

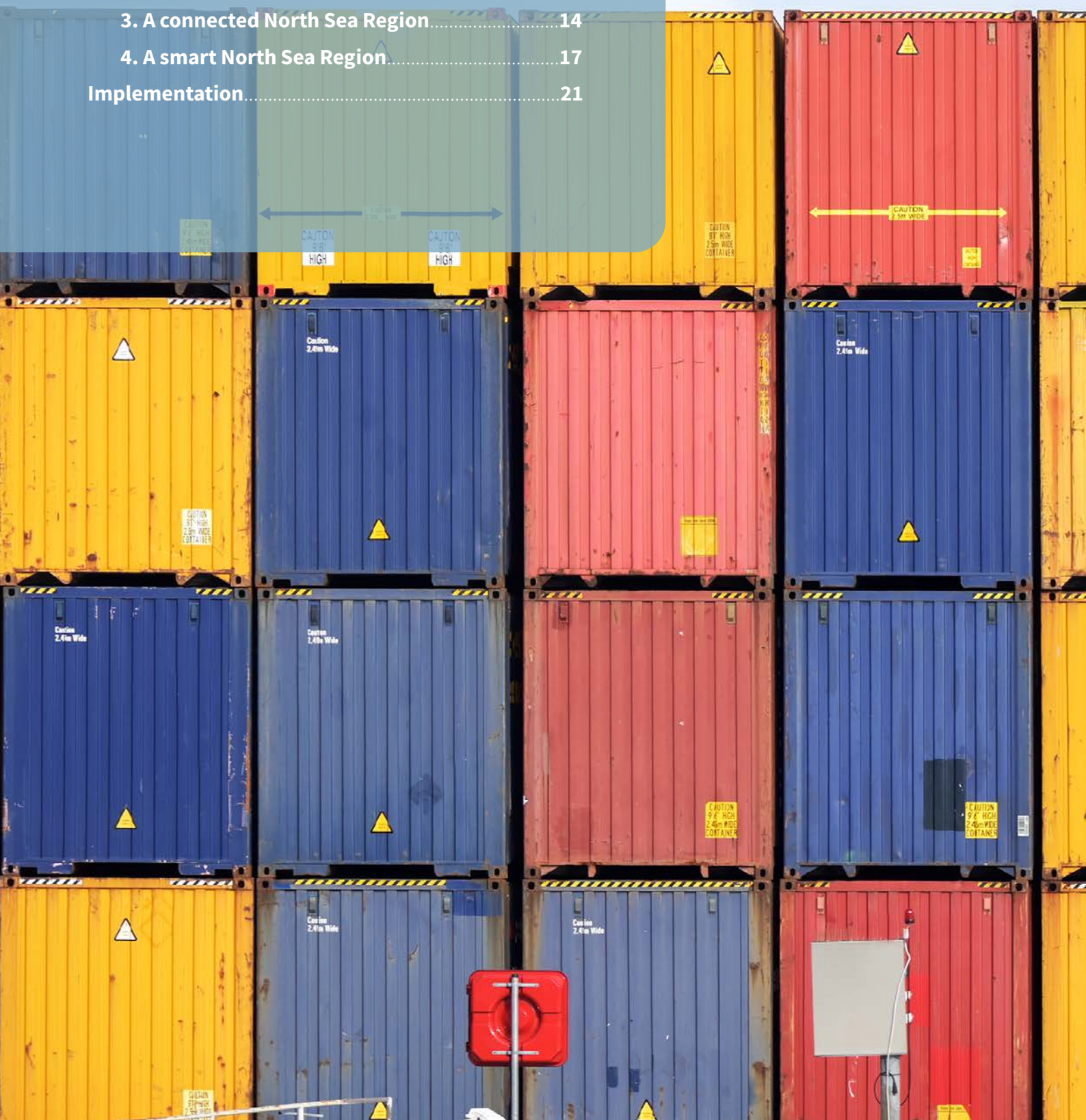


North Sea Region 2030 Strategy



CPMR **NORTH SEA
COMMISSION**

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Foreword

I am proud to present the North Sea Region 2030 Strategy. The strategy is first of all a steering document for the North Sea Commission, but also a priority list for the North Sea Region where we welcome other stakeholders to work with us.

This strategy was adopted in 2020 in very special and challenging circumstances. The North Sea Region is under the double impact of Covid-19 and of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, two very different developments which happen to coincide in time and which are both likely to have long-lasting consequences for the economy and for transnational relations. But let us not forget the more long-term challenges like climate change, energy transition, marine pollution, democratic participation and the North Sea Region's capability to benefit from the fast digital and technological development.

The strategy demonstrates the will of regional governments to tackle these challenges together and our commitment to work along the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris agreement and the European Green Deal. We will do it together with our wider European network, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). The strategy is adopted after a thorough process, involving our member regions, our thematic groups and stakeholders across the North Sea Region.



