

THE ACTION PLAN FOR NORDIC-SCOTTISH CO-
OPERATION ON REGIONAL POLICY AND
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (2001-2005)

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1. INTRODUCTION

On 1-2 March 2001, senior officials concerned with regional policy and sustainable economic development from the Nordic countries and Scotland met at Skibo Castle (Dornoch, Scotland) to discuss the development of joint approaches to shared challenges in the fields of regional policy and sustainable economic development in the Nordic and North Atlantic areas. This Conference was the third in a series that began at Ackergill (Wick, Scotland) in 1994 and was taken forward at Kittila (Lapland, Finland) in 1996. For the first time officials from the Faroe Islands and Greenland, as well as the EC, took part, as did participants from the private sector.

The Ackergill meeting initiated a co-operation programme, including the development of joint working between research and public bodies in each country focused on the themes of SMEs, information technology, university networking and forestry. A Visiting Professorial Chair in Nordic Policy Studies at the University of Strathclyde was also established. This first phase of the Nordic-Scottish co-operation is described and evaluated in a report by EPRC undertaken in 1998.¹

This co-operation led to a further important achievement, the development of a common EU-funded initiative in the form of the Northern Periphery Article 10 Programme 1997-99. This is now being followed up by the Northern Periphery Interreg IIIB Programme 2000-06. Support for Nordic-Scottish co-operation is also available from other sources, including the North Sea Interreg IIIB programme 2000-2006. Significant resources have been spent on these programmes already, and further funding will be available for co-operation projects in future years.

The Skibo Conference underlined the common interests between the Nordic countries and Scotland, such as sparsity of population and fragmented settlement structures, the challenges of transport and communication, the key role of SMEs as generators of economic development, the role of competence and knowledge, the need to preserve environmental quality and resources, the need to promote social justice and equal opportunities and the importance of culture and community structures. The Conference also recognised the value in joint working to address these issues and acknowledged the importance of sustainable solutions, which are beneficial in economic, social and environmental terms. A copy of the Conference Conclusions is attached as an Annex to this Action Plan.

In order to take this commitment forward, the Conference set out the aims and objectives for future Nordic-Scottish co-operation and identified potential areas of co-operation (see Section 2 below). EPRC and Nordregio were requested to prepare an Action Plan, which would indicate how the co-operation objectives are to be implemented. This paper sets out an Action Plan. It identifies three types of co-operation action and, for each, sets out the goals, specific activities, responsibilities and indicators of success. The paper also discusses how the Action Plan should be managed, and lists some proposed projects.

2. FUTURE NORDIC-SCOTTISH CO-OPERATION

2.1 Aims of the Nordic-Scottish Co-operation

As defined by the Skibo Conference, the aim of the Nordic-Scottish co-operation is *to promote the development of common approaches to shared challenges in the fields of regional policy and sustainable economic development in the Nordic and North Atlantic areas.*

¹ Bachtler J, Brown R and Raines P (1999) *Evaluation of Nordic-Scottish Co-operation*, Regional and Industrial Policy Research Paper No 35, European Policies Research Centre, Glasgow.

In particular, the objectives are:

- to work together on identifying solutions to common regional development challenges and opportunities throughout the area, including a particular emphasis on remote, sparsely populated areas, which bring sustainable benefits; and
- to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of interregional co-operation programmes, in particular their economic development impact;

by:

- identifying common projects designed to reduce disadvantage and exploit opportunities;
 - exchanging experience among officials/experts and co-operating on relevant policy research; and
 - sharing information on the design, management and evaluation of programmes.
- to collaborate on supporting institution-building and policy development in the Candidate Countries, in particular through a shared approach to twinning; and
 - where appropriate, to advance common interests at the EU level by influencing EU policy debates on regional policy, for example in areas such as Structural Funds, enlargement and competition policy.

The co-operation will build on experience to date of Nordic-Scottish co-operation and will use existing institutions. It should take advantage of available programmes such as the EU Interreg programmes (notably the Northern Periphery and North Sea programmes) and other Community Initiatives designed to support this aim. The guiding principles for such co-operation should be common benefit, through piloting practical solutions which, as far as possible, achieve concrete results.

