

67th NSC Executive Committee Meeting, 4th March 2015 Bergen, NO

NSC Executive Committee members present

President	Tom-Christer Nilsen
Vice-president	John Lamb
Vice-president	Kerstin Brunnström
Danish representative	Preben Friis-Hauge
Dutch representative	Not present
English representative	See vice-president
French representative	Not present
German representative	Not present
Norwegian representative	Thore Westermoen
Scottish representative	Martin Kitts-Hayes
Swedish representative	Dag Hultefors

North Sea Commission Secretariat

Executive secretary	Kate Clarke
Assistant executive secretary	Camilla Løvaas Stavnes Einar Stokka

NSC Chairs/Vice-chairs of Thematic groups present

Culture and tourism	Not present
Economic Development	Ellen Solheim
Marine resources	Anders Fasth
Energy and climate change	Jimmy Gray
Transport	Preben Friis-Hauge

NSC thematic groups advisors present

Culture and tourism	Geir Sør-Reime
Economic development	Simon Tijsma
Marine resources	Camilla Løvaas Stavnes
Energy and climate change	Not present
Transport	Jon Halvard Eide

Supporting officers and observers present:

Elmer Koole, Groningen

Martin Brebner, Aberdeenshire

Magnus Engelbrektsson, Västra Götaland
Eileen von Elsner, Schleswig-Holstein
Kia Sofie Abildtrup, South Denmark
Merete Mikkelsen, West Norway Brussels Office
Gordon Summers, Highlands
Lindha Feldin, Region Halland

Invited guests:

Nelson Rojas, HOG Energi
Ingvild Stub, Junior Minister EU/EEA affairs
Maria Martens, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Helge Drange, University of Bergen/Bjerknessenteret
Christian Byrith, Interreg

Actions (decided by ExCom)

Item	Action	Responsible	Deadline
2	Organizing a network meeting in conjunction with the ExCom Brussels meeting	NSC Secretariat	October meeting
5	NSC Statement on energy union	ECCG/NSC Secretariat	asap
5	Presentation for ExCom members on meshed grid and energy union	ECCG/NSC Secretariat	asap
5	Communication strategy for North Sea grid	ECCG	asap
5	Overview of projects on alternative fuel for public project in member regions	TG	June
5	Political statement maritime training	MRG	June
6	Revision NSR 2020 phase 1(according to timeline)	NSC Secretariat	June
9	Facilitate for political workshops during North Sea Conference in Assen	NSC Secretariat	June
11	Send North Sea grid statement to relevant ministries, TSOs and European institutions	NSC Secretariat	asap
5	Approach relevant ministries about North Sea grid/energy union	ExCom members	Asap, after receiving presentation
14	Paper on the rationale behind rising membership fees	NSC Secretariat	June

Agenda 67th NSC Executive Committee meeting	
FORMALITIES	
	Welcome by President Tom-Christer Nilsen
1	Approval of the agenda
2	Approval of the minutes
3	Apologies
STRATEGIC ISSUES	
4	NSR 2020 action plan
5	Thematic group work plans, thematic group activity reports will also be covered under this point
6	Roadmap for revision of North Sea Region 2020
7	Status for Preparatory Action - report from Edinburgh event
8	European Maritime Day 2015, Piraeus, Greece
9	North Sea Conference 2015
10	NSC statement CTG
11	NSC statement ECCG
12	External presentations
ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES	
13	How to involve member regions' Brussels representation offices in NSC work
14	Proposal for new model for NSC Secretariat
15	Election of vice-chair of the NSC Marine Resources Group
16	Election of vice-chair of the NSC Transport Group
17	Election of vice-chair of the Culture and Tourism Group – 2 positions
18	Election of vice-chair of the Economic Development Group
FINANCES	
19	Accounts 2014
20	Statement of accounts as per February 2015
21	Proposal for Budget 2016
REPORTS	
22	Report from the Interreg VB North Sea Region Programme
23	Thematic Groups' activity reports
24	Reports from national representatives
25	Activity report from the NSC Secretariat - written
26	Report from the CPMR – written
AOB	
27	Meeting plan 2015
28	Any other business

Minutes

NSC President Tom-Christer Nilsen welcomed everyone to the meeting.

FORMALITIES

1) Approval of the agenda

Decisions and conclusions:

The Executive Committee approved the agenda

2) Approval of the minutes

Decisions and conclusions:

The Executive Committee approved the minutes with an amended explicit reference to the decision of organizing a network meeting in conjunction with the ExCom Brussels meeting with (political) stakeholders of the NS region for example the members of the CoR and EP Intergroups.