KERSTIN BRUNNSTRÖM
President of the North Sea Commission



The North Sea Region 2030 Strategy at a glance

PRIORITY AREA	VISION	KEY TOPIC	2030 GOAL
 A PRODUCTIVE & SUSTAINABLE NORTH SEA	<i>Sustainable marine and maritime development</i>	Healthy marine environment	Lower emissions and reduced disposal of waste into the North Sea
		Maritime spatial planning	Better coordinated MSP across national borders and administrative levels
		Sustainable aquaculture and fisheries	Sustainable supply-chain in fisheries and aquaculture
			Development of new products
		Sustainable blue economy	Higher levels of skills and more career opportunities in sustainable blue economy sectors
			The North Sea Region is a global front-runner in sustainable blue economy innovation
 A CLIMATE NEUTRAL NORTH SEA REGION	<i>A resilient and adapted North Sea region which has achieved climate neutrality at the very latest by 2050</i>	Renewable energy/ alternative fuels	More renewable energy is produced and used in the North Sea Region
		Energy efficiency	Energy efficiency improvements are researched, tested and adopted by industry, business, government and citizens
		Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage and natural carbon sinks	CCUS solutions are utilised in the North Sea and across the regions
			Increased afforestation and restoration of degraded ecosystems
		Climate adaptation	The North Sea region is climate ready, adaptable and resilient to climate change
 A CONNECTED NORTH SEA REGION	<i>Fossil-free, safe and user-friendly accessibility for all and in every territory of the North Sea Region</i>	Transnational accessibility	The accessibility to markets, jobs and services is satisfactory for people and businesses
			Good connections to the TEN-T core and comprehensive networks and improved conditions for maritime transport
		Clean shipping, climate-neutral and inclusive transport	Significant reduction of the carbon footprint of transport, including shipping and aviation
			Well-functioning transport services are available in all kind of territories and affordable for all groups in society
		Intelligent transport solutions	A coherent regulatory framework related to intelligent transport solutions at the EU level has been adopted
			Regional and local authorities have the capacity to handle and benefit from new transport solutions
 A SMART NORTH SEA REGION	<i>A front-runner in sustainable economics and democracy - a macro-region maximizing its competitive advantages through innovation and blue and green economies</i>	Smart specialisation strategies	Economic diversification ensures viable jobs in all parts of the region
			New and innovative industries based on marine resources, sustainable energy, sustainable tourism, circular economy and digitalisation
		Skills/competences and mobility of researchers, students and the work force	High employment rates thanks to high innovation capacity, a skilled workforce, successful inclusion of migrants and other disadvantaged people
		Circular use of resources	Circular economy methods and techniques are widely adopted in society
			Economic growth based on sustainability and climate change mitigation should be among the highest in Europe

Why a North Sea Region Strategy?

The North Sea Region is one of the most coherent macro-regions in Europe. The region is a stronghold for accountable democratic institutions and is characterised by high environmental standards, fair conditions on the labour market, well-functioning welfare systems, social inclusion, justice, equality, low corruption and trust. The majority languages of all states are closely related, and over the last 75 years, the region has shared a common history of peaceful and prosperous cooperation.

The North Sea Region and its immediate hinterlands have played a major role in world history, including exploration and innovation, and is the cradle of modern industrial development. The region is home to strong industrial and research clusters which need to be further strengthened in all priority areas. Most North Sea Regions count as innovation leaders or strong innovators in the European Innovation Scoreboard and Regional innovation Scoreboard.

The North Sea Region is a gateway for Europe's world trade, an energy hub for Europe and home to more than 70 million Europeans. A well-managed North Sea Region is vital for ambitions to make Europe stronger in the world and fit for the digital age. It is vital for Europe's efforts to live up to its commitments under the Paris agreement, to become increasingly self-sufficient with renewable energy.

As such, societies and regional authorities across the North Sea Region have a key role in tackling the following major challenges:

- To manage global competition.
- To prevent and manage the short- and long-term effects of climate change on biodiversity, weather conditions, sea levels, sea and land temperatures, health, etc.
- To maintain and increase social and geographical cohesion and general welfare in urban as well as rural areas in a situation of urbanisation, migration and ageing populations.
- To manage recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown of societies and to build resilience for similar situations in the future.
- To involve citizens and the civil society based on the principles of multilevel governance.
- To engage in particular the younger generation in decision-making and public debate.
- To take advantage of the fast technological and digital development which changes our ways to communicate and interact, travel, and produce goods and services.
- To contribute towards the global sustainable development goals in Agenda 2030 and the aims set out in the Paris agreement and the EU's Green Deal initiative.
- To manage unwanted effects of the withdrawal by the UK from the European Union and shape the future cooperation structures across the North Sea.

Regions in the North Sea area vary in size, population, urbanisation and economic structures. Some of them are located in Member States of the European Union and some are not. Regional governments have different competencies, legal and financial status depending on national laws and traditions. This diversity together with joint cross-cutting challenges demand for a territorial framework and an integrated approach in order to provide a better cohesion. The North Sea Commission welcomes the discussion on European level on a stronger integration of the territorial dimension in Interreg programmes. Local and regional authorities as well as citizens' initiatives from the North Sea region will feel attracted by this approach. They will all benefit from a high degree of coordination and collaboration in tackling these common challenges. They share an interest in a stable and sustainable development of the North Sea itself and of the North Sea macro-region in general.



A shared platform

This strategy defines four priority areas for cooperation in the coming years: a productive and sustainable North Sea; a climate-neutral North Sea Region; a connected North Sea Region; a smart North Sea Region. Issues that overlap between the four priority areas and horizontal issues will be addressed in a cross-sectoral way. See references under each key topic.

The CPMR North Sea Commission (NSC) invites regional and local councils, national governments, European institutions, organisations and other stakeholders to collaborate across national, administrative and sectoral borders and join our efforts to unlock the full potential of the North Sea Region. It is of utmost importance that the civil society, including the youth, is involved in addressing the issues that the North Sea Region face in the decade ahead.

Purpose of the strategy

The North Sea Region 2030 strategy:

- ✱ guides the work of the North Sea Commission and will be further specified in biennial activity plans
- ✱ is a basis for joint lobby initiatives, for joint input to potential consultations on European and national North Sea related initiatives, for the development of joint projects, for the exchange of information/best practice between members, and for public awareness raising
- ✱ defines the NSC's priorities for transnational cooperation between different levels of government and sectors in the North Sea Region
- ✱ will be used in NSC's dialogue with the Interreg North Sea Region Programme, with a view to develop synergies between policy and projects, including input to the development and implementation of a new NSR Programme
- ✱ is an instrument for the NSC's communication with members, potential members and stakeholders in the North Sea Region
- ✱ is complementary and contributory to the work of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)
- ✱ focuses on those areas where there is a need for transnational cooperation, and where regional authorities have a role to play
- ✱ describes the North Sea Region's contribution towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals



1

A productive and sustainable North Sea

The North Sea is one of the busiest and most intensively used seas in the world. Shipping, oil, gas, wind energy, fishing, aquaculture, tourism and recreation are activities that all require coordination and sometimes a weighted priority in order to achieve a sustainable North Sea. Ocean surveillance and security need attention. The same goes for the need to develop affordable communications at sea with sufficient capacity in order to facilitate real-time surveillance and the roll-out of new technologies like IoT, use of autonomous vessels and drones in maritime operations.

