

[PDF udgave \(663 KB\)](#)

medlemme af Folketingets Europaudvalg
stedfortrædere

Journalnummer
400.C.2-0

Kontor
EUK

13. oktober 2003

Til underretning for Folketingets Europaudvalg vedlægges i forbindelse med Det Europæiske Råd i Bruxelles den 16.-17. oktober 2003 Rådets rapport vedrørende Den Nordlige Dimension, 13112/03.

**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 1 October 2003

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LIMITE
NIS 125
COEST 77

NOTE

from: Council (General Affairs and External Relations)
dated: 29 September 2003
to: European Council, Brussels, 16/17 October 2003

Subject : NORTHERN DIMENSION
- Second Northern Dimension Action Plan, 2004-2006.

1. The first Action Plan for the Northern Dimension in the external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003, endorsed by the European Council of 19/20 June 2000 in Feira (doc. 9401/00), will soon expire at the end of 2003.
2. In order to pursue the Northern Dimension policies beyond 2003, the Council agreed on 29 September 2003 to recommend to the European Council to endorse the attached Second Action Plan.

The present document follows the First Action Plan for the Northern Dimension ¹, adopted by the European Council in Feira in June 2000, and expiring at the end of 2003. The main text sets out general principles and methodology, key objectives and priorities, and the mechanisms by which the implementation of Northern Dimension activities will be kept under review. Examples of specific activities which Northern Dimension partners will pursue in addressing each of these priorities are set out in annex 1.

In preparing the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan, the Commission has based its work on the conclusions of the Ministerial Conference on the Northern Dimension held in Luxembourg on 21 October 2002, and particularly on the *Guidelines for a new Action Plan* ², adopted by this Conference and endorsed by the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council on 22 October 2002. This Second Action Plan represents the joint efforts of a wide range of Northern Dimension partners, and the Commission has drawn on a consultation process bringing together inputs from EU Member States and partner countries, from the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee, from regional bodies and associated organisations.

Reflecting these joint efforts, the Second Action Plan emphasises complementarity, subsidiarity and synergy among all Northern Dimension partners. The effectiveness of this interaction will be crucial to the achievement of our common objectives and to the success of the Northern Dimension in the coming years.

1. THE NORTHERN DIMENSION VISION

Four years since its launching at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, the Northern Dimension is today a visible demonstration of effective regional cooperation, contributing to the overall welfare of the European Union and neighbouring areas.

The Northern Dimension provides a common framework for the promotion of policy dialogue and concrete cooperation. The Northern Dimension concept covers a broad and diverse geographic area, stretching from the Arctic and sub-Arctic to the southern shores of the Baltic, and from North-West Russia in the East to Iceland and Greenland in the west. Its added value lies in the synergy and coherence that it creates across the activities implemented by all partners.

The Northern Dimension is an EU-led initiative, in which the European Commission shall maintain its overall leading role. Its success depends on the active participation of all actors involved, whether at the national, regional or local level, among the business community, or among civil society generally. The key purpose of the present Action Plan is therefore to provide a clear operational framework for all Northern Dimension stake-holders, setting out strategic objectives, priorities and concrete activities. These need to be carried forward in a co-operative spirit based on inclusive participation, subsidiarity and complementarity, with an effective division of labour and overall co-ordination and monitoring.

Strong foundations for this work have already been laid with the First Action Plan, where the European

Commission played a pivotal role in its implementation, and where EU Member States, partner countries, regional bodies, civil society, the business world and research institutions each carried forward important activities contributing to the overall goals of the Action Plan.

Looking forward, the Northern Dimension will take on an enhanced importance in the context of EU enlargement; the successful conclusion of the Accession Negotiations and the signature of the Accession Treaty with 10 Acceding Countries, including those directly involved in the Northern Dimension, takes the Northern Dimension into a new phase. This has been highlighted in the Commission's recent Communication on "Wider Europe -- Neighbourhood"³, and the Northern Dimension will have an important contribution to make in carrying forward the Union's new neighbourhood policy, building on shared interests and a common agenda between the enlarged Union and its neighbours.

The European Commission will continue to provide support for Northern Dimension activities through existing Community programmes, and will continue to work to enhance the coherence and inter-operability of the different Community instruments available for this purpose. The strength of the Northern Dimension will lie in the combined impact of the activities of all partners, including EU Member States and partner countries, international financial institutions, including those based in the region, regional bodies and the private sector. The financing and co-ordination approach used in the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership is a useful model for other important Northern Dimension sectors, when a sufficient commitment of all stakeholders is assured.

The flow of information on Northern Dimension activities and achievements among partners will help to avoid duplication and overlap, identify gaps, and share best practices. The Commission is ready to compile and circulate this information among all interested stakeholders, but an effective information exchange will depend on the contributions of all partners.