3) Apologies

Decisions and conclusions:

The Executive Secretary presented the list of apologies.

The ExCom meeting assembled a quorum.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

4) NSC Action plan

The five thematic groups had been asked to revise their section of the action plan. It is possible for them to continue the activities which they worked on the previous year or to take up new activities, as long as they are in line with the NSR2020 strategy paper.

Most groups have decided to continue along the lines of the previous action plan. The marine resource group is suggesting a more explicit focus on maritime training and raising awareness of maritime careers.

Decisions and conclusions:

The action plan was discussed more in detail during presentations of work plans and activity reports.

The ExCom decided to forward the action plan to the Annual Business Meeting

5) Work plans from the thematic groups

Group activity reports were also covered under this point

Energy and Climate Change group:

The work of the Energy and Climate Change group is focused much around North Sea grid. The group has prepared a statement on North Sea grid presented in agenda point 11. Chair Jimmy Gray gave a short report from the preparatory action stakeholder conference in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh conference was well attended and took us further in the work towards a North Sea grid. We would like to see an integrated meshed grid system and promoting cost savings in the industry. In order to reach our goals we need to involve member states and stakeholders. It is still unclear who will take the lead in the process forward. We should use North Sea Conference as an arena to take the discussions further.

Energy is a hot topic, it attracts the public. It is therefore very important to get communications right. We need to move from talking internally to talking to others, in lay man terms. The recently published energy union is a game changer. The North Sea Commission needs to find our role in the energy union. Maritime spatial planning is a tool to plan and facilitate for a North Sea grid.

Different ExCom members underlined that the North Sea grid is an important issue for the North Sea region and for NSC to raise our profile.

The NSC President asked if the Energy and Climate Change Group and the Secretariat could put together a short statement on importance of a meshed grid and the energy union, and a presentation for ExCom members to use when meeting with their respective governments. ExCom members agreed to present it to their national level representatives. This work will be done in parallel with a communication strategy on the topic.

Economic Development Group:

The Economic Development group had been asked to give an in-depth presentation of the groups work. Chair Ellen Solheim explained how they work with innovation on macro, meso and micro level. The presentation is attached to the minutes. The chair and advisor presented projects the group is involved in, both completed and ongoing projects. Ellen Solheim mentioned the good work being done at Universities around the North Sea on preparations for Horizon 2020. North Sea Commission should have a more peripheral role using the existing structures in the universities.

ExCom members appreciated the interesting in-depth presentation, and the way the projects show practical results. A discussion on how we operate as an organisation and the role of the groups was initiated. Is political influence or projects our primary role? Presentations of the group work plans and

activity reports made it clear that the groups work in different ways. These discussions will be addressed in the revision of the NSR 2020.

Transport group:

Chair Preben Friis-Hauge informed about the group meeting held in Nord Pas de Calais the week before the ExCom meeting. More than 20 people from 6 countries attended. This was the first meeting held in the French member region. In addition to a good group meeting, a study tour to the port in Calais was organized by the host region. The Nord-Pas de Calais region is really very advanced in terms of industrial development and logistical solutions, and has got high quality transport infrastructure in all modes. The meeting heard very interesting presentations from a centre of excellence in logistics (training and research), an international transport research network with 25 countries, an institute for innovative rail development, and from a project on inland ports. The meeting was very impressed with the high professional quality of these presentations, and the Transport group will now explore how we could profit from them in its future work, together with our members from the NPdC region.

The meeting also addressed the regular issues in the work plan. A member from Aberdeenshire Council presented the results of a screening of good practice data bases in clean urban transport. This exercise shows that there is a huge potential for regional and local authorities to develop successful measures on clean urban transport on the basis of the vast number of good practice examples contained in the data bases. However, governance issues are perceived as a barrier by many authorities. Aberdeenshire Council also presented the results of a survey on rural transport solutions based on desk top research and a consultation among the members. Also in this area it is an untapped potential to exploit. The Adviser is ready to elaborate more on how to disseminate the results of this work, as was also requested by the last Executive meeting in Brussels on 21 October. The paper will be published on the NSC website.

The NSC President asked if the transport group could make an overview on projects on alternative fuel in public transport. It was suggested to put forward a statement for the General Assembly focusing on innovation and highlighting best practice results.

Culture and Tourism:

Adviser Geir Sør-Reime gave an orientation about the group's last meeting in Østfold, where Lars Nordström was thanked as he stepped down as chair in the group. Vice chair Fredrikke Stensrød has stepped up as chair, according to the NSC Charter rules. The Culture and Tourism group function as an advisory body for the North Sea Seafood Route. The role of the group is further elaborated in the communication put forward to ExCom in agenda point 10.