The laws that support the many different uses of the sea are as varied and complex as the activities themselves. International conventions, European regulations and national legislation are often sectoral and promote different economic or environmental objectives. The different regulations and laws may not always be consistent with each other or with those of a neighbouring country. Additional complexity arises from the lack of an overall approach to the sustainable use of marine resources within a single sea basin.

The regions around the North Sea have different competences in planning processes and management for an optimal economic development based on sustainability. There is also a need to address the effects of climate change in the North Sea waters. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports on ocean warming, marine heatwaves, surface acidification due to CO₂ uptake, loss of oxygen, sea level rise etc, leading to changes in marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity.



VISION: Sustainable marine and maritime development

This will challenge and influence the way marine biological resources are harvested and exploited. Fish stock will migrate to colder waters, leading to activities in other geographic areas than today. Cultivation of cold-water species will have to find new locations, in aquaculture more diseases will occur due to warmer waters. Species from warmer waters will migrate into the North Sea.

The catch and production of fish, seafood and algae will be of even more importance for feeding a growing world population in years to come. It is a common obligation for the regions of the North Sea to provide healthy food. Know-how and skills on how to achieve sustainable growth based on harvest and production of marine resources are needed more than ever.

To accomplish a productive and well-managed North Sea different interests need to be balanced to promote sustainability. Marine and maritime research has an important role to play. The NSC can be a driving force to influence authorities, sector players and companies to choose the most sustainable solutions even if in the short term it seems more costly.



1.1 | HEALTHY MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The marine environment and biodiversity face many threats. Plastic waste from land, rivers, fishing boats and cruise ships, air-transported micro plastic, nuclear emissions, leakages from ship wrecks, dumped munitions, paraffin and other high viscosity floating substances, oil spill and sewage need to be reduced. Marine litter and plastics significantly affect coastal areas as well as the marine environment with effects on local and regional economy and on society.

Tackling marine emissions and litter is therefore an increasingly important priority.

There is a need to strengthen the work that is being done locally, nationally and internationally to reduce emissions and waste. It is vital to prevent litter and plastics from entering the seas and harming marine wildlife and habitats.

A reduction in waste can be achieved through a combination of investments and innovations for tackling marine litter and a more developed cross border approach. There is also need for more research on how to recycle the marine litter once returned to land.

All regional actors should do their best to contribute to the efforts identified in OSPAR's action plan for marine litter. Not only recycling and clean-up of oceans and rivers is important. It is also of fundamental importance that circularity is built into the design of all products (packaging, fishing gear, consumer products) through investment in research and entrepreneurship, especially for young people.



Goal:

Lower emissions and reduced disposal of waste into the North Sea



Related with Strategy topics:

3.2 Clean shipping, climate-neutral & inclusive transport
4.3 Circular use of resources



Relevant for SDGs:

6.3, 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 14.1



1.2 | MARITIME SPACIAL PLANNING (MSP)

How to balance different interest in the management of the North Sea is a political matter. It is of greatest importance that the economies in the North Sea itself and in the regions develop and grow in a sustainable manner to ensure that future generations have a healthy and clean North Sea.

The EU Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning defines MSP as a process by which the relevant Member State's authorities analyse and organise human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives. MSP is supposed to reduce conflicts, encourage investments, increase cross-border cooperation and to protect and preserve the environment. MSP is a work area under the North Seas energy cooperation, initiated by the coastal states in 2016 and renewed in 2019, and there are cross-border projects to develop a common approach to MSP.

The development of offshore wind is one of the biggest challenges in the near future. Maritime Spatial Planning will contribute in the realisation of this.

MSP is useful for decision-makers, and an opportunity to make political long-term decisions for various activities and use of the marine environment. MSP is generally designed to deliver largely national objectives. They also vary considerably in their scope and approach. Representation of local and regional interests and stakeholders, through existing and new mechanisms, is essential in this process. MSP links governance on land, coast and sea. Land-sea interactions therefore have to be taken into account since it is clear that ecosystems and activities at sea have a direct impact on regional coastal planning. New digital tools will make MSP more easily accessible, but its quality will still depend on the process and interpretation of information.

MSP is also useful for interregional and international coordination and cooperation as well as to promote best practice from various regions. A comprehensive understanding is needed of what MSP can deliver for ecosystems since these systems do not acknowledge artificial human-scale administrative boundaries and transnational sectoral interests.



Goal:

Better coordinated MSP across national borders & administrative levels



Related with Strategy topics:

1.4 Sustainable blue economy

2.1 Renewable energy/Alternative fuels



Relevant for SDGs:

14.2



1.3 | SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES

An even more sustainable aquaculture sector has a huge potential to create wealth and jobs. It is therefore important to facilitate further development of the sector. Increased dialogue between the aquaculture sector and local and regional authorities is necessary to ensure use of areas and resources in the best way possible. The transition towards sustainable aquaculture could be promoted through studies identifying common challenges for North Sea fishing communities.

In the North Sea, aquaculture production of salmon and trout are by far the largest. There is a need to better facilitate for the introduction, development and production of 'new' marine species and species on lower trophic levels (mussels, scallops, micro and macro algae, cleaner fish etc.). It is necessary to secure, support and promote knowledge, education and training customised to new forms of products, for instance cosmetics, antibiotics and vitamins.

Due to climate change, over-exploitation and natural migrations, wild fish stocks face new sets of threats. It is important to ensure that spawning and nursery areas for different species of fish are taken care of and protected from harmful activities. These areas are often coastal and attractive also for other activities and actors. There is need to acquire more knowledge of the impacts of marine harvesting on biodiversity.



