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# **INTERREG NORTH SEA REGION PROGRAMME 2021-2027 SEA SCREENING - FINAL REPORT**

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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Under the requirements of *European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment* (the SEA Directive), programmes that meet certain criteria should have a Strategic Environmental assessment (SEA) carried out on them. To establish if a programme needs an SEA, a screening review is required against a list of criteria.

The draft Interreg North Sea Region programme 2021-2027 has been screened against these criteria. This report records the results of the screening review:

- A draft screening report was produced in early April 2021 which concluded that an SEA is not required as:
  - The programme does not set the framework for future development consent of projects;
  - It is unlikely that the programme will cause **significant** negative or positive effects on the environment; and
  - Any influence that the programme has on implementation of other plans or programmes does not increase the likelihood that those other plans and programmes will cause **significant** negative or positive effects on the environment.
- The draft screening report was sent for consultation to the relevant environmental bodies in Denmark, Flanders, France, Germany, Norway, The Netherlands and Sweden.

After consideration of the comments received during the consultation, the final screening report also concludes that a full SEA is not required.

## RÉSUMÉ NON TECHNIQUE

Conformément aux exigences de la *directive 2001/42/CE de l'Union européenne relative à l'évaluation des incidences de certains plans et programmes sur l'environnement* (directive ESIE), les programmes qui répondent à certains critères doivent faire l'objet d'une évaluation environnementale stratégique (EES). Pour déterminer si un programme doit faire l'objet d'une EES, il faut procéder à un examen préalable en fonction d'une liste de critères.

Le projet de programme Interreg pour la région de la mer du Nord 2021-2027 a été examiné en fonction de ces critères. Ce rapport présente les résultats de l'examen préalable :

- Un projet de rapport d'examen préalable a été produit au début du mois d'avril 2021 et a conclu qu'une EES n'était pas nécessaire car:
  - Le programme ne fixe pas le cadre dans lequel la mise en œuvre des projets futurs pourra être autorisée;
  - le programme n'est pas susceptible d'avoir des effets négatifs ou positifs **notables** sur l'environnement; et
  - les influences éventuelles du programme sur la mise en œuvre d'autres plans ou programmes n'augmentent pas la probabilité que ces autres plans et programmes aient des effets négatifs ou positifs **notables** sur l'environnement.
- Le projet de rapport d'examen préalable a été envoyé pour consultation aux autorités environnementales compétentes au Danemark, en Flandre, en France, en Allemagne, en Norvège, aux Pays-Bas et en Suède.

Après avoir pris en compte les commentaires reçus au cours de la consultation, le rapport final d'examen préalable conclut également qu'une EES complète n'est pas nécessaire.

## NIET-TECHNISCHE SAMENVATTING

Volgens de voorschriften van Richtlijn 2001/42/EG van de Europese Unie betreffende de beoordeling van de gevolgen voor het milieu van bepaalde plannen en programma's (de SEA-richtlijn) moet voor programma's die aan bepaalde criteria voldoen, een Strategische Milieubeoordeling (SMB) worden uitgevoerd. Om te bepalen of een programma aan een SMB moet worden onderworpen, is een toetsing aan een lijst van criteria vereist.

Het ontwerp van het Interreg Regio Noordzee 2021-2027 programma is getoetst aan deze criteria. In dit verslag zijn de resultaten van de toetsing opgenomen:

- Begin april 2021 werd een ontwerp-screeningsverslag opgesteld, waarin werd geconcludeerd dat een SEA niet vereist is, als:
  - Het programma vormt niet het kader voor de toekomstige goedkeuring van projecten;
  - Het is onwaarschijnlijk dat het programma **significant** negatieve of positieve gevolgen voor het milieu zal hebben; en
  - De eventuele invloed van het programma op de uitvoering van andere plannen of programma's verhoogt niet de kans dat die andere plannen en programma's **significant** negatieve of positieve gevolgen voor het milieu zullen hebben.
- Het ontwerp van rapporteringsverslag is ter raadpleging toegezonden aan de relevante milieu instanties in Denemarken, Vlaanderen, Frankrijk, Duitsland, Noorwegen, Nederland en Zweden.

Na bestudering van de tijdens de raadpleging ontvangen opmerkingen wordt in het definitieve screeningverslag eveneens geconcludeerd dat een volledige SMB niet vereist is.

## NICHTTECHNISCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Gemäß den Anforderungen der *Richtlinie 2001/42/EG des Europäischen Parlamentes und des Rates über die Prüfung der Umweltauswirkungen bestimmter Pläne und Programme* (SUP-Richtlinie) sollte für Programme, die bestimmte Kriterien erfüllen, eine Strategische Umweltprüfung (SUP) durchgeführt werden. Um festzustellen, ob ein Programm eine SUP benötigt, ist ein Screening anhand einer Kriterienliste erforderlich.

Der Entwurf des Interreg North Sea Region-Programms 2021-2027 wurde anhand dieser Kriterien überprüft. In diesem Bericht werden die Ergebnisse des überprüfenden Screenings dargelegt:

- Anfang April 2021 wurde ein Entwurf des Screening-Berichts erstellt, der zu dem Schluss kam, dass eine SUP nicht erforderlich ist, da:
  - das Programm nicht den Rahmen für die Genehmigung zukünftiger Projekte festlegt
  - es unwahrscheinlich ist, dass das Programm **erhebliche** negative oder positive Auswirkungen auf die Umwelt hat und
  - jegliche Einflüsse des Programms auf die Umsetzung anderer Pläne oder Programme nicht die Wahrscheinlichkeit erhöhen, dass diese anderen Pläne und Programme **erhebliche** negative oder positive Auswirkungen auf die Umwelt haben.
- Der Entwurf des Screening-Berichts wurde den zuständigen Umweltbehörden in Dänemark, Flandern, Frankreich, Deutschland, Norwegen, den Niederlanden und Schweden zur Konsultation übermittelt.

Nach Prüfung der während der Konsultation eingegangenen Kommentare kommt auch der abschließende Screening-Bericht zu dem Schluss, dass eine vollständige SUP nicht erforderlich ist.

## IKKE-TEKNISK RESUMÉ

I henhold til kravene i *Den Europæiske Unions direktiv 2001/42/EC* om vurderingen af virkningerne af visse planer og programmer på miljøet (SMV-direktivet) skal programmer, der opfylder visse kriterier, gennemgå en strategisk miljøvurdering (SMV). For at fastslå, om et program skal gennemgå en SMV, kræves en screening mod en liste af kriterier.

Udkastet til Interreg North Sea Region programmet 2021-2027 er blevet screenet mod disse kriterier. Denne rapport dokumenterer resultaterne af screeningen.

- Et udkast til en screeningrapport blev udarbejdet primo april 2021, som konkluderede, at en SMV ikke er påkrævet, eftersom:
  - Programmet ikke fastsætter en ramme for fremtidige anlægstilladelser til projekter;
  - Det er usandsynligt, at programmet vil have medføre **væsentlige** negative eller positive indvirkninger på miljøet; og
  - Enhver indvirkning, som programmet måtte have på implementeringen af andre planer eller programmer, ikke øger sandsynligheden for, at disse andre programmer eller planer vil medføre **væsentlige** negative eller positive indvirkninger på miljøet.
- Udkastet til screeningrapporten blev sendt til høring hos relevante miljøorganer i Danmark, Flandern, Frankrig, Tyskland, Norge, Holland og Sverige.