The above objectives encompass several forms of co-operation: networking and awareness-raising (eg. exchange agreements, thematic seminars, information activities); joint studies/analyses or policy papers on common issues of interest; and concrete co-operation projects (funded through Interreg, Twinning etc). The Action Plan below elaborates on specific measures and the allocation of responsibilities, it is presented as a basis for discussion and agreement among the countries involved.

The co-operation will be organised at an informal level through liaison between the senior officials of the Nordic countries and Scotland, working with the support of existing organisations and research institutes.

2.2 Potential Areas of Co-operation

The Skibo Conference identified potential policy responses and possible areas of co-operation in the following fields.

- *Regional Policy and Sustainable Development:* changes in outlook and adaptation on the part of individuals, communities, enterprises and institutions; new forms of institutional planning, policy design and delivery; sustainable tourism; effective strategies for responding to potential catastrophes for the rural economy (oil spills, food safety).
- *Regional Policy in Rural and Peripheral Areas:* promoting active and successful communities; the optimal role of the public sector in the restructuring and diversification of rural economies; decentralisation of public sector jobs (government offices, higher education institutions, research facilities); the quality of employment in rural areas; involving the private sector more in economic development; service provision for rural areas (transport, utilities, public/private community services); raising awareness of the distinct circumstances of Northern peripherality.

- *New Economy and the Information Society*: the exploitation of knowledge and new technology for and by SMEs and communities; effective networking between companies and individuals; connecting sources of knowledge (universities, research institutes) with users and businesses; developing common approaches to and resources for e-learning.
- *Business Growth*: promoting entrepreneurship in all areas, especially through education of young people; developing networks between SMEs; developing joint opportunities and interconnections in relation to North Atlantic transport, especially in relation to oil and gas developments in Northern waters.
- *Skills and Learning*: benchmarking of skills shortages and mechanisms for reskilling to get people back to work; comparison of best practice in responding to labour market demand at regional or area level; developing the right type of skills for the information age.
- *Global Connections*: promoting broadband development in less populated areas by, at an early stage, sharing of information about country and regional strategies, including on the aggregation of local public sector demand, and progress to date; research into trends in the application of ICT infrastructure technology in such areas and planning regimes; promoting e-commerce and best practice in e-learning for SMEs.
- *Community Development*: developing networks to promote bottom-up community development including through sharing 'best practice' and learning from mistakes; promoting the involvement of young people in communities in rural areas by asking young people what they want and promoting youth exchanges; developing business involvement in community development.

3. THE ACTION PLAN

The aim of the following Action Plan is to serve as a framework for the continued co-operation, bringing forward the aims and themes listed in the above Skibo conclusions. An effective action plan should prioritise between these interesting topics, identify in which context the different issues best can be followed up, and suggest a division of responsibilities for further action.

3.1 Forms of Co-operation

A first observation is that the issues fall naturally into three groups, as indicated in the table below:

- policy co-operation – joint studies and policy papers, contributions to EU policy debates; exchange of experience regarding common challenges, programme management, competition rules, northern dimension etc; and networking and exchange agreements;
- practical co-operation in regional development: sustainable development; rural development and peripheral areas; the new economy and the information society; business growth; skills and learning; global connections; community development;
- support for institution-building and policy development in the Candidate Countries, notably through twinning covenants but also bilateral initiatives.

In each of these areas, there are different possible instruments for implementing common actions. In particular, there is more EU funding than ever before under the headings of institution building and practical co-operation in regional development.

Topics and issues	Instruments for implementing common actions		
	<i>Nordic-Scottish funding, from governments and NÄRP²</i>	<i>INTERREG IIIB North Sea & Northern Periphery</i>	<i>Other EU programmes and initiatives</i>
Policy co-operation			
➤ Joint studies and policy papers, influencing EU policy debates	x		
➤ Exchange of experience regarding common challenges, programme management, etc.	x		
➤ Networking and exchange agreements	x		
Practical co-operation in regional development:			
➤ Regional Policy and Sustainable Development		x	
➤ Regional Policy in Rural and Peripheral areas		x	
➤ New Economy and the Information Society		x	
➤ Business Growth		x	
➤ Skills and Learning		x	
➤ Global Connections		x	
➤ Community Development		x	
Support for institution building and policy development in the candidate countries			
➤ Twinning and other activities			x