Goals:

Sustainable supply-chain in fisheries and aquaculture
Development of new products



Relevant for SDGs:

12.2, 12.3, 14.4

1.4 | SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

Seas and oceans are drivers for the European economy and have great potential for innovation and growth. The NSC member regions can contribute to identifying new sustainable and profitable marine and maritime business areas to support the development of the sustainable blue economy. This can be provided through a closer dialogue with the business community and through mapping, promoting and exchanging best practice transnationally.

The regions have a responsibility to promote sustainable maritime business development and competitive blue economy. The interaction between different sectors and levels of government needs to be strengthened. There is also a need to improve the access of SMEs to finance for developing cross border innovations in the blue economy, and in general to increase investment in industry and entrepreneurship in order to develop skills and knowledge in sustainable growth and use of marine resources.

The North Sea Region should make better use of existing European investment platforms to effectively pursue the objectives in blue economy.

The NSC will support activities which increase skills in the blue economy in the North Sea Region. It is also important to promote and contribute to the development of career opportunities in the marine and maritime sectors.



Goals:

Higher levels of skills and more career opportunities in sustainable blue economy sectors
The North Sea Region is a global front-runner in sustainable blue economy innovation



Related with Strategy topics:

1.2 Maritime Spatial planning
4.1 Smart specialisation strategies
4.2 Skills/competences and mobility of researchers, students and the workforce



Relevant for SDGs:

12.2

2

A climate-neutral North Sea Region

Climate change is one of the greatest global threats that we face and a major challenge which we all must be engaged in for the health and wellbeing of all citizens and the planet. The NSC has a role in encouraging every member region to support action on the aims of the Paris Agreement. The North Sea Region will have an important role in achieving the European Commission's ambitious goal of becoming the first climate-neutral continent and in creating a European Climate Pact. It is an area with a strong historical relationship in maritime affairs which makes it the perfect place to be an active part of the climate emergency solution.

The region is already a leader in offshore renewable energy and the sector is developing fast. It is essential that this potential is continued to be exploited. The role as Europe's renewable energy hub can be even further developed through technical and legislative coordination, interconnectors, a North Sea Grid and new energy solutions. This work also needs to be combined with energy efficiency measures to ensure a reduction in our consumption of energy as well as reducing emissions. The reliability and continuity of the energy system in countries around the North Sea should be ensured by flexibility, energy conversion and energy storage.



VISION: A resilient and adapted North Sea Region which has achieved climate neutrality at the very latest by 2050

The North Sea Region must move towards decarbonization. The oil and gas sector will play an important role in the energy transition. In addition, methods such as Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) and restoring biodiversity and natural carbon sinks must be considered if the region is to meet ambitious targets of carbon neutrality by 2050. Climate adaptation and socio-ecological resilience are also key guiding principles in developing a vital North Sea region. There must be development of new methods to adapt to rising sea levels and sea temperatures, and the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. This can only be successful through cooperation and knowledge sharing across the region and through engaging with citizens so that they too embrace the required change and become engaged.



2.1 | RENEWABLE ENERGY/ALTERNATIVE FUELS

The primary energy supply will increasingly be coming from renewable energy sources – a mix of wind, hydro, solar, wave, tidal, green and blue hydrogen, biomass and biofuels. This will require battery development and storage. To make this happen we will need to continue active sharing of research of the technical solutions required and examples of best practice across member regions of NSC as well as seek out funding opportunities to support commercial solutions. Research and development of new technological innovations in clean energy generation and storage is required so that they can be developed, piloted and adopted within the North Sea region and beyond. New opportunities for experimentation will be needed.

Education, skills and training need to be increased and encouraged in this area to support the energy transition if the North Sea region is to remain a leader within renewable energy.

This includes seeking out and encouraging circular economy opportunities to be established and adopted across the energy sector, together with the use of existing fossil fuel infrastructure for new energy generation and economic development incentives.

To increase resilience in energy supply, the North Sea Region should aim for a transnational renewable energy grid.



Goal:

More renewable energy is produced and used in the North Sea Region



Related with Strategy topics:

1.2 Maritime spatial planning

3.2 Clean shipping, climate-neutral & inclusive transport



Relevant for SDGs:

7.2

2.2 | ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Energy efficiency improvements, including developing new industrial processes alongside consumer education which promotes behaviour change, are needed to ensure that a growing population is using less energy and therefore having less of an impact on the climate.

There are many buildings across the North Sea region under ownership of NSC member regions and therefore a great opportunity for progressing learning and partnership working in this area. In addition, supporting the need for reducing energy demand through improving the energy efficiency of residential, commercial, public and industrial sector buildings across the North Sea Region is a necessary part of promoting innovation in the energy system. It can help to increase productivity and competitiveness while also creating opportunities to strengthen supply chains and growth across the region's economy.

Action on energy efficiency can also help tackle the challenge of energy poverty therefore benefiting people, businesses and society as a whole. The transition must be socially fair and involving citizens, so they too become more engaged.

This will all help to support the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions required to become a climate neutral region.



Goals:

Energy efficiency improvements are researched, tested and adopted by industry, business, Government and citizens.



Relevant for SDGs:

7.1, 7.3, 9.4, 12.2



2.3 | CARBON CAPTURE, UTILISATION AND STORAGE AND NATURAL CARBON SINKS

Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS) and natural carbon sink solutions need to be rolled out in the North Sea and across the region to help facilitate the transition to climate neutrality. This will need to include two approaches both of which enhance economic development incentives. One covering continued research of CCUS opportunities in the North Sea enhancing the possibilities which the North Sea presents, for example taking advantage of existing oil and gas infrastructure, the suitable geology and extensive knowledge of the sea bed. This also includes being open to new technology for carbon use. The second approach is the need for nature-based solutions to play a key role in mitigating against and adapting to climate change. Therefore, an increase in afforestation and restoration of degraded forest lands and other ecosystems such as coastal wetlands supporting carbon sinks is also key. Coastal ecosystems specifically are important habitats taking up and storing vast amounts of CO₂ as 'blue carbon'.