Efter overvejelse af de kommentarer, der blev modtaget under høringen, konkluderer den endelige screeningrapport ligeledes, at der ikke kræves en fuld SMV.



## IKKE-TEKNISK OPPSUMMERING

Etter krav fra *Den Europeiske Unions direktiv 2001/42/EC om miljøkonsekvensvurdering av planer og programmer* (SEA direktivet), skal programmer som møter visse kriterier bli utredet gjennom en strategisk miljøkonsekvensvurdering (SEA). For å vurdere hvor vidt et program behøver en SEA, må programmet vurderes ved at det screenes mot en kriterieliste.

Utkastet til Interreg North Sea Region programmet for 2021-2027 har blitt screenet mot SEA kriteriene. Denne rapporten dokumenterer resultatene av screeningen:

- Et utkast til screening rapporten ble produsert tidlig i april 2021 og konkluderte med at en SEA ikke er nødvendig siden:
  - Programmet ikke setter forutsetninger for de kommende tilstandene av andre prosjekter;
  - Det er usannsynlig at programmet vil føre til **signifikante** negative eller positive effekter på miljøet; og
  - Enhver effekt programmet vil ha på implementeringen av andre planer eller program ikke øker sannsynligheten for at disse planene eller programmene vil føre til **signifikante** negative eller positive effekter på miljøet.
- Utkastet til rapporten ble oversendt til relevante miljøorgan i Danmark, Flandern, Frankrike, Tyskland, Norge, Nederland og Sverige for konsultasjon.

Etter betraktning av de kommentarene som ble gitt ved konsultasjoner, konkluderte også den endelige rapporten med at en fullverdig SEA ikke er nødvendig.

## ICKE-TEKNISK SAMMANFATTNING

Enligt kraven i *Europaparlamentets och rådets direktiv 2001/42/EG om bedömning av vissa planers och programs miljöpåverkan* (SMB-direktivet), ska program som uppfyller vissa kriterier bedömas med hjälp av en strategisk miljöbedömning (SMB). För att fastställa om ett program behöver en SMB, krävs en granskning i linje med en rad kriterier.

Utkastet Interreg North Sea Region-programmet 2021-2027 har granskats mot dessa kriterier. Den här rapporten presenterar resultaten av granskningen:

- Ett utkast till granskningsrapporten utfördes i början på april 2021 och fastställde att en SMB inte är nödvändig eftersom:
  - Programmet inte fastställer ramen för kommande tillstånd för projekt;
  - Det är osannolikt att programmet skulle ha **signifikanta** negativa eller positiva effekter på miljön; och
  - Eventuell påverkan som programmet har på implementering av andra planer eller program inte ökar sannolikheten för att de planerna och programmen kommer att ha **signifikanta** negativa eller positiva effekter på miljön.
- Utkastet av granskningsrapporten skickades för konsultation till relevanta miljöorgan i Danmark, Flandern, Frankrike, Tyskland, Norge, Nederländerna och Sverige.

Efter övervägande av kommentarerna som mottagits under konsultationen, fastställer även den slutliga granskningsrapporten att en fullständig SMB inte är nödvändig.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 This Report

This Final Screening Report has been prepared to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Interreg North Sea Region programme 2021-2027. The screening has been made in accordance with the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (SEA Directive).

## 1.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

The objective of the SEA Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.

Under the requirements of the SEA Directive certain types of plans must be subject to an environmental assessment.

Article 3 (2) of the SEA Directive states that an environmental assessment shall be carried out for all plans and programmes:

- Which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use; and
- Which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC (EIA directive) or have been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC (habitats directive).

To determine the need for SEA a screening procedure has been undertaken to determine if the programme fits the criteria set out in the SEA Directive. The results of this screening procedure are outlined in this report. The contents of this report are as follows:

- Part 2 sets out the background to the Interreg programme;
- Part 3 sets out details of how the screening process works;
- Part 4 outlines the results of the outline screening;
- Part 5 outlines the results of the detailed screening;
- Part 6 sets out the results of the consultation process; and
- Part 7 sets out the draft conclusions and next steps.

## 2. INTERREG PROGRAMME

### 2.1 Introduction to Interreg

The European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), better known as Interreg is part of the European Union's cohesion policy and provides a framework for action between national, regional and local actors from different Member States of the European Union. The programme aims to reduce social, environmental and economic disparities between EU member states through three types of programmes:

- Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes. These support cooperation between regions from at least two different Member States lying directly on the borders or adjacent to them. e.g. Interreg Greece-Bulgaria; Interreg Central Baltic;
- Transnational Cooperation Programmes. These involve regions from several countries of the EU forming bigger areas. The programmes aim to promote better cooperation and regional development within the Union by a joint approach to tackle common issues. e.g. Interreg North Sea Region, Interreg Baltic Sea Region; Interreg Central Europe; and
- Interregional Programmes. The interregional programmes are geographically "pan-European" covering vast areas. e.g. Interreg Europe.

To date, five programming periods of INTERREG have succeeded each other: INTERREG I (1990-1993) - INTERREG II (1994-1999) - INTERREG III (2000-2006) - INTERREG IV (2007-2013) - INTERREG V (2014-2020).

The fifth period of Interreg (2014-2020) was based on 11 investment priorities (thematic objective) related to the Europe 2020 strategy<sup>1</sup> for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In May 2018, the European Commission adopted proposals aimed at restructuring cohesion policy and European structural and investment funds post-2020 including the Interreg programmes<sup>2</sup>. Proposals confirmed that cross-border, transnational and interregional territorial cooperation, including across maritime borders and with third countries, should remain part of cohesion policy post-2020, while stressing the need to facilitate the implementation of ETC programmes in order to increase their effects.

The next period of Interreg will run from 2021-2027 and will continue to support interregional cooperation among regions across Europe. The new programmes, including the North Sea Region programme are currently being drafted and are expected to be submitted to the European Commission for approval in 2021.

### 2.2 Introduction to Interreg North Sea Region

The Interreg North Sea Region (NSR) is one of the programmes under the ETC Transnational Cooperation objective. The programme aims to contribute to the EU's Strategy for the North Sea Region. The cooperation area in the 2014-2020 programming period covers seven countries. In light of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, it has been decided that the geographical coverage will be amended from 2021 onward. The United Kingdom will cease to be part of the programme in the programming period 2021-2027 and it has been proposed that

<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628228/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)628228\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628228/EPRS_BRI(2018)628228_EN.pdf)

France will become a new member country instead. Figure 1 shows the expected geography of the NSR Programme 2021-2027.



**Figure 1: Expected geography of the North Sea Region Programme 2021-2027 – covering seven countries, six of them EU member states and one partner country (Norway).**

The overall objective of the programme is 'to support development and foster sustained economic growth across the NSR'. The 2014-2020 Programme offered funding in support of five thematic axes:

- Priority axis 1: Building on our capacity for innovation;
- Priority axis 2: Promoting the sustainable management of our environment;
- Priority axis 3: Improving accessibility in the North Sea region;
- Priority axis 4: Promoting sustainable and competitive communities; and
- Priority axis 5: Technical assistance

Additionally, the NSR had four thematic priorities, supported by nine objectives, that contribute to the programme strategy:

- Priority 1: Thinking growth;
- Priority 2: Eco-innovation;
- Priority 3: Sustainable North Sea Region; and
- Priority 4: Green transport and mobility

The programme was subject to a SEA in 2014<sup>3</sup> in accordance with the requirements in Directive 2001/42/EC, and was conducted as follows:

- Description of how environmental factors were considered in the programme's evolution;
- Strategy, vision and priorities assessed against the Europe 2020 Strategy<sup>1</sup> and EU seventh Environmental Action Programme<sup>4</sup>; and
- Appraisal of the programme objectives within the priorities to determine any significant effects.