There are significant differences between these categories of projects with respect to the possible degree of influence for the Nordic-Scottish co-operation. On the Nordic side, the NÄRP committee can take a more direct responsibility for policy co-operation. In each of the countries, the involved ministries can influence the priorities of the monitoring committees for the North Sea programme and the Northern Periphery programme, but decisions here will be taken in consensus between member states and regions. Twinning covenants and support for institution building and policy development in candidate countries will also be decided country wise. However, a strong network between key persons in the Nordic-Scottish network will of course contribute to the overall co-ordination of efforts and therefore enhance the outcome and impact of these efforts.

3.2 Actions for Policy Co-operation

Goals:

To promote a better mutual understanding of policies and policy perspectives between the Nordic countries and Scotland, and – thereby – to co-operate in influencing policy debates at European level.

Actions:

(i) *Undertake dialogue on key European policy challenges and issues, notably the enlargement of the EU, through:*

- meetings of senior officials and other key persons every second year – supported by monitoring and assessment of common interests and positions with regard European

² NÄRP is the Nordic Senior Officials Committee for Regional Policy (Nordiska Ministerrådet och dess Ämbetsmannakommitté för regionalpolitik).

policy issues, such as the timetable and conditions of accession and the implications of enlargement, as well as other aspects of European integration;

- establishing ad hoc working groups for specific issues;
- regular invitation of relevant experts from Nordic countries and Scotland to official meetings, seminars etc;
- informal exchanges of relevant papers, views etc (particularly via a website).

(ii) *Exchange experience to improve mutual understanding of respective policy frameworks and systems through:*

- secondment programme – involving active exchange of civil servants and other economic development professionals from Nordic countries and Scotland spending 1-3 months in another administration;
- joint Nordic-Scottish research programme – Scotland to link in with the second phase of the Nordic Council of Ministers five-year research programme on regional policy (2002-2004);
- new visiting scholarship/professorship programme –integrated with the above research programme.

Responsibility:

- (i) NÄRP (or individual Nordic governments), Scottish Executive
- (ii) NÄRP (or individual Nordic governments)/Scottish Executive; EPRC/Nordregio

Indicators of success:

Influence on European debates (eg. measured on the basis of position papers inserted into the European debate on policy challenges and issues)

Mutual understanding of policies and policy perspectives (eg. measured through the perceived value of senior officials' meetings; number of civil servants seconded; number of experts exchanged; instances of collaboration on policy research).

3.3 Actions for Practical Co-operation in Regional Development

Goal:

To improve the practical design, delivery and evaluation of regional development policies, strategies, measures or projects through co-operation between Nordic and Scottish organisations

Actions:

Within the context of the Interreg programme, improve the economic development impact of inter-regional co-operation by:

- identification of issues where co-operation or exchange (as set out in section 2.2) provides a basis for projects such as exchange of experience networks, joint pilot projects and initiatives, collaborative studies;
 - adaptation of project generation, selection and monitoring processes to ensure that projects contribute directly to practical policy understanding and identify how they will improve regional development policies, strategies, measures or projects;
 - creation of meta-evaluation and feedback mechanism to permit regular review of results of past and present Interreg projects, as well as effective administrative mechanisms providing feedback for officials.
- (i) *Exploit non-Interreg sources of funding for practical co-operation on common regional development issues*
- (ii) *Establish dissemination mechanism to ensure effective dissemination of co-operation project results throughout the policy and academic communities.*

Responsibility:

- (i) Interreg Monitoring Committees; Interreg programme management secretariats
- (ii) Nordic and Scottish government departments and economic development organisations: eg. Ministries in all countries, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, SND, SIVA, NUTEK, Vinnova, Tekes, T&E-Centres, Regional councils, County councils, County administrative boards
- (iii) EPRC/Nordregio

Indicators of success:

Increased understanding of practical policy options (eg. measured by numbers of co-operation projects with concrete economic development outcomes)

Evidence of change in policy practice (eg. measured by new or adapted policy initiatives in terms of design or delivery)

3.4 Actions to Support Institution-Building and Policy in Candidate Countries

Goal:

To co-operate in supporting policy development in Central and Eastern Europe. The added value for the Nordic-Scottish co-operation will be the opportunity to have a larger pool of expertise for use (making it less difficult to manage these contracts) and through increased activity to build more dense networks in Candidate Countries (for political co-operation at a later stage).