Protection and restoration of ecosystems will therefore also benefit biodiversity, soil quality and water resources. Biodiversity is essential through its provision of ecosystem services, for example food, fuel, construction materials, flood prevention and enjoyment but also in its own right as part of the natural world.



Goals:

CCUS solutions are utilised in the North Sea and across the regions

Increased afforestation and restoration of degraded ecosystems



Relevant for SDGs:

6.6, 14.2, 15.1, 15.2

2.4 | CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Mitigation efforts are working to decrease the speed of climate change but they will not prevent change from coming. Therefore, an area like the North Sea Region that will be affected by changes such as sea level rise, intensified heavy rain showers, more extreme varieties in discharges, and long hot and dry summers should anticipate these events to stay and increase in frequency. The NSC must consider ways to continue to keep up with these changes and begin to understand how the region can adapt successfully so that it does not become overwhelmed by them.

Efforts on climate change adaptation across local, regional and national levels need to be intensified across the North Sea Region. Active sharing of knowledge, research and best practice in climate change adaptation as well as staying informed on new technological innovations being adopted by regions

will continue to be vital. It is important that those areas most vulnerable to climate change have the support and ability to adapt. Importing goods and services could be impacted and disrupted by climate change. Addressing this is also an important part of adaptation. Similar to mitigation the NSC members will share funding and project opportunities, and best practice across industry, business, and Government including community engagement projects ensuring a transition that is socially fair and just.



Goals:

The North Sea region is climate ready, adaptable and resilient to climate change



Relevant for SDGs:

1.5, 2.4, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3



The North Sea Region (NSR) is a major transport hub in Europe and vital for the competitiveness, internal and external trade of the EU and beyond. The region is host to the biggest ports in Europe, and more than 20 ports are part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) core network. The NSR has a competitive transport and logistics industry, with vehicle and aviation manufacturers and transport-related technology developers. The transport sector is on the other hand causing billions of Euros in negative externalities in Europe per year, in the form of accidents, pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and congestion.

Globalisation, increasing urbanisation, demographic changes and technological developments within clean vehicles and digitisation are having a strong impact on the configuration of the future transport system. Changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns towards the shared economy are paving the ground for new and innovative mobility concepts. The NSR is in a good position to adapt to and exploit these developments in support of a more sustainable, efficient, safe and inclusive transport system. To succeed with this ambition, it is also important to influence attitudes and encourage behavioural change among transport users.



VISION: Fossil-free, safe and user-friendly accessibility for all and in every territory of the North Sea Region

Efficient and sustainable transport of passengers and goods in and between countries is key for promoting a desirable development in the NSR. To be competitive, the NSR needs to be well connected to the TEN-T and capable of benefiting from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding instrument. Important tools are the promotion of modal shift from road/air to rail/sea, intelligent transport systems and smart mobility concepts. Climate-neutral public transport in cities and rural areas needs to be further developed, shared mobility options better exploited and the conditions for walking and cycling improved. Satisfactory and affordable transport services need to be available in all kind of territories and for all groups in society.



3.1 | TRANSNATIONAL ACCESSIBILITY

The TEN-T policy is key for promoting free circulation of goods, services and citizens throughout the EU and in the NSR. The TEN-T network is crucial for promoting accessibility, as well as for ensuring quality, efficiency, safety and sustainability of transport operations in the NSR. The network is also important for linking up to third countries and the rest of the world. Overall, the NSR is well embedded in the TEN-T network and many sea ports, air ports and urban nodes are included in the core layer and corridors. However, not all parts of the NSR, in particular peripheral areas in the Northern and Western part of the region, are sufficiently integrated in the TEN-T network. These areas suffer from long distances to markets, with extended transport times, higher costs and fewer route options. There is also a need to improve the conditions for maritime transport, and to integrate Motorways of the Sea (MoS) better in logistics chains.



Goals:

The accessibility to markets, jobs and services is satisfactory for people and businesses
Good connections to the TEN-T core and comprehensive networks and improved conditions for maritime transport



Relevant for SDGs:

9.1

3.2 | CLEAN SHIPPING, CLIMATE-NEUTRAL AND INCLUSIVE TRANSPORT

Transport accounts for about 25% of the greenhouse gas emissions in Europe. International shipping is a large and growing source of emissions. While transport on the one hand is part of the climate problem, it is on the other hand also an important part of the solution. There is significant untapped potential to reduce shipping emissions cost-effectively through a combination of regulations, technology development, stakeholder cooperation and targeted financial and other incentives. The electrification of (passenger) vessels is an important measure for promoting emission free maritime transport. Facilities for on-shore power supply is one solution for reducing emissions and pollution from vessels in ports. The states and regions in the NSR are in the process of developing and rolling out alternative fuels and low-carbon vehicle technologies and infrastructure which will contribute significantly to lowering emissions from terrestrial transports. The NSR is also well-equipped with renewable energy and spearhead technologies to facilitate a transfer to a low-carbon and eventually fossil-free transport system.

To reduce the carbon footprint, short distances should not be covered by airplanes where sustainable and time-wise feasible alternatives exist.

Not all parts of the NSR have sufficient access to green and affordable transport solutions, and there is a need to adapt services to the characteristics of different territories, in particular in remote areas affected by ageing and depopulation. It is also required to develop services which are tailored to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society.



Goals:

Significant reduction of the carbon footprint of transport, including shipping and aviation
Well-functioning transport services are available in all kind of territories and affordable for all groups in society



Related with Strategy topics:

1.1. Healthy marine environment
2.1. Renewable Energy/Alternative Fuels



Relevant for SDGs:

9.1, 11.2

3.3 | INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

The current developments towards increasing digitalisation and automation have a strong potential for making transport safer, less polluting, more efficient, simpler and cheaper. Sharing of transport-related data can improve the efficiency of logistics chains and open up new opportunities for combining transport of goods and people. However, too little attention is paid to the importance of integrating emerging technologies into the wider transport system. Regional and local authorities also need more knowledge and increased capacity to be able to benefit from the technologies of the future, but also to mitigate related risks and challenges. Relevant strategies in this field should also be assessed against technological vulnerability. The introduction of automated transport solutions furthermore requires coherent European regulations (e.g. in terms of liabilities and data protection), governance and societal acceptance.

