

Information on consultations during the programming process

The process

1. The consultation of the Draft Operational Programme and Draft Environmental Report was carried out in two phases in order to give the authorities and the public an early and effective opportunity within an appropriate time frame to express their opinion. The Draft Operational Programme (version 3) has been submitted for public consultation, in a first phase, in the period 15 June – 11 August 2006 (8 weeks). Simultaneously, a draft version of the environmental scoping report was submitted from mid June for a four-week consultation period to the authorities with relevant environmental responsibilities designated by the member states and Norway. In phase two, the consultation of the public on the draft Environmental Report prepared on 30 August 2006 along with the Draft Operational Programme (Version 3) was carried out in the countries participating in the programme according to the national requirements for information and consultation in the period 1 September – 4 December 2006.

Announcement

2. The announcements and consultation documents were published on the programme's website (www.interregnorthsea.org) and in the relevant national publications (e.g. official journals), and spread through the national networks concerned with INTERREG and to the public likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the adoption of the Operational Programme. In addition, the relevant ministries in the countries concerned have received a paper copy of the Draft Operational Programme and Draft Environmental Report with an invitation for comments.

Documentation

3. All the comments received were recorded in a table. On this basis, the comments were considered and assessed with regard to their relevance. Draft Operational Programme Version 4 was prepared in the course of the continuous programming process, and recommendations were made to the Programme Preparation Group (PPG)¹ in September 2006 and December 2006 as to include/not include the suggestions.

Consideration of opinions expressed

4. The Draft Operational Programme (version 5) has been prepared in November 2006 including the incorporated comments as decided at PPG 8 on 13 December 2006. This draft has been further developed as compared to previous versions in two ways:
 - a) In its structure in a way to strengthen the priority axes, make the document more coherent regarding the relation between the priorities, enhance clarity and ease reading. This included the introduction of Priority 1 Building on our Capacity for Innovation, which implied a shift of some selective elements from the other priorities to the new Priority 1. This shift has not led to major changes on the content, but rather to a clearer structure of the areas of intervention and a strengthened accentuation of the aspects of promoting innovation and an improved mutual interconnection and coherence between

¹ The PPG was installed by the Interreg IIIB North Sea Region Programme Monitoring Committee at its meeting on 29-30 October 2005 for the purpose of preparing the new North Sea Region Programme 2007-2013. The PPG is composed of one national and one regional representative from each Member State and Norway.

the priorities. Information on transnational co-operation activities to be considered in the priorities have been included in order to be more specific and better anticipate the results and impacts of the priorities and the programme, including environmental effects.

- b) In its content in a way to better focus the directions of support (areas of intervention and corresponding actions) within the thematic scope as already defined in version 3.
5. The Draft Operational Programme (Versions 6 and 7) was further developed in the course of the continuous programming process, incorporating additional corrections and formal adjustments.

Submission

6. The Draft Operational Programme (Version 7) was submitted to the European Commission in April 2007.