Actions:

- (i) *Exploit the funding provided by twinning covenants to promote:*
- co-operation in preparation and management of twinning covenants;

- sharing of information on interest in, and composition of, bids;
 - co-operation in preparing joint bids;
 - sharing of expertise eg. organisation of study visits, use of STEs;
 - collaboration of preparation of materials;
 - joint meetings with CC officials.
- (ii) *Maximise other opportunities for joint contributions to institution-building and policy development in the Candidate Countries, by:*
- sharing of information on conferences, seminars;
 - exchange of relevant papers on the institution-building and policy development process;
 - sharing of information on missions, study visits etc.

Responsibility:

- (i) Twinning co-ordinators in Denmark, Finland, Scotland and Sweden
- (ii) NÄRP/Scottish Executive

Indicators of success:

Joint twinning activity (eg. measured by instances of collaboration in the preparation, management and delivery of covenants)

Other collaboration on institution-building and policy development in Candidate Countries (eg. measured by joint participation in seminars, missions etc; exchanges of papers etc)

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

The Skibo Conference agreed that the Nordic-Scottish Co-operation should operate in a largely decentralised manner, managed from within existing structures and involving no new organisational arrangements. Further, the intention is to exploit, insofar as possible, existing funding mechanisms.

4.1 Organisation

If the co-operation is to maintain momentum, the responsibility for taking forward agreed actions must be clear. The above Action Plan suggests an allocation of responsibilities among the organisations represented at the Skibo Conference. However, some form of monitoring and review mechanism will be required to facilitate the co-operation process.

An liaison group should therefore be established – one official per country – which will have responsibility for discussing the co-operation, disseminating information, monitoring actions and co-ordinating preparations for meetings. This should not be a permanent secretariat but an informal group that should be able to work together primarily using electronic media. The group should meet face-to-face at least once a year, ideally, as a follow-on to other meetings, eg. of NÄRP. The emphasis would be on liaison not decision-making. A key task for the liaison group is to keep track of the co-operation taking place and to provide a regular report to participants. The group may also need to initiate some

publicity and motivational activities to encourage organisations to respond to the opportunities for co-operation identified above.

It would be important to name a 'chair' for the group who would take responsibility for keeping the group together and maintaining momentum. This role should rotate between Scotland and the Nordic countries.

4.2 Timetable

The Action Plan needs to operate over a reasonable timescale if it is to be successful. The evaluation of Nordic-Scottish co-operation in the 1990s noted that building effective co-operation projects needs time and energy, in particular to secure the necessary trust and confidence among participants. It is suggested that the Action Plan should operate for a minimum period of five years in line with the planning period for the Nordic co-operation programme on regional policy³.

It is also important that senior officials give a lead to the process. In this respect, regular meetings (of the Ackergill, Kittila, Skibo type) are important to build confidence, commitment and good working relationships. Meetings should be held once every two years hosted by different countries in turn. The last three meetings have been in Scotland and Finland; the next meeting might therefore be in Sweden, Norway or Denmark in 2003.

Each meeting should have policy and practical components. The *policy component* should address, in plenary discussions, a broad, medium-term challenge, which is common to all or most countries and which will significantly influence regional development policies eg. the implications of EU enlargement. The *practical component*, addressed in workshop discussions, should focus on specific issues of policy design, delivery or evaluation eg. the promotion of effective policies for SMEs.

Themes should be identified long enough in advance to allow for the preparation and distribution of papers to participants. Meetings should be followed up with revised papers, disseminated to a wider audience.

Meetings should also receive a report on the different elements of the Action Plan, in particular to review progress under the different objectives and actions and to determine modifications.