Furthermore, it is important to exploit the potential in new and innovative mobility concepts, such as different shared solutions, micro-mobility and the concept of Mobility as a Service (MaaS). It is important to take account of the fact that what may be the most appropriate solutions would vary between urban and rural areas.



Goals:

A coherent regulatory framework related to intelligent transport solutions at the EU level has been adopted
Regional and local authorities have the capacity to handle and benefit from new transport solutions



Relevant for SDGs:

9.1



4

A smart North Sea Region

The North Sea Region is a macro-region with highly specialised industries based on top quality research and access to a wide range of resources and a well-skilled workforce. The region aims to remain a leading, competitive, attractive and socially sustainable region, and is a front-runner in circular and biobased economy, digital economy and innovation. The ambition will be met by joining forces around joint smart specialisation areas. It is also a lead in maintaining European democratic values and traditions.

Growth in the North Sea Region must be based on sustainable resource use and on circular economy principles, as well as taking full advantage of digital economy opportunities. This will also allow the North Sea Region to lead by example in meeting the European Commission's Green deal.

The economic potential of climate actions needs to be fully exploited by businesses in the region. This includes green technology and renewable energy development. To achieve the sustainability goals of the North Sea Strategy 2030, companies providing the solutions must be supported.

There is also industrial expansion potential in the circular economy. This includes the re-use of construction waste, development of new products based on waste from existing production, development of maintenance and replacement services and products. It also concerns integration of production lines between different types of industries and a higher degree of recycling of non-renewable resources.



VISION: a frontrunner in sustainable economics and democracy; a macro-region maximising its competitive advantages through innovation and blue and green economies

The North Sea Region should develop cooperation based on regional smart specialisation priorities. The NSC can be used as a forum for exchanging experiences, transferring good practices and developing projects linked to the member regions' Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3). The NSC will seek opportunities to bring this knowledge and know-how into the established European Smart Specialisation platforms.

The North Sea Region should maintain and develop well-functioning democratic institutions, open and inclusive societies with equal opportunities for everyone. The North Sea Commission will support initiatives to uphold a good balance between national, regional, and local authorities and to strengthen the complementarity between them. The North Sea Commission has a particular focus on good partnerships between national and regional authorities. Through a stronger involvement of civil society and a better cooperation with citizens, regions should be empowered to find place-based solutions for societal challenges. Cooperation in transnational projects may be a good experience for bringing citizens closer to the North Sea Region as a whole.



4.1 | SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGIES

North Sea regions have similarities in business structures linked to the sea and the coast and a potential for exchanging experiences and practices based on their smart specialisation strategies (S3).

NSC member regions can use their smart specialisation strategies to increase competitiveness by connecting different branches and industries across the regions and to work in close co-operation with, and within, the European S3 platform to address important issues like:

- ✱ **Industrial transition:** Industries need support in the transition from carbon-based and non-sustainable production to production based on renewables and circular use of resources. State-aid legislation must be flexible to allow for this.
- ✱ **New and innovative industries:** The North Sea region has a great potential for new industries based on green technologies, new use of marine biological and mineral resources, sustainable energy production and circular use of resources
- ✱ **Digitalisation of industries:** Digitalisation is a key to innovation in industries and research. Industrialists and experts must work together to speed up industrial digitisation, including SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups. Digital infrastructures, open data and interoperability must be addressed to make the region fit for the digital age.
- ✱ **Climate-neutral industries:** To enable a swift transition to climate neutral industries, there is need for targeted economic support for research and development to fill knowledge gaps, and for public aid to industries to enable their transition
- ✱ **Diversification of industries:** The shift towards sustainable, climate neutral and circular industries will require a stronger diversification, and the development of new, competitive and sustainable products, especially based on blue and green resources.
- ✱ **Development of travel and tourism:** Coastal and maritime tourism is an important and fast-growing part of the maritime economy of Europe and an important part of the EU Blue Growth Strategy. There is need for more sustainability and circularity in the industry, and a need for diversification and less seasonality. The North Sea Region has a huge yet largely unexploited potential for sustainable tourism development, and other infrastructure developments at sea or near the coast need to take the touristic values into account



Goals:

Economic diversification ensures viable jobs in all parts of the region

New and innovative industries based on marine resources, sustainable energy, sustainable tourism, circular economy and digitalisation