<sup>3</sup> [http://archive.northsearegion.eu/files/2014\\_Public\\_Consultation/NSRP\\_SEA\\_Report.pdf](http://archive.northsearegion.eu/files/2014_Public_Consultation/NSRP_SEA_Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/>

The environmental assessment was undertaken acknowledging that the exact nature and impacts of actions of the programme could not be identified at an early stage, as this is dependent on the specific projects that will support the delivery of the strategy.

A range of scenarios were therefore constructed and assessed as part of the SEA to understand at a high level, how implementation of the programme in a certain way could result in significant positive or negative effects. Those activities which are of a more concrete nature and which could, hence, potentially have a more direct environmental impact, are described in very general terms in the programme document.

The environmental assessment concluded that it is not possible to provide a detailed assessment of the significant environmental impacts which could be expected. However, in general, environmental outcomes had the potential to be significant in scenarios where the momentum of activity generated positive cumulative impacts, and alternatively, certain activities if mismanaged, could generate negative unforeseen or environmental impacts. Ways in which significant adverse effects could be prevented, reduced or offset were presented.

### **2.3 Interreg North Sea Region Draft Programme 2021-2027**

The 2021-2027 programme is currently under preparation by the Programme Preparation Group (PPG). In May the draft programme (2021-2027) is tabled to get approved.

This includes four themes:

- Priority 1: Robust and smart economies in the North Sea Region;

The objective of this priority is to foster sustainable economic development in the region. Projects under this priority will support regional actors in the public and private sectors to develop resilience in order to protect regional economies and societies in the North Sea Region from potential shocks and crises.

- Priority 2: A green transition in the North Sea Region;

The objective of Priority 2 is to advance the green transition in the region in order to support sustainable development while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

- Priority 3: A climate resilient North Sea Region;

The objective of Priority 3 is to develop a long-term perspective to preserving the natural environment of the North Sea Region and to protect societies from the adverse impact of climate change. Projects under this priority will contribute to climate change adaptation practices and enhancement of biodiversity.

- Priority 4: Better governance in the North Sea;

The objective of Priority 4 is to improve multi-level governance structures and increase institutional capacity in governments, international organisations, the EU, NGOs, private parties and citizens to participate in governance.

Table 1 sets out the assumptions that have been made under each topic. These assumptions set out the committee's understanding of how the programme could contribute to this topic.

**Table 2-1: Overview of the NSR Interreg programme thematic framework and example actions supported**

Priority	Objectives	Programme assumptions – examples of action supported
Priority 1:  <b>Robust and smart economies in the NSR</b>	1.1. Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing innovation support measures/initiatives and transnational innovation networks and clusters, complementary to networks that already exist, to ensure that actors across the NSR can access the best innovation partners in their field.</li> <li>• Developing and implementing new technologies, products, processes and services in order to address transnational challenges.</li> <li>• Supporting knowledge partnerships of innovation actors and stimulating transnational cooperation between businesses, research institutions, governments and social institutions to develop new or improved links.</li> <li>• Fostering technology and innovation transfer from research to business; stimulating the commercial take-up of research results and entry of innovations onto the market.</li> <li>• Supporting public administrations to use public investments as a driver for innovation and facilitating SMEs’ participation in (public) procurement processes.</li> <li>• Enhancing the cooperation between innovation actors and civil-society that commonly support the uptake of innovation technologies to shape the innovation ecosystem.</li> <li>• Developing transnational support tools for SMEs and entrepreneurs to increase their innovation capacity and to incorporate research and technological innovations.</li> <li>• Exploiting new sources of SME growth such as the green economy, health and social services and promoting place-based development opportunities e.g. in regard to tourism and blue growth. Improving access to innovation support for actors in rural areas to reduce innovation gaps in the North Sea Region non-urban areas as well as reinforcing urban-rural linkages in the field of innovation support.</li> </ul>
	1.2 Developing skills for smart specialization, industrial transition and entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying and overcoming skills gaps in green technology sectors (as common smart specialisation focus areas) to support the development and uptake of new innovative products and processes.</li> <li>• Developing knowledge and skills for improved decision making in the transport sector to increase the uptake of alternative fuels and multimodal transport solutions.</li> <li>• Providing training schemes for entrepreneurial skills to SMEs to help them identify and adopt new sustainable and smart business concepts.</li> <li>• Promoting cross-sectoral learning to close the linear model of producing and consuming goods and services in the transition to a circular economy with a specific focus on the development of rural areas.</li> <li>• Improving digital skills in the tourism and cultural heritage sectors to prepare for the digital transformation and to develop sustainable housing concepts in touristic areas.</li> <li>• Improving SME access to digital know-how and technology by providing an incentive to connect with ICT knowledge and service providers.</li> <li>• Improving educational curricula for maritime and inland waterway shipping crews to meet the growing demand for a workforce trained in new tools or methods.</li> <li>• Preventing brain drains in rural regions by developing and building on strategic priority areas and developing tools to retain talent and entrepreneurial skills.</li> </ul>



Priority	Objectives	Programme assumptions – examples of action supported
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping SMEs to access opportunities in the single market, in the global market and to international value chains by developing entrepreneurial skills for internationalisation.</li> <li>• Developing skills in marginalised groups in regions that face brain drains to improve accessibility to the labour market.</li> <li>• Supporting citizens to become social innovators by developing their skills and competences related to social entrepreneurship and innovation.</li> <li>• Developing skills to enhance regional innovation ecosystems (entrepreneurs, public administration, science and civil society)</li> </ul>
<p>Policy 2:</p> <p><b>A green transition in the NSR</b></p>	<p>2.1 Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering the deployment of renovation of buildings. Supporting the continuous growth of nearly zero-energy buildings (NZEB)</li> <li>• Supporting the uptake of smart energy systems and technologies in the construction and building sectors</li> <li>• Greening of ports and their logistics chains</li> <li>• Supporting the continuous bridge between the technologies of renewable energies of today and those of the future</li> <li>• Eliminating emissions in logistics chains</li> <li>• Developing electrification of the energy system which is in line with the Clean Energy Package: Pilots and demonstrations are necessary to define scale, regulatory issues, technical issues, and economical feasibility</li> <li>• Supporting the energy value chain that both costs and benefits are kept in the local and regional energy system</li> <li>• Sharing information, best practices and accelerating the uptake between regions on methods such as Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS)</li> <li>• Developing the overall decarbonisation process</li> <li>• Stimulating the increased use and production of fossil-free (alternative fuels) transports and energy systems (such as hydrogen)</li> <li>• Integrating smart and digital carbon &amp; climate-neutral solutions across all sectors</li> </ul>
	<p>2.2 Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing support to pilots, demonstrations and test beds in order to scale-up the use of product and service innovation to support circularity.</li> <li>• Improving land and sea ecosystems by supporting circularity in agriculture.</li> <li>• Providing improved production methods for packaging that enhance circularity of the material used.</li> <li>• Fostering initiatives on circular procurement methods to encourage long-lasting change.</li> <li>• Encouraging a transition to circular production in rural areas to encourage new business opportunities and reduce the urban-rural divide.</li> <li>• Encouraging circularity of renewable energy infrastructures</li> <li>• Enhancing the development of new value-chains of circular economy, especially for rural regions.</li> <li>• Utilising open data access to encourage development and accessibility of spare parts.</li> <li>• Recycling of legacy of materials or extraction of hard to recycle substances</li> <li>• Improving waste management practices to reduce the threat of plastic in the North Sea.</li> </ul>