4.3 Dissemination

A further lesson from past Nordic-Scottish co-operation is the importance of publicising and marketing the co-operation objectives – at the outset and at intervals throughout the co-operation period – through a variety of media. These include regular articles in news media, organisational newsletters and websites and publicity material at seminars and conferences. The progress and results of co-operation initiatives should also be widely and actively disseminated.

The organisation of the co-operation, in particular meetings and other activities, should be facilitated by active use of the Internet. A Nordic-Scottish website already exists, in embryonic form (www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/skibo/), and could be developed at minimal cost. The website could be used to foster understanding of the resources, knowledge and information available in the areas of interest, with links spanning all of the countries and regions participating in the co-operation, the regional development institutions, agencies and other organisations, academic departments and research institutes as well as relevant papers and other output.

³ Nordisk regionalpolitisk samarbeidsprogram 2001-2005, Nordisk Ministerråd, København 2000.

5. FUNDING

The aim of this Action Plan is to encourage and to monitor the Nordic-Scottish co-operation. The concrete projects will all have to be funded separately, and sources will vary according to the kind of activities involved. It will important to identify and exploit synergies with existing activities.

5.1 Funding sources

With respect to the typology of co-operation topics and issues presented earlier, there are several possible funding sources

Topics and issues	Possible funding sources
1. Policy co-operation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Joint studies and policy papers, influencing EU policy debates ➤ Exchange of experience regarding common challenges, programme management, etc. ➤ Networking and exchange agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NÄRP Research Programme (with Scottish contribution) ➤ Direct funding from Nordic-Scottish government departments/agencies
2. Practical co-operation in regional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regional Policy and Sustainable Development ➤ Regional Policy in Rural and Peripheral areas ➤ New Economy and the Information Society ➤ Business Growth ➤ Skills and Learning ➤ Global Connections ➤ Community Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Northern Periphery Programme IR III b ➤ North Sea Programme IR III b ➤ Interreg III c ➤ ESPON (necessary with a EU15 / EU 27 perspective to get funding here) ➤ Norwegian participation in Interreg III b and ESPON programmes ➤ 5th and 6th Framework Programme ➤ European Programmes for co-operation within culture, education, communication, environment etc. ➤ Project funding from Scotland and NÄRP (especially projects under section 3.2 above)
3. Support for institution building and policy development in the Candidate Countries and other countries (eg.Russia): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Twinning projects ➤ Other activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Phare support for twinning covenants ➤ Other bilateral/multi-lateral support for CEE countries (eg. World Bank)

5.2 Project selection and support

Policy co-operation projects. It would be advisable for the policy co-operation projects to be of strategic, high-level policy-maker interest with a coherent approach to the selection of joint studies, policy papers and exchange agreements. In the first instance, a limited set of themes should be identified which would be the focus for the plenary sessions at the 2003 meeting. Examples might be: assessment of the impact of enlargement on regional policy from a Nordic-Scottish perspective; development of the concept of the Northern dimension; policy lessons from the Northern Periphery and North Sea programmes. The commissioning of policy papers and the organisation of secondments and exchanges should then focus on these issues, with the timing of outputs (research results, secondment feedback etc) geared towards the 2003 meeting. Funding should be determined – on the basis of these

principles - through individual proposals and applications to NARP and to Scottish government organisations (Scottish Executive, Scottish Enterprise, HIE).

Practical co-operation projects. This Action Plan has identified a wide range of topics and issues for practical co-operation, as well as numerous different funding programmes, each with its own selection criteria. The main challenge here is to encourage the organisations and individuals involved with the Nordic-Scottish Co-operation to develop their joint interests (see below for examples), to identify the funding possibilities, to apply for support and to ensure that the results are evaluated and disseminated, in particular for future Nordic-Scottish meetings.