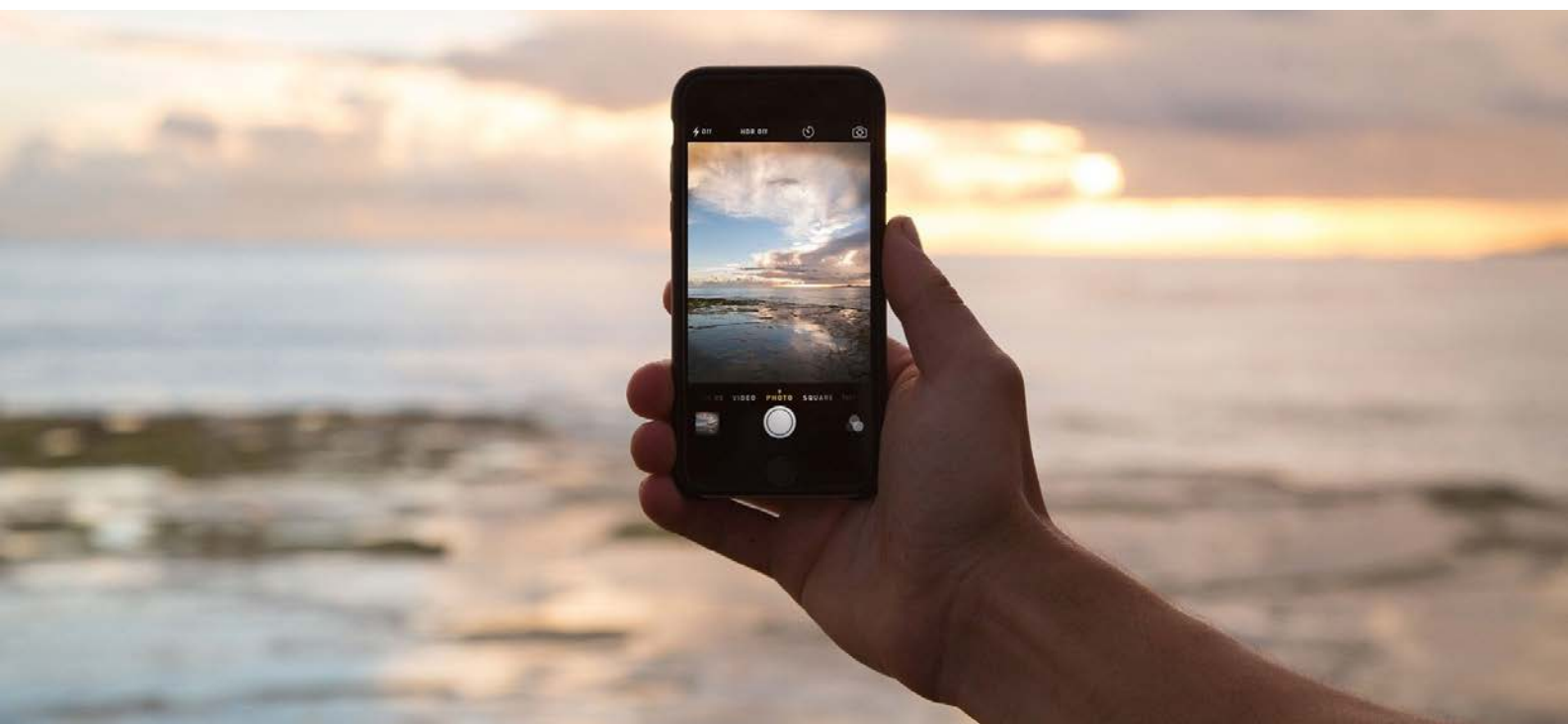
Related with Strategy topic:

1.4 Sustainable blue economy



Relevant for SDGs:

8.2, 8.9, 9.2



4.2 | SKILLS/COMPETENCES AND MOBILITY OF RESEARCHERS, STUDENTS AND THE WORK FORCE

To maintain the North Sea Region's position as a key industrial innovator, a skilled workforce is essential. Education and training on all levels must match the needs on the labour market. There is a need to continually reevaluate competences through a process of up-skilling or re-skilling to meet new skills demands, including digital skills. Constructive dialogues are needed between academia, industry and the public sector on how to remain an innovative hub with a highly skilled workforce with access to lifelong learning and labour markets across borders.

Close exchange between educational and research institutions around the North Sea is essential to maintain the region as an innovative hub in the world.

The workforce must be able to move between countries where there is a current need for specific competences, and dedicated measures must be in place to ensure that young people are supported to enter the labour market.



Goals:

High employment rates thanks to high innovation capacity, a skilled workforce, successful inclusion of migrants and other disadvantaged people



Related with Strategy topic:

1.4 Sustainable blue economy



Relevant for SDGs:

4.4, 4.7, 8.6

4.3 | CIRCULAR USE OF RESOURCES

It will be a mission for the North Sea Region to lead by example and implement the European Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan.

Circular economy is a vast policy field, and recycling starts with circularity being built into the design of all new products. Products should also be designed for long-term use, where vital parts can be replaced and individual components can be re-used or recycled or upcycled. Investment in this area is vital to making tangible progress. There is also a need for progress on valorisation of recycled components/products.

It also relates to waste management, aiming at reducing leakage of plastics, textiles and other substances to nature, and reducing the amount of waste placed in landfills as far as possible to a minimum and maximising the recycling of non-renewable resources. Circular economy is also about the use of renewable bio-based materials.

Resources are limited and waste must be recycled instead of being burnt or landfilled, and there is a need for research and development to change production and waste management to enable this.

A vital part of the Green Deal is that public authorities should be drivers for innovation in industry through their procurement. Intelligent and Green Public Procurement (GPP) should be used to encourage the development of innovative products and services. The industry can be a contributor of new solutions in the public sector, and new and innovative ways of cooperation should be used to achieve this. Regional governments should also lead the way for emission reductions through innovative public procurement.



Goals:

Circular economy methods and techniques are widely adopted in society
Economic growth based on sustainability and climate change mitigation should be among the highest in Europe



Related with Strategy topic:

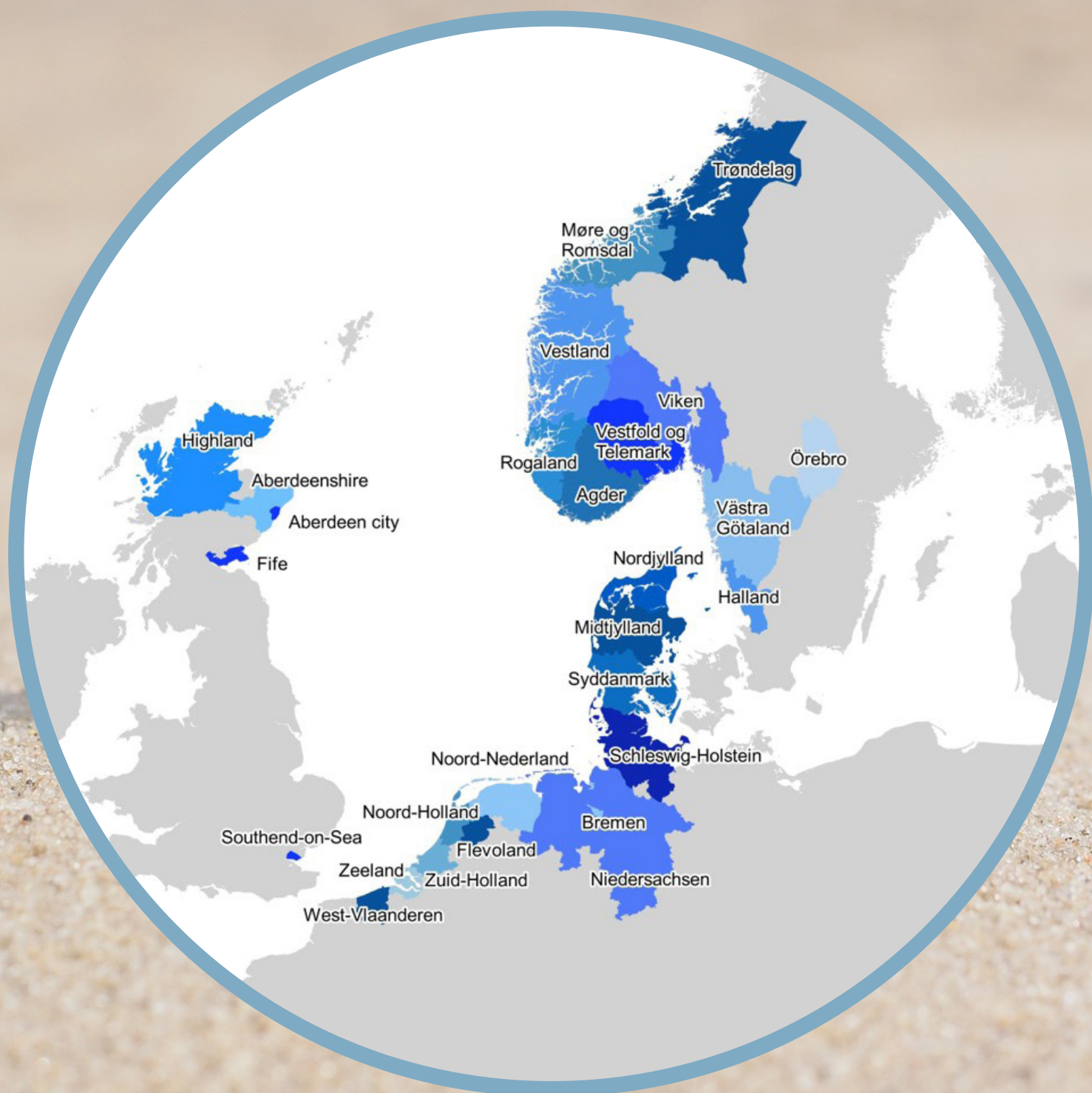
1.1. Healthy marine environment



Relevant for SDGs:

8.4, 9.4, 12.2

The North Sea Commission



Implementation

This strategy was adopted by the NSC Annual Business Meeting (ABM) in June 2020. It was drafted by a task force in the NSC under the guidance of the NSC Executive Committee as a steering group. It builds on a member survey of the 2020 strategy, a thorough analysis of development strategies/plans of NSC member regions. Member regions, NSC thematic groups and external stakeholders have been consulted at several stages during the process.

The strategy will be implemented by the NSC Executive Committee with the support of the NSC thematic working groups. ABM will adopt an action plan specifying the concrete measures to deliver on the priority areas identified in the strategy. The action plan will be evaluated and reviewed biennially. It will also help to manage and enable synergies and interfaces between priority areas ensuring consistent and targeted actions, capitalising on the expertise of its members and thematic groups and of the CPMR.

The NSC intends to develop its internal work methods in line with the strategy: more travel-free meetings, increased youth involvement and regular exchange between thematic groups to benefit from synergies between the four priority areas.

NSC member regions will exchange practices on relevant/efficient measures which are being implemented to recover from the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. They will also capitalise on good practices from elsewhere in Europe and globally. The NSC will also facilitate discussions about how the regions could strengthen their resilience against future pandemics.

The NSC would obviously not be capable of reaching the ambitious goals of the strategy on its own. The role of the NSC would primarily be to raise awareness and facilitate cooperation in order to mobilise the EU, the states, regional authorities, the business community, civil society and the population at large to move the societal development in the desired direction.

To achieve the goals of the strategy, the NSC will:

- ✦ Exchange information and experience, and transfer good practice between member regions
- ✦ Mobilise members and raise awareness through public activities
- ✦ Develop knowledge through mappings and other reports
- ✦ Initiate, shadow and capitalise on EU financed projects
- ✦ Coordinate with relevant EU programmes, in particular the transnational programme covering the North Sea Region
- ✦ Contribute to policy development through resolutions, policy papers and responses to consultations, as well as through cooperation with national, European and international institutions
- ✦ Collaborate formally and informally with other organisations and stakeholders
- ✦ Build bridges between cultures





**CPMR
CRPM**

The North Sea Commission (NSC) is a cooperation platform for regions around the North Sea. Our mission is to further partnerships between regional authorities which face the shared development challenges and opportunities presented by the North Sea. Through dialogue and formal partnerships the NSC seeks to promote common interests, especially in relation to European Union institutions, national governments, and organizations dealing with issues relevant to the North Sea.

The North Sea Commission is one of six geographical commissions under the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). The CPMR brings together 160 regions from 28 states, both members and non-members of the European Union, and thereby represents almost 200 million people. It campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory, and is also working towards the delivery of an integrated maritime policy designed to contribute towards Europe's economic growth.



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[@NSC_CPMR](https://twitter.com/NSC_CPMR)



nsc@crpm.org



+ 46 (0)70 875 65 90



Region Västra Götaland
Bergslagsgatan 2
411 06 Gothenburg
Sweden



Region Västra Götaland
Regionens hus
405 44 Göteborg
Sweden



CPMR **NORTH SEA
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