Priority	Objectives	Programme assumptions – examples of action supported
	<p>2.3 Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing efficient ways to achieve re-use of products or collection and recycling of materials.</li> <li>• Encouraging resource-efficient design, digitalisation or sustainable business models where producers keep ownership of products to encourage attention on durability.</li> <li>• Assisting the phasing out of current conventional technologies.</li> <li>• Supporting the development of sustainable logistics for urban areas and the interconnected territories by integrating local supply chains and reducing transport distances.</li> <li>• Supporting the development, implementation and monitoring of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) or other strategy-based sustainable transport development plans in the region.</li> <li>• Enhancing sustainable mobility services in urban areas and their surroundings by developing and testing innovative IT solutions; for example, Internet of Things (IoT).</li> <li>• Developing “green-accessibility” through soft modes of transport like cycling, ebiking and walking.</li> <li>• Improving the integration of emissions-free transport modes in multimodal mobility by developing and/or demonstrating new solutions.</li> <li>• Supporting the development of mobility hubs in urban and non-urban areas (better integration of bus/rail, car and bike-sharing, dial-a-bus service)</li> <li>• Enabling start-ups and SMEs working in zero-emission transport mode industries to take advantage of business opportunities by piloting and assessing new ideas and initiatives in sustainable mobility measures.</li> <li>• Supporting and encouraging commuters and tourists to choose environmental friendly means of transport.</li> <li>• Supporting solutions for electric/alternative propulsion mobility at urban and regional levels by contribution to existing or pilot networks of charging/distribution infrastructures, as well as testing for potential bottlenecks in the available infrastructure.</li> <li>• Encouraging social innovations in the mobility sector, such as shared mobility and co-creation by boosting capacities and supporting the application of already available concepts in shared mobility.</li> <li>• Promoting sustainable and locally produced electric batteries and vehicles and alternative/new fuels, especially by local automotive enterprises</li> <li>• Improving sustainable mobility between urban and rural areas</li> <li>• Promoting automation and autonomous transport both on land and on water by creating more awareness for the advantages of these solutions, especially with regard to their positive environmental impact.</li> <li>• Making transport and mobility more smart by using intelligent transport solutions to promote soft transport modes and avoid emissions.</li> </ul>
<p>Policy 3: <b>A climate resilient NSR</b></p>	<p>3.1 Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving protection of coasts, estuaries, rivers against erosion and storm surges by implementing Nature Based Solutions.</li> <li>• Integrating water management to mitigate the impact of more intense rainfall events and flooding from rainwater, groundwater, water courses and rivers in f.ex. mountainous and coastal areas.</li> <li>• Improving the management of groundwater and surface waters, including pressures from discharges in riverbeds caused by peak loads.</li> </ul>

Priority	Objectives	Programme assumptions – examples of action supported
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening urban resilience by using space in a multifunctional way, as for example by adapting blue-green infrastructure as part of urban design.</li> <li>• Facilitating the maintenance of soil moisture and supply to ground- and surface waters.</li> <li>• Testing methods and solutions to cope with impacts of sea level rise (such as erosion, flooding, salt water intrusion).</li> <li>• Initiating nature restoration measures in water management at rivers, lakes, wetlands or groundwater (rewinding of water courses and rivers or rewetting of wetlands).</li> <li>• Implementing ecosystem services such as carbon storage, soil formation as well as water quality and flows.</li> <li>• Predicting climate change impacts and the effects they have on societal values, and exploring the cost of such measures and stimulating the involvement of business opportunities for SMEs.</li> <li>• Promoting social innovation i.e. by actively engaging communities, stakeholders and citizen’s participation in implementation of pilots and measures.</li> <li>• Supporting the integration of coastal zone management with maritime spatial planning in conflicting uses of spaces such as for coastal sand nourishment or harvesting of sand. Mainstreaming of successful measures and monitoring methods in strategies and management guidelines.</li> <li>• Adopting improved methods for tackling other effects of climate change such as drought, heat stress on road infrastructure or energy systems, salinization etc.</li> </ul>
	<p>3.2 Enhancing nature protection and biodiversity, green infrastructure in particular in the urban environment and reducing pollution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing methods addressing a range of pressures on marine biodiversity and ecosystems, such as invasive species, marine litter and contaminants</li> <li>• Developing tools and testing methods to plan and manage competing uses of maritime space to support strategies on marine environment, blue growth and maritime planning</li> <li>• Strengthening methods to accommodate off-shore renewable energy production to meet requirements of marine ecosystems - such as potential use of subsea off-shore wind park infrastructure as artificial reefs and breeding grounds for marine species</li> <li>• Testing nature restoration methods for management of degraded ecosystems</li> <li>• Deploying new methods and technologies for environmental monitoring and management. Successful approaches should be mainstreamed.</li> <li>• Working with ecological corridors and green infrastructure in rural and urbanized landscapes to improve ecological connectivity and deliver benefits from them.</li> <li>• Implementing environmental measures and improved management of ecosystems by use of participatory processes, involving public authorities, relevant groups of citizens, NGO’s, farmers and communities and their organisations in pilots and tests</li> <li>• Governance solutions for the development and enhancement of green infrastructure in the urban environment</li> <li>• Initiating cooperation on reducing marine and coastal litter on beaches; contributing to the goal to keep litter under the threshold value as decided by EU Member State experts and outlined in a report by the European Commission</li> </ul>

Priority	Objectives	Programme assumptions – examples of action supported
<p>Policy 4:</p> <p><b>Better governance in the North Sea</b></p>	<p>Other actions to support better cooperation governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative pilot actions to increase biodiversity in cities with a positive impact on the wellbeing of citizens</li> <li>• Establishing networks that bring together relevant stakeholders to develop integrated and cross-sectoral strategies in relevant challenge-driven fields</li> <li>• Improving multi-level governance in challenge-driven fields through better coordination of new and/or existing cross-sectoral networks</li> <li>• Developing tools to foster citizen knowledge and engagement to improve their position in multi-level governance processes and their participation in decision making</li> <li>• Building networks of relevant actors in state-of-the-art projects to develop roadmaps and action plans for projects in priorities 1-3, and to bring together the right stakeholders to ensure that projects address the actual needs on the ground, long-term impact and up-take of developed solutions.</li> <li>• Building institutional capacity for governance actors on all levels to adapt to territorial needs and challenges (i.e. digitalization, social innovation)</li> <li>• Fostering and setting up transnational partnerships between urban and rural actors as well as the civil-society and developing strategies in the field of governance to overcome the urban-rural divide in the North Sea Region</li> <li>• Building thematic communities for topics addressed in Priorities 1-3 in order to transfer findings and scale-up cooperation around shared issues, with the aim of embedding project results in a wider framework and ensuring their take-up</li> <li>• Developing and promoting new or improved governance mechanisms for upscaling, transferring and mainstreaming solutions in challenge-driven fields in regional and local economies</li> <li>• Developing concepts for better transnational coordination between existing actors involved in the maritime space (including Maritime Spatial Planning processes) and attracting new stakeholders</li> <li>• Facilitating a long-term and consistent dialogue between decision-makers, experts and businesses to create widely supported joint strategies for sectors with a high significance for the regions</li> <li>• Bringing together relevant governance actors to address regulation-free spaces in order to develop joint strategies, approaches and standards.</li> </ul>