Institution-building projects. These projects are likely to be more ad hoc, dependent on the opportunities offered principally by the Twinning covenants as well as other pre-accession and transition aid for the Candidate Countries and some other countries (such as Russia). In the case of Twinning projects, there are mutual advantages for Nordic-Scottish participation in the preparation of certain bids but these will necessarily have to be considered on a case-by-case basis, and project selection will be determined by the Candidate Countries and EC. The main challenge here is to ensure open lines of communication between the Nordic countries and Scotland in considering the preparation of bids. (Clearly, not all bids will be appropriate for such co-operation, and individual countries will make their own strategic judgements on whether co-operation is advantageous to their interests). Apart from Twinning, there may also be other funding sources or types of co-operation project that could be exploited to serve the objectives of this category of co-operation.

5.3 Indicative List of Projects

In circulating this Action Plan for discussion among participants, it is anticipated that possible projects will be put forward for consideration. An indicative list of the projects already suggested is presented below (other suggestions are welcome).

5.3.1 Policy Co-operation Projects

These are projects under direct supervision of the Nordic-Scottish co-operation arrangement, with NARP and the Scottish Executive as nodes in the network. Projects here should contribute to the strengthening of this link and provide input to the meetings to be held every second year.

Title:	Common interests and positions in the EU
Theme:	Analysis of emerging political and policy positions of EU and Candidate Countries in the preparations for enlargement. Assessment of impact of enlargement on national interests and the key issues for the next round of negotiations. Competition rules.
Relevance to goals:	Direct input to the dialogue on European challenges and issues, providing basis for next Nordic-Scottish meeting
Funding:	NARP/Scottish Executive
Proposer:	Nordregio/EPRC
Partners:	

Title:	Northern and Nordic dimension
Theme:	To identify common interests and to further develop the concepts of the Northern dimension, the Nordic dimension and the Arctic Window
Relevance to goals:	Direct input to the dialogue on European challenges and issues, providing basis for next Nordic-Scottish meeting
Funding:	NARP/Scottish Executive
Proposer:	Norwegian Ministry of Regional Development
Partners:	

Title:	Policy lessons from Northern Periphery and Nordic Sea programmes
Theme:	What works, and what does not? Meta-evaluation of the NPP and NSP programmes and projects, identifying successful projects, good practice in inter-regional co-operation, examples of practices

Relevance to goals:	transferred between countries, regions and organisations, and lessons for policy. Identification of impact of research policies and lessons for better future policies
Funding:	NÄRP Research Programme/Scottish Executive
Proposer:	Nordregio/EPRC
Partners:	

Title:	Nordic-Scottish Visiting Scholars/Professors Programme
Theme:	Programme for senior experts and officials to spend 3-6 months based in research environment of EPRC (Glasgow) or Nordregio (Stockholm) to work on policy research issues of significance for Nordic-Scottish co-operation eg. implications of enlargement
Relevance for goals:	Direct contribution to mutual understanding of policies and policy perspectives. Direct input to dialogue on European challenges and issues
Funding:	??
Proposer:	EPRC/Nordregio
Partners:	

Title:	
Theme:	
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	
Partners:	

5.3.2 *Practical Co-operation Projects*

These are projects where different partners in the involved countries are co-operating to develop their regions. Suggestions below reflect discussions at the Skibo conference.

Title:	Sharing youth experience of community involvement
Theme:	Assessment of youth involvement in the community decision-making process and youth exchanges as well as promoting links with remote rural communities
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	Northern Periphery Programme/LEADER +
Proposer:	
Partners:	Scottish local community groups. Potential partners from Finland, Norway, Greenland?

Title:	Communications in peripheral areas
Theme:	Exchange of experience regarding transport and communication systems in rural and peripheral areas; roads, ferries, air transport, telecommunication; the effects of privatisation and alternative models for service provision
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	
Partners:	

Title:	Broadband technologies for use in rural areas
Theme:	Comparative study of technology solutions for developing broadband in rural/remote areas
Relevance for goals:	Joint working to share information and experiences in tackling common issues central to rural and community development
Funding:	
Proposer:	
Partners:	

Title:	Development of a common platform for e-learning and distance learning packages
Theme:	How to co-operate better and learn from each other on development of e-learning and distance learning
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	
Partners:	

Title:	Identifying the nature scope of planning controls over telecoms development
Theme:	Specific focus on how considerations relating to regional effects of the new infrastructure are taken into account. Key priority would be to identify best practice in forward planning, siting and design.
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	Northern Periphery Programme / North Sea Programme
Proposer:	
Partners:	Scottish local authorities (esp. Highlands Council), HIE. Potential partners from Norway, Sweden, Finland?