2. THE 2004-2006 ACTION PLAN: OVERALL OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY SECTORS

The enlargement of the European Union will have implications for the region covered by the Northern Dimension. The Action Plan therefore addresses the opportunities and the challenges posed by this historic event, to help ensure that it benefits the entire region. In this context, strengthened interaction at all levels between Russia and the EU is essential.

The present Action Plan covers five broad priority sectors:

- economy, business and infrastructure;
- human resources, education, culture, scientific research and health;
- the environment, nuclear safety and natural resources;
- cross-border cooperation and regional development;

- justice and home affairs.

The Northern Dimension also pays special attention to regions with specific needs, such as Kaliningrad and the Arctic region.

The Action Plan respects internationally recognised principles of sustainable development, good governance, transparency and participation, gender equality, the rights of minorities, the protection of indigenous peoples ⁴ and supports the strengthening of civil society and democratic institutions throughout the region. The Action Plan promotes the development of national and regional strategies for sustainable development.

In line with the EU *Lisbon Strategy*, the Action Plan encourages the adoption of mutually reinforcing economic, employment, social and environmental policies by all partners involved ⁵.

3. SPECIFIC PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES, 2004-06

3.1. ECONOMY, BUSINESS, INFRASTRUCTURE

The closer integration of markets, strengthened economic relations between the countries of the region and with the Russian Federation and the completion of a modern infrastructure system are the key medium and long-term objectives for the Northern Dimension in this sector. To this end, specific priorities are identified in relation to:

- Trade, investment promotion, and business cooperation
- Infrastructure, including energy, transport, and telecommunications and information society.

3.1.1. Trade, Investment promotion and business co-operation

Sustainable and sustained economic growth in the Northern Dimension region is the key priority for the 2004-2006 period. The economic opportunities presented by the enlargement of the Union must be fully exploited. A favourable business climate must be developed on both sides of the future EEA/EU border through, inter alia, the implementation of economic reforms in new EU Member States and in the Russian

Federation, and Russian efforts to integrate with the international economy (through WTO accession), and with the EU economy (through the Common European Economic Space initiative).

Further efforts will be made to remove technical and other barriers to trade and investment, to promote equal competition among economic actors, and to help develop a transparent financial sector. Special consideration must be given to SMEs, particularly in new EU Member States and in Russia, to help them take full advantage of EU market opportunities. Ongoing efforts to speed up border crossings and to fight corruption will be continued.

Measures must be taken to stimulate investments, taking account of the role which foreign investment can play and of the need to attract the kind of investment which can best promote development and innovation. The vision of the Baltic Sea region as a "Joint Investment Area" should be supported.

Business co-operation, trade and the economy must develop in the full respect of internationally recognised principles of sustainable development, in their environmental, social and economic dimensions, as well as gender issues and the protection of human rights.

Continued effective implementation of related support measures, notably through EU programmes such as Tacis and INTERREG, as well as through bilateral and regional co-operation programmes will have an important part to play here.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To improve the business climate, removing technical and other barriers to trade and investment and promoting co-operation among the business community across the region.*
- *To support economic reforms and regulatory convergence in Russia, reinforcing the transparency and predictability of relations.*

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- *To promote Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), especially Russian SMEs, and their adjustment to the European market. Northern Dimension Partners will work to facilitate SMEs' access to capital, encourage the exchange of best practice and training and promote managerial and other skills and a better knowledge of regulations.*
- *To support industrial enterprises in their moves towards more sustainable production, in order to improve economic performance while addressing environmental concerns and offering socio-economic opportunities to the indigenous population of the region.*
- *To facilitate trade and economic relations through the improvement (or indeed the introduction) of integrated border management. Clearance time for border crossings of goods should be reduced to a maximum of two hours. Northern Dimension partners can achieve this objective particularly by encouraging the convergence of customs legislation, reducing corruption, and through the modernisation of border-crossing infrastructure and the rationalisation of procedures.*
- *To increase maritime safety, particularly in the Baltic Sea, through joint efforts to accelerate the exclusive use of icebreakers and to propose a designation of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area through the International Maritime Organisation as well as developing harmonised standards for ice classifications for ships operating in harsh ice conditions.*

3.1.2. Energy

The Northern Dimension area is rich in natural resources and offers significant potential for the

production and supply of energy while at the same time possessing a unique environment that is particularly vulnerable to pollution or other side-effects of unsustainable development.