## **3. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: THE SCREENING PROCESS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The objective of the screening process is to make a clear recommendation to the Interreg Programme Preparation Group (PPG) as to whether a full SEA should be carried out on the programme. This will be undertaken through the following tasks:

- Using an outline and detailed screening checklist to assess how the draft programme proposal affects the environment. The conclusions of this process are reported in this Screening Report;
- Consultation with Member States Environmental Bodies on the conclusions reported in the Screening Report; and
- Production of a Final Screening Report.
- Final recommendations translated into languages of the different member states as set out in the contract and in the ToR.

Please note that this methodology reflects guidance contained within the European Commission guidance on the "Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment."

### **3.2 Screening checklist and production of draft screening report**

Under the requirements of the SEA Directive specific types of plans that set out the framework for future development consent of projects must be subject to an SEA. To establish if a plan needs to be subject to the full SEA process, a "screening" assessment is required against a series of criteria. This screening assessment is set out in Figure 1 below.

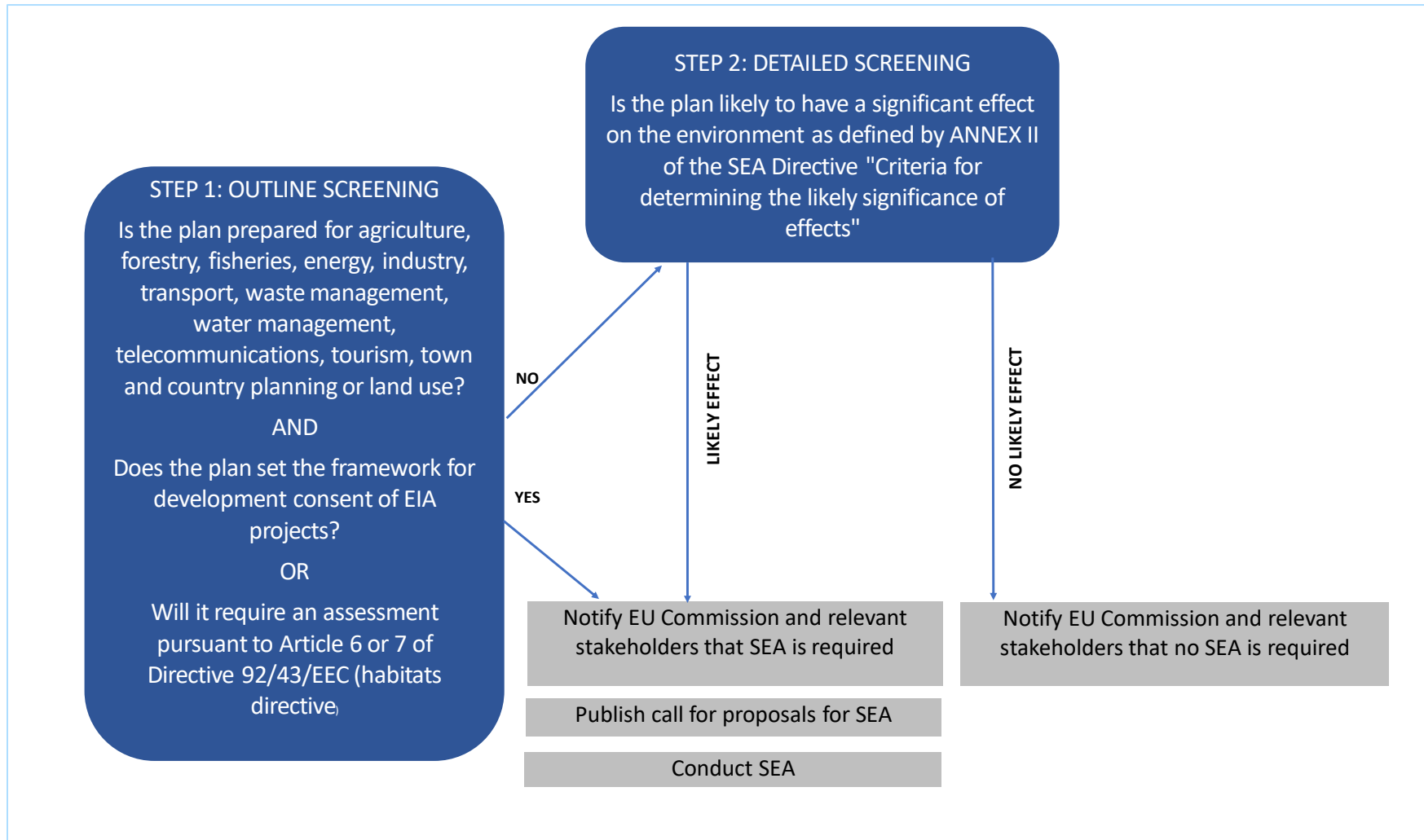


Figure 2: SEA screening process

The outline screening questions are focused on the administrative nature of the programme. Dependent on the answers to these questions, we will either recommend that a full SEA is required, or a more detailed screening is undertaken.

The detailed screening stage is focused on the likely significant effects of the programme. Unlike the outline screening which involves answering yes / no questions, the detailed screening uses professional judgement to make an assessment.

Once the detailed screening has been completed the information in the table above is used to reach a conclusion as to the need for a full SEA process. The screening process and its conclusions will be subject to consultation with Member States' Environmental Bodies.

### **3.3 Consultation on the draft screening report**

Ongoing consultation is an important part of SEA, including at the screening stage. Through collaboration with the PPG during the scoping stage, identification of the countries and regions that can be expected to be affected by the programme's impact on the environment will be undertaken. The purpose of designating the parties is to ensure that the affected parties will receive the draft screening report.

The draft screening report was sent to the designated parties alongside a list of questions used to guide the responses of the designated parties. Designated parties were given 14 working days to respond.

### **3.4 Production of final screening report**

The Final Screening Report will set out the final screening recommendation taking into account the screening process and consultation responses. The final report will clearly set out the reasoning for the screening decision that has been taken.

## 4. OUTLINE SCREENING

At the outline screening stage the following questions are addressed:

- Is the plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use; and
- Does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a)) or has it been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC (habitats directive)?.

If the answer to both of these questions is yes, then a SEA must be carried out. If the answer to either of the questions is uncertain or no, then a more detailed screening must be carried out on the programme using the criteria set out in Annex 2 of the SEA Directive.

The outline screening concludes that a more detailed screening is required, and Table 2 sets out the reasoning for this decision.