Title:	Joint approach to new maritime developments regarding oil, gas and cargo transportation in the North-Western waters
Theme:	Analysis of changes and development in sea transport in Northern waters; assessment of impacts and possibilities for transport; identification for infrastructure possibilities; assessment of risks for oil spills and impacts on the environment and the rural economy, initiation of networking between private and public bodies
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	Scottish Executive – Team Community Initiatives and Team Highlands & Islands
Partners:	Barlindhaug Consulting

Title:	Delivery of essential services in remote and peripheral areas
Theme:	Assessment of different forms for service provision, public or private. Investigation of the content of Art. 16 in the Amsterdam treaty on "services of public interest" and how it is translated into policies in each country
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	Northern Periphery Programme / North Sea Programme
Proposer:	Scottish Executive, Nordregio
Partners:	Scottish Enterprise, HIE, regions in Norden

Title:	New industries in rural and peripheral areas
Theme:	Regional and industrial policy is to a large extent based upon "bottom-up" initiatives for indigenous development. How successful are public interventions, and are there new policy measures that have proved to be working – direct business support or indirect business infrastructure? Dissemination of best practice.
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	Northern Periphery Programme / North Sea Programme
Proposer:	Norwegian Ministry of Regional Development
Partners:	

Title:	Identifying best practice in sustainable urban expansion
Relevance for goals:	
Theme:	Examination of scale of urban development pressures in Edinburgh, Copenhagen, Gothenburg and Oslo would be examined. Identify best practice in terms of layout, design, green transport solutions, energy efficiency and waste planning
Funding:	North Sea Programme
Proposer:	
Partners:	Scottish local authorities and house builders. Potential partners from Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Title:	Costs of rapid urbanisation
Theme:	The on-going structural changes imply heavy investments in cities and under-utilised infrastructures elsewhere. Assessment of costs involved, i.e. investments and bottlenecks in capital areas, and empty roads and schools in rural areas.
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	Swedish Ministry of Industry
Partners:	

Title:	
Theme:	
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	
Partners:	

5.3.3 *Projects for Institution-Building in Candidate Countries*

These are projects where governments and regions in Norden and Scotland co-operate for a more effective involvement in new EU Member States.

Title:	Education programmes in Candidate Countries
Theme:	To set up an effective organisation for educational support to Candidate Countries, as part of Twinning covenants or other EU programmes
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	Nordregio/EPRC (SIRIUS)
Partners:	

Title:	
Theme:	
Relevance for goals:	
Funding:	
Proposer:	
Partners:	

ANNEX: CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

THIRD NORDIC-SCOTTISH COOPERATION CONFERENCE, SKIBO CASTLE, 1-2 MARCH 2001

SUMMARY

A review of the Nordic-Scottish co-operation and an assessment of the challenges of Globalisation, the New Economy and enlargement of the European Union which the partners must now address has demonstrated the significant benefits that can be achieved by a continuation and reinforcement of this initiative and the practical implementation of the policies it has developed.

INTRODUCTION

Senior officials concerned with regional policy and sustainable economic development from the Nordic countries and Scotland met at Skibo Castle near Dornoch in Scotland from 1-2 March to discuss the development of joint approaches to shared challenges in the fields of regional policy and sustainable economic development in the Nordic and North Atlantic areas.

This conference was the third in a series which began at Ackergill near Wick in Scotland in 1994 and was taken forward in Kittila in Lapland, Finland in 1996. For the first time officials from the Faroe Islands and Greenland, as well as the European Commission, participated, as did people from the private sector. The conference heard of encouraging progress in this co-operation since then, including the development of joint working between research and public bodies in each country and the development of common EU programmes notably the Northern Periphery programme.⁴

DISCUSSION

The Conference again underlined the common interests between the Nordic countries and Scotland, such as sparsity of population and fragmented settlement structures, the challenges of transport and communication, the key role of SMEs as generators of economic development, the role of competence and knowledge, the need to preserve environmental quality and resources, the need to promote social justice and equal opportunities and the importance of culture and community structures.

