative spore technology to remove selected WL chemicals at waste-water treatment plants and will also promote future sediment re-use. The project will target citizen behavior to reduce the levels of specific WL chemicals arriving at WWTPs in pilot catchments. The partnership contains 13 partners from 4 countries (UK, DE, NL, BE) in the programme area.

All 10 projects under Priority 3 are up and running and though the no reports have yet been received, it is the expectation that the projects will contribute positively to reaching programme goals. There is a strong focus on strengthening capacity of both knowledge partnerships and authorities/ practitioners, develop and adapt solutions for strengthening the resilience to climate change and provide strategies as well as solutions for long-term sustainable management of the environment and shared natural resources. Here are some examples of expected project results from approved projects, which we hope will contribute to this increased capacity:

- Avoidance of stranded investments for application of wind farms in designated shipping routes, and of sunk costs for development of unsuitable environmental areas: 60.000.000 Euro (NorthSEE)
- New coastline plans using shared insights, designs and demonstrations of the effectiveness of the methods of Sand Nourishments, based on Building with Nature principles: 700 Km of coastline (BwN)
- Increase in the lifespan of targeted flood protection infrastructure: 5 % increase (FAIR)
- Water quantity: Improvement of buffer capacity by 20% (Topsoil)
- Increased return on public investment by adopting participatory/co-governance approaches to management of NSR ecosystems: 20 Percentage increase (Water Co-Governance)
- Reduced probability of floods in cities from extreme rainfall: 30 % (Begin)



- Achieve an improved level of community resilience against the impact of flooding in at-risk communities: 432 stakeholders and 2.800 inhabitants have an increased level of self-efficacy and resilience in case of flooding through empowerment of inhabitants and sustainable coalitions. (FRAMES)
- 70% Phosphorus and 50% Nitrogen removal in demonstration sites (NuReDrain)
- Farmland ecosystems improved: 30% increase among measured bio-indicators and ecosystem service indicators at 10 demonstration sites in comparison to reference sites (Partridge)

Reduced level of selected watch list chemicals in outflow from waste-water sites piloting spore technology: 25% reduction of selected toxic watch list chemicals from treated waste-water entering the target watercourses in 2019 compared to baseline levels determined at the project start (Sullied Sediments)



PRIORITY 4

HyTrEc2, which stands for 'Hydrogen Transport Economy in the North Sea Region 2', is a project whose partnership consists of 8 public authorities and institutions of higher learning from four North Sea Region countries – the U.K, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. Together they are exploring how to improve conditions for hydrogen transport across the North Sea Region. It is intended that hydrogen transport can become an alternative to oil based fuels through increased testing of prototype fuel cell, range extended and dual fuel vehicles, the production and storage of cheaper green hydrogen and the development of a more efficient supply chain linked to training. The partners held their kick-off meeting first in 2017. More information will be available within the next annual report.

SEEV4-City, which stands for '**S**mart, clean **E**nergy and **E**lectric **V**ehicles **4** the **C**ity', is a project whose partnership consists of 11 public authorities, institutions of higher learning, and companies from five North Sea Region countries – Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the UK. Together they are exploring how to exploit the use of ICT to structure the energy system in such a way that electric vehicles can be charged by locally produced renewable energy. The partners held their kick-off meeting in Amsterdam in September 2016. Since then they have moved quickly to get pilots started.

SHARE-North (Shared Mobility Solutions for a Liveable and Low-Carbon North Sea Region) has been hard at work developing, implementing, promoting and assessing car sharing, bike sharing, ride sharing and other forms of shared mobility in urban and rural areas and employment clusters in the North Sea Region. The SHARE-North partnership consists of nine public and private partners from Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands, and the UK. Among other activities, they ran workshops and seminars promoting the benefits of car- and bike-sharing, implemented carpooling and car-sharing programmes, and organised webinars about vehicle sharing.

The results these projects are aiming to achieve during their life time are:

- Reduction of local and global transport-related emissions - 13458 tonnes of CO2 saved during project lifecycle (SHARE-North)
- Cars removed from public streets through car-sharing - 4000 cars replaced by shared vehicles (SHARE-North)
- Increase of real zero emission kilometres in the SEEV4-City Operational Pilots - 150 tons CO2 emissions avoided annually (SEEV4-City)
- Increase in energy autonomy in SEEV4-City sites - 25% (SEEV4-City)
- Potentially avoided grid related investments - 100,000,000 EUR in 10 years (SEEV4-City)