Screening question	Assessment	Yes/No
Is the plan prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use?	The plan is not prepared specifically for any one of these sectors. However, projects that arise from the Interreg programme are likely to fall within more than one of the sectors named.	Yes
Does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a)); <sup>5</sup>  or  Has it been determined to require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC (habitats directive)?	The Interreg North Sea Region Programme does not 'set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment'. Although the programme could act as a catalyst for development of projects that may require development consent it does not set the framework that would be used to grant, deny or restrict that development consent. It does not set out suitable or unsuitable locations or details of the nature, size or operating conditions that should be achieved by a development project for it to gain consent. This will be governed by the development consenting framework of the individual member states.  With regard to allocating resources, the programme is not intended to finance large-scale implementation. Instead the programme develops a leverage effect by investing in research, innovation and skills development whilst providing the mechanism for small scale testing and / or piloting activities for new solutions. As	<b>No</b>  <b><u>Proceed to detailed screening of the programme</u></b>

<sup>5</sup> Please note that Annex 2 of the SEA Directive gives further guidance on interpretation of setting the framework for development consent: "1(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources"



Screening question	Assessment	Yes/No
	<p>acknowledged in the SEA of the previous programme<sup>6</sup>, Interreg programmes have comparatively limited budgets allocated to cooperation programmes which restricts their scope to produce large-scale tangible impacts.</p> <p>Due to the strategic nature of the North Sea Interreg programme it will not require an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of Directive 92/43/EEC (the habitats directive).</p>	

**Table 4-1: Outline screening**

<sup>6</sup> Strategic Environmental Assessment of the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 Environmental Report

## 5. DETAILED SCREENING

Annex 2 of the Directive sets out the assessment criteria for considering significant environmental effects. The Interreg draft programme has been assessed against these criteria. The detailed assessment is set out Table 3 below.

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Potential effects of the programme
<p>1(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;</p>	<p>The Interreg North Sea Region Programme does not 'set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment'. Although the programme could act as a catalyst for development of projects that may require development consent it does not set the framework that would be used to grant, deny or restrict that development consent. It does not set out suitable or unsuitable locations or details of the nature, size or operating conditions that should be achieved by a development project for it to gain consent. This will be governed by the development consenting framework of the individual member states.</p> <p>With regard to allocating resources, the programme is not intended to finance large-scale implementation. Instead the programme develops a leverage effect by investing in research, innovation and skills development whilst providing the mechanism for small scale testing and / or piloting activities for new solutions. As acknowledged in the SEA of the previous programme<sup>7</sup>, Interreg programmes have comparatively limited budgets allocated to cooperation programmes which restricts their scope to produce large-scale tangible impacts.</p>
<p>1(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;</p>	<p>The Interreg North Sea Region Programme influences other plans and programmes through providing support to member states policy makers to integrate environmental concerns into territorial plans and potentially implement new more positive standards for industry.</p> <p>Some examples given are using support to help policy makers integrate climate change mitigation measures into blue economy development plans; updating local energy and transport plans, introducing common environmental standards for ships and ports; and integrating circular economy policies into territorial strategies.</p> <p>It does this through improving co-operation and knowledge sharing between the programme participants in different member states and regions. Any influence that the programme has does not increase the likelihood that other plans and</p>

<sup>7</sup> Strategic Environmental Assessment of the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 Environmental Report

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Potential effects of the programme
	programmes will cause significant negative or positive effects.
1(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	See above  The Interreg North Sea Region Programme helps policy makers integrate environmental concerns into territorial plans. Any influence that the programme has does not increase the likelihood that other plans and programmes will cause significant negative or positive effects.
1(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;	There are several environmental problems in the region, some of which are global issues, some which are specific to the North Sea context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area is a global frontrunner in offshore wind energy but there remains significant differences between use of renewable energy in the North Sea countries.</li> <li>• The region faces challenges caused by growing travel and transport. A modal shift towards green transport solutions is needed.</li> <li>• The region faces considerable environmental challenges and threats linked to the impacts of climate change, pollution and emissions as well as over exploitation of resources. This includes, but is not limited to, vulnerability of densely populated coastal regions in the Netherland to storm surges and sea level rise.</li> <li>• As in the rest of Europe, habitat and biodiversity loss is a key challenge in the North Sea area.</li> </ul> Any influence that the programme has on helping to address these problems does not increase the likelihood of significant negative or positive effects.
1(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The Interreg North Sea Region Programme helps to deliver elements of the North Sea Commission’s North Sea Region 2030 Strategy, the European Green Deal, Industrial Strategy (which supports the decarbonisation of the economy), Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the Circular Economy action plan by helping to build value chains that support SMEs and co-ordinating smart specialisation strategies to contribute to innovative sustainable development.  Any influence that the programme has on implementation of community legislation does not increase the likelihood that other plans and programmes will cause significant negative or positive effects..
2(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	The SEA of the previous programme <sup>8</sup> highlights the difficulty of drawing conclusions on the likely impact of the programme and states that effects were

<sup>8</sup> Strategic Environmental Assessment of the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 Environmental Report

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects	Potential effects of the programme
2(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	dependent on the specific projects that support the delivery of the strategy.
2(c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects;	The report does however state that the comparatively limited budget allocated to cooperation programmes restricts their scope to produce large-scale tangible (significant) impacts and this is particularly the case with transnational programmes which focus on larger geographic areas, therefore limiting the 'concrete' impact even further.
2(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	Taking this into account it is unlikely that the Interreg North Sea Region Programme will cause significant negative or positive effects on the environment.
2(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	
2(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to— (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use;	
2(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	

**Table 5-1: Screening of the Draft Programme**

## 6. RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

The draft screening report was sent to the designated parties alongside the following questions to guide responses.

- Do you agree with our preliminary conclusion that the INTERREG North Sea Region Programme does not require a full SEA to be carried out under the terms of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment?
- If you disagree with the conclusion above, please could you give reasons?
- Do you have any other comments to make?

Consultees were given two weeks to respond and if no response was received approval is deemed to be given by the respective national delegation ('tacit consent'). Table 6.1 sets out the responses received.

Consultee	Response
Denmark Ministry of Environment of Denmark The Danish Environmental Protection Agency	As it is assumed, that Ramboll has carried out the assessment on the basis of the environmental assessment directive, and since no other implementation has been made in DK than that provided for in the environmental assessment directive, it is assumed that Ramboll's assessment is in accordance with Danish law.
Flanders Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship	From our perspective a full SEA is indeed not necessary for the North Sea Region Programme.  In your mail I understand that Ramboll, after a more in-depth analysis, comes to the same conclusion.
France Conseil Général de l'Environnement et du Développement durable (CGEDD)	No response by deadline – tacit consent assumed
Germany Ministerium für Bundes- und Europaangelegenheiten und Regionale Entwicklung Lower Saxony Ministry for Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development	No response by deadline – tacit consent assumed
Norway The Ministry of Local Government and modernisation, the Planning department The Ministry of Climate and Environment, the department for Nature Management	No response by deadline – tacit consent assumed
The Netherlands Directorate Environmental and International Affairs, Netherlands' Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management	We agree with your preliminary conclusion that the INTERREG North Sea Region Programme does not require a full SEA to be carried out under the terms of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Consultee	Response
	We have no further comments.
<p>Sweden</p> <p>Swedish Environmental Protection Agency</p>	<p>We agree to some extent to the preliminary conclusions made when strictly following the Directive 2001/42/EC art. 3. The <i>INTERREG North Sea Region Programme</i> in itself does not 'set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 2014/52/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment'</p> <p>But we will point out that this program might result in future project listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 2014/52/EU, and that the program to some extent has the purpose to facilitate such projects. It is not obvious that even if this program, as the initial strategy in a program or plan hierarchy in itself doesn't 'set the framework for future development consent', doesn't require an SEA.</p> <p>We disagree with the conclusions made in the last bullet point that "any influence that the programme has is positive and that it does not increase the likelihood that other plans and programmes will cause significant negative effects." Here we want to emphasize that it is both the negative and positive significant effects that should be taken into consideration and assessed.</p> <p>We would also like to add that we can see that an SEA can promote the programme in a very positive way, developing the programme in a more environmental way, strengthen the environmental perspective etcetera. An SEA could also develop criteria for which activities that could be in favour of this programme and promote the content of the activities in a more environmentally positive direction.</p>