Marine Resources:

Chair Anders Fasth presented the three main focus areas for the Marine Resource Group. There is an ongoing exchange of best practice on maritime spatial planning in group meetings. A group meeting was held in Gothenburg where examples from the national competent authority and municipal marine planning were presented. The group attended the stakeholder conference in Edinburgh, and is ready to follow up on the maritime spatial planning part of it. The reform of the

Common Fisheries Policy and the landing obligation will impact fishery-dependent communities. The group is bringing challenges and best practice examples to the table, while supporting innovation and selective gear. The group has decided to take up maritime training as a focus area. There is a need to raise awareness of the opportunities in the fisheries sector; to avoid youth unemployment, make sure maritime employment survives in our coastal communities and to close a generation gap. The group aims to put forward a policy paper for the Annual Business Meeting in June. The group suggests lifting the issue of a stakeholder forum as a horizontal theme, following up on discussions in Edinburgh.

Discussions and decisions:

The work plans were approved

The Energy and Climate Change group will in cooperation with the NSC Secretariat put together a short statement on the importance of a meshed North Sea grid and the Energy Union.

The Energy and Climate Change group will develop a North Sea Grid communication strategy.

The screening of good practice results on clean urban transport conducted by Aberdeenshire for the transport group will be published on the NSC websites.

The transport group will make an overview of member regions' projects on alternative fuel for public transport in the member regions. This will result in a statement for the General Assembly focusing on innovation and best practice results from around the North Sea Region.

The marine resource group will present a statement on maritime training for the Annual Business Meeting in June.

6) Roadmap - Revision of the North Sea Region 2020

Assistant Executive Secretary Camilla Løvaas Stavnes presented the roadmap for the process as described in the papers circulated before the meeting. The North Sea Region 2020 was adopted for a 10 year period. The half way marker is a good opportunity to analyse what we have already achieved, what is outstanding and how we can close the gap.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom takes note of the timeline and approves the process

The ExCom delegates to the presidency to be a political steering committee in between the ExCom meetings.

The ExCom asks the Secretariat to establish and lead an administrative working group

The ExCom allocates € 30000 to a revision of NSR 2020 from the free reserves.

7) Status update preparatory action

Executive Secretary Kate Clarke ran through the main conclusions from the Edinburgh event. Cllr Jimmy Gray had already given a clear and concise report from the event earlier in the meeting. All members are encouraged to read the summary report and familiarise themselves with the main outcomes from the Edinburgh event.

The Secretariat is working with DG Mare and planning the next event. DG Mare proposes to set up a meeting place for the national level administrative agencies from the energy and other relevant sectors. The Secretariat has also pressed for national political involvement in order to keep the momentum on the issues. This next event will be smaller and more focused and the main outcome will be a North Sea Agenda prepared specifically for the Dutch Presidency in January 2016. DG Mare proposes to hold the event before the summer (June) in Den Haag. The North Sea Commission will be involved in the preparations and follow-up work and will help to define the deliverables.

Members who had attended the Edinburgh event expressed their satisfaction with the event and results and the need for national level involvement was stressed as well as the need for NSC to be a driving force on the issues.

8) Maritime Days 2015

ExCom decided in October last year to make use of the opportunity of European Maritime Days to make ourselves more visible and for strategic communication with European Institutions. The NSC Secretariat has developed an application for a workshop during Maritime Days 28-29th May 2015 in Greece. The workshop is a natural follow up of the Edinburgh conference, focusing on implementation of the MSP-directive and cross-border, cross-institutional and cross-sectorial cooperation. We will get feedback on our application in the middle of March.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom supports the work of organising the workshop in connection with the European Maritime Day 2015.

The ExCom approves the financial implication of the NSC involvement in the workshop at the European Maritime Day 2015, not likely to exceed €1500.

9) North Sea Conference 2015

Elmer Koole from Northern Netherlands presented the concept and ideas for the North Sea Conference in Assen 16-18th June 2015. The presentation can be found here; http://prezi.com/8u-i0lfwtjtc/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy. More information will also be made available at the North Sea Commission website. The NSC Secretariat has been involved in a number of planning meetings. We are planning to organize more political seminars/workshops, in line with the revision process and the preparatory action. There will be two fringe events on 15th June. A conference organized by Cultural Connections Northern Europe in cooperation with the Culture and Tourism group and a simulation game/role play organized by the Dutch government in cooperation with NSC.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom takes note of the presentation from the host region

The ExCom asks the Secretariat to facilitate for the workshop “North Sea Commission for beginners” and look into possibilities of organizing other NSR 2020 relevant workshops.