The Conference recognised the value in joint working to address these issues and acknowledged the importance of sustainable solutions which are beneficial in economic, social and environmental terms. Specifically it identified potential policy responses and possible areas of co-operation in the following fields:

- *Regional Policy and Sustainable Development*: changes in outlook and adaptation on the part of individuals, communities, enterprises and institutions; new forms of institutional planning, policy design and delivery; sustainable tourism; effective strategies for responding to potential catastrophes for the rural economy (oils spills, food safety)
- *Regional Policy in Rural and Peripheral areas*: promoting active and successful communities; the optimal role of the public sector in the restructuring and diversification of rural economies; decentralisation of public sectors jobs (government offices, higher education institutions, research

⁴ Full details of the development of Nordic-Scottish cooperation are in the evaluation carried out by EPRC in 1998.

facilities); the quality of employment in rural areas; involving the private sector more in economic development; service provision for rural areas (transport, utilities, public/private community services); raising awareness of the distinct circumstances of Northern peripherality.

- *New Economy and the Information Society*: the exploitation of knowledge and new technology for and by SMEs and communities; effective networking between companies and individuals; connecting sources of knowledge (universities, research institutes) with users and businesses; developing common approaches to and resources for e learning
- *Business Growth*: promoting entrepreneurship in all areas, especially through education of young people; developing networks between SMEs; developing joint opportunities and interconnections in relation to North Atlantic transport, especially in relation to oil and gas developments in Northern waters.
- *Skills and Learning*: benchmarking of skills shortages and mechanisms for reskilling to get people back to work; comparison of best practice in responding to labour market demand at regional or area level; developing the right type of skills for the information age.
- *Global Connections*: promoting broadband development in less populated areas by, at an early stage, sharing of information about country and regional strategies, including on the aggregation of local public sector demand, and progress to date; research into trends in the application of ICT infrastructure technology in such areas and planning regimes; promoting e commerce and best practice in e learning for SMEs
- *Community Development*: developing networks to promote bottom up community development including through sharing best practice and learning from mistakes; promoting the involvement of young people in communities in rural areas by asking young people what they want and promoting youth exchanges; developing business involvement in community development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To take co-operation forward on a more structured basis to provide practical benefits to all concerned and to ensure that its effects are properly evaluated, the conference agreed to recommend to the responsible authorities the following strategic aim and objectives for the future development of Nordic-Scottish co-operation.

Aim and Strategic Objectives

To promote the development of common approaches to shared challenges in the fields of regional policy and sustainable economic development in the Nordic and North Atlantic areas.

In particular:

- to work together on identifying solutions to common regional development challenges and opportunities throughout the area, including a particular emphasis on remote, sparsely populated areas, which bring sustainable benefits; and
- to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of interregional co-operation programmes, in particular their economic development impact,;

by:

identifying common projects designed to reduce disadvantage and exploit opportunities

exchanging experience among officials/experts and co-operating on relevant policy research; and

sharing information on the design, management and evaluation of programmes

- to collaborate on supporting institution building and policy development in the candidate countries, in particular through a shared approach to twinning; and
- where appropriate, to advance common interests at the EU level by influencing EU policy debates on regional policy, for example in areas such as structural funds, enlargement and competition policy.

The co-operation will build on experience to date of Nordic-Scottish co-operation and use existing institutions. It should take advantage of available programmes such as the EU INTERREG programmes (notably the Northern Periphery and North Sea programmes) and other Community Initiatives designed to support this aim. The guiding principles for such co-operation should be common benefit, through piloting practical solutions which, as far as possible, achieve concrete results.

The above objectives encompass several forms of co-operation: networking and awareness-raising (eg. exchange agreements, thematic seminars, information activities); joint studies/analyses or policy papers on common issues of interest; and concrete co-operation projects (funded through Interreg, Twinning etc). An Action Plan will be produced elaborating on specific measures and the allocation of responsibilities, for agreement among the countries involved.

The co-operation will be organised at an informal level through liaison between the senior officials of the Nordic countries and Scotland, working with the support of existing organisations and research institutes.

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