Table 6-1: Consultation responses

Apart from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, all designated parties either did not reply (assumed tacit consent) or agreed with the conclusions of the draft screening report that a SEA was not required. Our response to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency comments is shown in Table 6.2.

Consultee comment	Ramboll suggested response
<p>We agree to some extent to the preliminary conclusions made when strictly following the Directive 2001/42/EC art. 3. The <i>INTERREG North Sea Region Programme</i> in itself does not 'set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 2014/52/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment'</p>	<p>Noted and agreed</p>
<p>But we will point out that this program might result in future project listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 2014/52/EU, and that the program to some extent has the purpose to facilitate such projects.</p> <p>It is not obvious that even if this program, as the initial strategy in a program or plan hierarchy in itself doesn't 'set the framework for future development consent', doesn't require an SEA.</p>	<p>As discussed in the screening report, we reach the conclusion that the programme could act as a catalyst for development of projects that may require development consent.</p> <p>However, we stand by our conclusion in the screening report that the programme does not set the framework for development consent in that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not set the framework that would be used to grant, deny or restrict development consent.</li> <li>• does not set out suitable or unsuitable locations or details of the nature, size or operating conditions that should be achieved by a development project for it to gain consent.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, in our report we have outlined a detailed screening process against Annex 2 of the SEA Directive and come to the conclusion that we have set out a reasonable explanation as to why SEA is not required under all these points.</p>
<p>We disagree with the conclusions made in the last bullet point that "any influence that the programme has is positive and that it does not increase the likelihood that other plans and programmes will cause significant negative effects."</p> <p>Here we want to emphasize that it is both the negative and positive significant effects that should be taken into consideration and assessed.</p>	<p>Here we would like to point out that the SEA directive stipulates that an SEA is required for certain plans and programmes which are likely to have <b>significant</b> effects on the environment. As stated in the screening report, we do not foresee that <b>significant</b> positive <u>or</u> negative effects are likely due to the programme: "Due to the nature of the measures proposed in the programme it is unlikely that the Interreg North Sea Region Programme will cause significant negative or positive effects on the environment". We stand by our conclusion.</p>

Consultee comment	Ramboll suggested response
<p>We would also like to add that we can see that an SEA can promote the programme in a very positive way, developing the programme in a more environmental way, strengthen the environmental perspective etcetera. An SEA could also develop criteria for which activities that could be in favour of this programme and promote the content of the activities in a more environmentally positive direction.</p>	<p>This point would be valid under the assumption that there were no other mechanisms to ensure that the interventions planned by the Interreg North Sea Region programme maximise their positive effects on the environment.</p> <p>However, in preparation of the Operational Programme for the Interreg North Sea Region and the interventions planned thereunder, the horizontal principle of promoting sustainable development has to be taken into account according to Article 6a (4) of the draft Common Provisions Regulation of the EU's shared management funds (which also covers the Interreg programmes).<sup>9</sup></p> <p>This horizontal principle is incorporated into the programming of the Interreg North Sea Region programme through specific project selection criteria which ensure that projects with a positive effect on the environment are prioritised, all else equal.</p> <p>As a result, we consider that the added benefit of a full SEA to maximise the positive effects on the environment of planned interventions is negligible.</p>

**Table 6-2: Response to Swedish Environmental Protection Agency**

<sup>9</sup> Article 6a (4) of the draft Common Provisions Regulation states the following: The objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in line with the objective of promoting sustainable development as set out in Article 11 TFEU, taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement and the "do no significant harm" principle. The objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in full respect of the EU environmental acquis.



## 7. CONCLUSION

This Final Screening Report has been prepared to determine the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Interreg North Sea Region programme 2021-2027. The screening has been made in accordance with the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (SEA Directive).

A screening procedure has been applied to determine if the programme fits the criteria set out in the SEA Directive.

The outline screening has concluded that a more detailed screening of the likely effects of the plan was needed. This more detailed screening has looked in detail at the context and likely effects of the Interreg North Sea Region programme 2021-2027.

The determination reached after applying this screening process and after consulting with stakeholders is that an SEA is not required for the Interreg North Sea Region programme 2021-2027.

The determination has been made for the following reasons:

- The Interreg North Sea Region Programme does not 'set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment';
- Due to the nature of the measures proposed in the programme it is unlikely that the Interreg North Sea Region Programme will cause significant negative or positive effects on the environment; and
- Although the Programme does have some influence on implementation of community legislation and an influence on other plans and programmes (through integration of environmental and sustainability considerations), any influence that the programme has does not increase the likelihood that other plans and programmes will cause significant negative or positive effects.

## APPENDIX 1: DOCUMENT REVIEW

The table below shows a summary of the documents reviewed by the team.

Document reviewed	Summary
<b>Documents reviewed for the purposes of screening</b>	
<p>Strategic Environmental Assessment of the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 Environmental Report.</p>	<p>This sets out the results of the SEA of the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020. The report could help the team consider the necessity of screening in a SEA for the North Sea Region Programme. The report states that the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 encompasses and addresses a number of activities listed within Annex I and I and “<i>criteria for such projects emanating from the programme and the steering development consents could comprise limits on the type of activity which is permitted or conditions to be met by an applicant if permissions is granted, of the preservation of certain characteristics of the area concerned</i>”.</p> <p>The report does however state that the comparatively limited budget allocated to cooperation programmes restricts their scope to produce large-scale tangible impacts. Specifically, Interreg B (transnational) focusses on larger geographic areas and often involves networking activities, therefore limiting the ‘concrete’ impact even further.</p> <p>The report concludes that the North Sea Programme fulfils the Directives screening criteria for being subject to strategic environmental assessment. An environmental assessment was subsequently undertaken.</p> <p>This document provides contextual information to the team and has helped the team understand broadly the potential for the current North Sea region programme to have significant environmental effects.</p> <p>The report concludes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The exact nature and impacts of actions of the programme could not be identified at an early stage, as this is dependent on the specific projects that will support the delivery of the strategy.</li> <li>• Those activities which are of a more concrete nature and which could, hence, potentially have a more direct environmental impact, are described in very general terms in the draft programme document. This means that it is not possible to provide a detailed assessment of the significant environmental impacts which could be expected. A tentative, qualitative assessment is provided;</li> <li>• The priorities in the NSR Programme have a wide potential to achieve positive environmental impact. Potential environmental benefits could be long term and cumulative in nature, for example projects designed to support a green economy realise opportunities for investment and employment-creation in areas such as renewable energy. There</li> </ul>