10) Communication from the Culture and Tourism group

The Culture and Tourism Group had prepared a communication to the Executive Committee emphasising the importance of maritime and coastal tourism in blue growth. It can play an important role in future growth in NSC member regions. In addition, the Group asks the Executive Committee to take note of the explicit ideas and input on maritime tourism when revising the North Sea Region 2020 strategy and the NSC work program.

Discussions and decisions:

ExCom takes note of the communication from the group, and encourages member regions to participate in common initiatives.

ExCom asks the NSC Secretariat to take this input into account when revising NSR 2020

11) Policy statement North Sea grid

The Energy and Climate Change group has prepared a policy statement on North Sea grid commenting on the energy challenges that Europe is facing, and how a meshed North Sea grid can contribute to unlock the potential in the North Sea region.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom adopted the statement with additional follow up points from the discussions under agenda point 5.

The ExCom asked the NSC Secretariat to send the policy statement to relevant ministries in the North Sea countries, TSOs and to the European Commission.

12) External presentations

State Secretary Ingvild Næss Stub “Norway- a partner in Europe”

We were proud to welcome Norwegian state secretary for EU and EEA affairs Ingvild Næss Stub to give a presentation about “Norway – a partner in Europe”. The state secretary started by underlining how much Norway values its North Sea neighbours and partners. Organisations such as the North Sea Commission is important for the government, regional actors have important networks and channels to decision makers in the EU. For the first time, Norway has an EU/EEA minister, an indication that the current government wants a closer and more active relationship with the EU.

The ExCom thanked State Secretary Stub for the presentation and the opportunity to discuss directly with national level. The Norwegian member mentioned our work with the North Sea grid and our plans to approach national governments. Vice-president John Lamb asked the ministry to regard the North Sea Commission as stakeholders when developing North Sea related policies.

Helge Drange, UiB/Bjerknessenteret – “The North Sea in a warm, or not so warm future”

Helge Drange is a renowned researcher from the Bergen based Bjerknessenteret. He gave a presentation about the changing temperature, and concluded that it is extremely likely that the changes we see in climate are due to human activity. His presentation is attached to the minutes. Mr. Drange underlined in the discussions that followed that we need to make big societal changes in order to turn the development. Micro level changes are important, but we need to see changes in transport, industry and petroleum sectors. The presentation can be found here;
<http://folk.uib.no/ngfhd/04Mar2015.html>

Discussions and decisions:

ExCom takes note of the information

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

13) Involving Brussels representation offices

The NSC evaluation report from February 2013 gave a set of conclusions and recommendations. One of the recommendations was that “The Presidency should strengthen links to Brussels for EU policy lobbying.” Two proposed actions are mentioned 1) “Organise more meetings in Brussels (European Parliament, European Commission and CPMR)” and 2) “Develop a model for Brussels office/antenna (e.g. use office of the region which houses the Executive Secretariat or similar)”.

ExCom decided they would like to set up a closer cooperation with member regions Brussels offices and asked Secretariat to prepare a more detailed presentation.

Merete Mikkelsen, Director for West-Norway Brussels Office gave an overview of upcoming topics on the agenda for EU Commission in 2015 and then presented the paper on a cooperation platform the Brussels offices, having consulted the member regions’ offices in Brussels.

Discussions and decisions

The ExCom takes note of the content of the proposal for closer alignment and support from the Brussels offices in the work of the President and the Secretariat

The ExCom supports the establishment of a North Sea regional network in Brussels based on all North Sea regions independent of NSC membership

14) Proposal for a permanent model for the NSC Secretariat

Executive Secretary Kate Clarke introduced the agenda point, followed by an in-depth discussion.

The issue of a permanent model for the NSC Secretariat had already been on the agenda twice in 2014. The rationale behind a reorganisation was to ensure better continuity and to ensure that all political candidates had a realistic chance of running for president. The current model requires for the region of the president to cover the expenses to run a secretariat. The only model that ensures no rise in fees and continuity is for an Executive Secretary to be based in the CPMR offices in Brussels and this model was originally proposed under the ExCom papers sent out 4 weeks prior to the meeting. While exploring the model it had become evident that the € 60 000 the North Sea Commission pays to the thematic group advisers today would no longer be available under a model where the secretariat is funded through the CPMR. All current NSC fees would be needed to cover the costs of the Executive Secretary and the Secretariat in Brussels. The other geographical commissions are set up differently regarding thematic groups. The Presidency therefore asked the Secretariat to explore a model whereby the advisors expenses were continued under the proposed CPMR model. This paper was circulated with the extra papers presented one week before the meeting. No other geographical commission fund thematic group advisers.

This was discussed thoroughly by the ExCom. The conclusion of the discussion was that the thematic group advisers are engines for the work in the organisation, and the ExCom does not wish to put forward a proposal which removes funding for thematic group advisers. Most countries were in favour of raising fees rather than reducing quality of our work, despite concerns of cuts in public spending. The set up and number of thematic groups will still be up for discussion. A discussion of whether a rise in membership fees should be proportional or fixed was conducted in the group. A majority was in favour of a proportional rate which should be introduced over a period of two years by drawing on the free reserve to cover the difference.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom asks the Annual Business Meeting to choose between two models;

- 1) Adopt to raise the fees to such a level to maintain the current financing of the advisors and to pay for a permanent secretariat at CPMR in Brussels. This increase would be based on current model for calculation of dues to NSC (ie % increase pr. inhabitant)
- 2) Business as usual, no change from the current model.

If the Annual Business Meeting adopts the model of raising membership fees. The ExCom suggests an incremental increase of the membership fees, at a proportional rate to be introduced over two years. The free reserves would be used to fund the incremental raise.

The Secretariat will make a short paper explaining the context and the reason behind raising fees for member regions to use in the case the model of raising membership fees is chosen.

15) Election of vice-chair to the Marine Resources Group

Decision:

Jonathan Wills from Shetland, SCO was elected new vice-chair to the group

16) Election of vice-chair to the Transport Group

Decision:

Kåre Pettersen from Vestfold, NO was elected new vice chair to the group.

17) Election of vice- chairs to the Culture and Tourism Group

Decision:

David Alston from Highlands, SCO and Otto Kjær Larsen from Northern Denmark were elected new vice-chairs to the group.

18) Election of vice-chair to the Economic Development Group

Decision:

No candidates had been put forward within the deadline. The NSC Secretariat will reissue the call for candidates for the next ExCom meeting

FINANCES

19) Accounts 2014

The accounts for 2014 were presented showing a surplus of € 21 712. This is transferred to the free reserves. An audited version of the accounts will be presented to the Annual Business Meeting in June.

20) Statements of accounts February 2015

Only small travel expenses have been incurred so far. It is to be noted that the ExCom had earlier agreed to allow for up to € 30 000 from the free reserves under 2015 budget to be used for the revision of NSR 2020.

21) Proposal for budget 2016

It was decided that the budget proposal adjusted for inflation at 1.6% should be submitted to the Annual Business Meeting in June. However it is to be noted that the decision on the new model for the Secretariat may have consequences for the budget for 2016 since the new Secretariat model should be set up for the new Presidency period from June 2016. The Secretariat will discuss options with CPMR in order to be prepared should the ABM decide to move the Secretariat to CPMR.

REPORTS

22) Report from the North Sea Region Interreg Programme

Christian Byrith gave a presentation on the latest news on the North Sea Programme, and some reflections after the Edinburgh stakeholder event.

The new North Sea Interreg programme has been submitted to the European Commission for approval, and the first call is out in April. A number of project ideas are already registered. More info on upcoming info events and application material will be made available at the website of the North Sea programme. The presentation is attached to the minutes.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom takes note of the information

23) Activity reports from the thematic groups

Handled under point 5

Decisions and conclusions:

Reports from the NSC thematic groups were approved

24) Reports from national representatives

The national representatives gave a short update on recent North Sea Commission related events in their respective countries. The Norwegian, Swedish and Scottish candidate handed in a written summary which is attached to the minutes.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom takes note of the information

25) Reports from NSC Secretariat

Written report

Decisions and conclusions:

ExCom take notes of the information

26) Reports from the CPMR

Vice-president Kerstin Brunnström represented the North Sea Commission at the CPMR Political Bureau in Nantes 27th February. She gave a presentation about the maritime cluster model of Västra

Göteborg and was also able to present news about the preparatory action and the Edinburgh event. The vice president shortly summarised the decisions made in the CPMR Political Bureau. A note on CPMR policy messages on the Juncker plan is attached to the minutes.

Discussions and decisions:

The ExCom takes note of the information

AOB

27) Meeting plan 2015

Discussions and decisions:

The next ExCom meeting will be organised 18th June in Assen, following the North Sea Conference. The following meeting will be organised in Brussels 28th October, with arrival and dinner on 27th October.

28) Additional issues

No additional issues