Document reviewed	Summary
	<p>are however, inevitably uncertainties in terms of the form and significance of potential impacts and how effective the programme will be at achieving positive outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a number of ways in which projects or activities could produce negative unforeseen or mismanaged environmental impacts. For example, achieving higher energy efficiency could involve negative environmental impacts depending on the energy generated.</li> </ul>
<p>North Sea Region Programme 2020 - 2027 Orientation Paper<sup>10</sup></p>	<p>The team have reviewed the current North Sea Region Orientation Paper to help in the determination of whether the Interreg North Sea Region Programme 2021-2027 is likely to include the level of detail that will mean it is a programme that “sets the framework for development consent”.</p> <p>For 2014-2020, the North Sea Region Programme had four thematic objective (priority axes), which follow from and contribute to the Programme Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority 1: Thinking growth: Supporting growth in the North Sea Region;</li> <li>• Priority 2: Eco-innovation: Stimulating the green economy;</li> <li>• Priority 3: Sustainable North Sea Region: Protecting against climate change and preserving the environment; and</li> <li>• Priority 4: Promoting green transport and mobility.</li> </ul> <p>Projects were implemented under nine specific objectives (investment priorities).</p> <p>The orientation paper states the following: According to preliminary findings of an evaluation of projects in the 2014-2020 programme cover an array of policy areas and policy levels.</p> <p>This Paper provides recommendations for the thematic focus of the 2021-2027 programme. For 2021-2027, the European Commission recommends concentrating the available ERDF contribution on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy Objective 1 (a smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation),</li> <li>• Policy Objective 2 (a greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management),</li> <li>• Policy Objective 5 (a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives), and</li> <li>• Interreg-specific objectives (a better Interreg governance and a safer and more secure Europe).</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> <https://northsearegion.eu/media/12417/annex-1-north-sea-region-programme-orientation-report.pdf>

Document reviewed	Summary
	<p>It is noted that the NSR programme does not operate in isolation but is part of a larger complex set of programmes and strategies in the North Sea region, which need to be taken into account when designing the transnational cooperation programme.</p>
<p>Scoping Study Interreg NSR 2021-2027<sup>11</sup></p>	<p>This scoping study provides analytical support for the programming of the Interreg North Sea Region Programme (2021 – 2027).</p> <p>This includes an analysis of how the achievements and lessons learned during the current programme period and the recommendations for future thematic concentration made by the EU Commission fit with national and regional policies in the NSR. The study demonstrates a strong stakeholder support as well as a solid foundation to further develop transnational collaboration focusing on PO1: A smarter Europe and PO2: A greener, low-carbon Europe. There is a wish among stakeholders to focus the programme on few policy Objectives.</p> <p>This document was useful for understanding the background context to the NSR Interreg draft Programme for 2021-2027.</p>
<p>2014-2020 Interregional Cooperation Programme under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective (Interreg Europe) Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report. Dr. Dräger and Thielmann</p>	<p>This sets out the results of the SEA of the overall Interreg Europe Programme 2014-2020.</p> <p>The report could help the team consider the necessity of screening in a SEA for the North Sea Region Programme. In relation to screening the report states: Pursuant to the Directive 2001/42/EC adopted by the European Parliament and European Council, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the development and amendment of certain plans and programmes including those programmes which influence other plans and programmes (Art. 3 and Annex II SEA-Directive). Accordingly, the assessment of the effects on the environment of the Interregional Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 (hereinafter: Programme) is obligatory. However, the team has concluded that the reasoning stated in the report is not strictly correct.</p> <p>This document provides contextual information to the team and has helped the team understand broadly the potential for the current North Sea Region programme to have a significant environmental effect. The report concludes that due to the nature of the Interreg EUROPE, only highly indirect effects and contributions can be realised by the Programme. In general, the strategic approach offers a potential for positive effects. Concerning the potential effects of the Programme as a whole on the environment and contributions to the EU environmental objectives and general EU environmental policy, the Programme is differentiated into two parts: PAs 1 and 2 show little, highly indirect effects and</p>

<sup>11</sup> [https://northsearegion.eu/media/14942/81a-final-report-with-addendum\\_scoping-study\\_ppg-4a-meeting\\_090920.pdf](https://northsearegion.eu/media/14942/81a-final-report-with-addendum_scoping-study_ppg-4a-meeting_090920.pdf)

Document reviewed	Summary
	<p>contributions, PAs 3 and 4 can realise also indirect effects and contributions but due to their explicit focus on environmental issues more effectively. The risk of negative effects and contributions is very limited.</p>
<p>ESI Fund regulations</p>	<p>In the programming period 2014-2020 the ESI Fund Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1303 / 2013) stipulates the need to assess whether a SEA is required during the programming phase (screening):</p> <p>Art 55:4: "Ex ante evaluations shall incorporate, where appropriate, the requirements for strategic environmental assessment set out in Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (36) taking into account climate change mitigation needs."</p> <p>However, in the programming period 2020-2027 the ESI-Fund Draft Regulation<sup>12</sup> does not explicitly mention the need to conduct a SEA or assess whether one is needed during the programming phase. Neither does it exempt the managing authorities from conducting a SEA.</p> <p>However, to conform to the SEA regulations a screening assessment should be carried out.</p>
<p>Interreg North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 Citizen summary<sup>13</sup></p>	<p>This sets out the background to the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020.</p> <p>This report states that "Ambitious themes have been selected for the Programme but the budget to address them is limited. Obviously, making significant, lasting change on issues such as carbon reduction will require contributions from many sources".</p> <p>This also states that results that Member States seeks to achieve through the implementation of Programme objectives and priorities.</p> <p>This document was useful for understanding the background context to the NSR Interreg Programme 2014-2020.</p>
<p><b>General SEA guidance documents / documents to be considered for a full SEA</b></p>	
<p>Ex Ante Evaluation of the North Sea Region Programme 2014-2020<sup>14</sup></p>	<p>This is the final report of the Ex Ante Evaluation of the 2014-2020 North Sea Region Programme. The aim of the ex ante evaluation was to provide an external perspective on the preparation of the new Programme with a view to improving and strengthening the final quality of the Programme and optimising the allocation of resources.</p> <p>This report concludes that the 2014-2020 North Sea Region Programme has been</p>

<sup>12</sup> Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument. COM/2018/375 final - 2018/0196 (COD)

<sup>13</sup> <https://northsearegion.eu/media/1314/citizen-summary-final-version.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [http://archive.northsearegion.eu/files/user/File/NSRP\\_2014\\_2020/Final\\_ex\\_ante\\_report\\_June2014\\_im.pdf](http://archive.northsearegion.eu/files/user/File/NSRP_2014_2020/Final_ex_ante_report_June2014_im.pdf)

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	<p>developed in line with relevant regulations and requirements. The Programme has developed a robust rationale and 'logic' for its proposed interventions and has focused strongly on delivering outputs and results which address needs in the Programme area and contribute to Europe 2020 goals.</p> <p>This document will be useful if a full SEA needs to be produced and will be reviewed in detail at that point.</p>
Handbook on SEA for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013	<p>This sets out detailed guidance on SEA for cohesion policy.</p> <p>This document will be useful if a full SEA needs to be produced and will be reviewed in detail at that point.</p>