Infrastructure must be developed in order to provide better security of energy supply to the European continent and safe, effective and environmentally sound energy supply for the population and industry to the partner countries in the region. The work on energy issues must encompass the further development and integration of energy markets, the strengthening of EU – Russia and Norway-Russia dialogue on energy and its co-operation with the Baltic Sea regional energy co-operation BASREC, the development of energy resources in an environmentally friendly way and the promotion of energy efficiency and saving. This energy partnership is principally aimed at enhancing the security of energy supplies to the EU and at improving investment conditions in Russia's energy sector in order to upgrade the infrastructure, promote energy efficient and environmentally friendly technologies, and enhance energy conservation within Russia.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To develop the electricity and natural gas transportation networks in the Northern Dimension region, thus contributing to the competitive operation of the EU internal energy market and to the security of energy supplies across Europe. Northern Dimension partners will work to improve the co-ordination of energy production and supply, and to achieve full integration of the acceding countries in the EU priority axes for energy transportation and in a Common European Energy Market.*

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- *To ensure that the development and utilisation of energy resources will be made more efficient and environmentally sound. Northern Dimension partners will also endeavour to ensure safe transportation of energy materials, to explore the possibilities for increased use of renewable energy and to establish a testing ground for flexible mechanisms under the Energy Protocol in the Baltic Sea Region.*
- *The European Union and the Russian Federation will continue their work to strengthen the EU-Russia Energy Dialogue ⁶, launched at the EU-Russia Summit of October 2000 with the purpose to improve energy cooperation.*

3.1.3. Transport

The improvement of the transport infrastructure in the Northern Dimension area is vital for the economic development of the region, with the key priorities being the development of a multi-modal transport system improving the connections within the region and with the neighbouring countries, the creation of an environmentally friendly integrated transport and communications market, the promotion of an efficient use of existing infrastructure, and the further realisation of the Pan-European transport network in partner countries. Safety levels within all modes of transport must be enhanced, in particular for maritime safety with regard to the use of double-hull tankers and sufficient safety classification in harsh ice conditions, including scientific research support.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To address bottlenecks and choke points in the Northern Dimension region, creating at the same time an environmentally friendly transport network integrating accession countries. The basis for such a work will be provided by the Commission's revision of the Guidelines for the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the Commission White Paper "European Transport Policy for 2010" ⁷.*

- *To increase safety levels within all modes of transport. High priority will be attributed, in particular, to maritime with a view to protecting the marine environment from accidents that threaten sea and coastal ecosystems as well as socio-economic life of populations involved. Scientific research will support such activities.*

3.1.4. Telecommunications and Information Society

Information and communication technology (ICT) will play a crucial role in the development of a prosperous and sustainable Northern Dimension region in the coming years. The private sector should take an active role in this, and the public-private financing of NeDAP projects should be encouraged. The Northern Dimension region can develop a leading knowledge-based economy, in particular through follow-up of the Northern eDimension Action Plan, launched in 2001.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To promote the co-ordinated development of telecommunications, information society networks and services in the Northern Dimension region, including the regulatory and administrative framework. A co-ordinated effort should be made to support ICT development in Northwest Russia, to help avoid the development of a technology and infrastructure gap.*
- *Bearing in mind the importance of ICT in helping the region overcome the disadvantages caused by long distances and harsh climate, Northern Dimension partners will make every effort to accelerate the transition of the region to an information society, to ensure better living conditions and access to modern services, including telemedicine, e-logistics.*

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3.2. HUMAN RESOURCES, EDUCATION, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, CULTURE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

The Northern Dimension region has a rich supply of human resources and a high scientific potential. The future of the whole area, including the Arctic, and the social well-being and economic growth of the region will depend to a large extent on the development of this potential.

3.2.1. Human Resources and Employment, Education/Training and Culture

To assist in unlocking the rich supply of human resources and high scientific potential of the region, the key objective is to give priority attention to capacity building, education and training/retraining, scientific research and health with the objective to create a sustainable region. Outdated qualifications and skills should be brought to meet demands with regard to sustainable development as well as modern technological demands. Students, teachers and researchers must be able to maximise the opportunities available to them notably through the promotion of university exchanges and the use of virtual learning facilities in the promotion of culture, democracy and sustainable economic growth. The principles of life-long learning must be implemented in the countries of the region, in order to improve the overall level of education in the area.

Cultural development, (including cultural tourism) should be strengthened, by mobilising and co-ordinating national, regional and local authorities, NGOs, private enterprise and civil society in the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity and dialogue.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To promote the creation of a "knowledge-based sustainable region" through joint projects, networking and mobilising fields of education and training, research, culture and youth, and by bringing information and learning opportunities to remote areas through Internet-based and other tools.*
- *To promote a dialogue that enables the region to develop as a dynamic and open cultural area, raising awareness of heritage, and promoting local and regional development.*

3.2.2. Scientific Research

Scientific research is vital to the development of the region, with the key objective being to ensure that research activity is effectively co-ordinated and recognises the impact of ongoing economic, environmental, political and social change in the region. Co-operation among enterprises, universities and the scientific community should be enhanced with a view to fostering employment creation.

The present Action Plan therefore supports the goal of promoting scientific research in the Northern Dimension area, with a focus on climate change and the economic, social and environmental impacts caused by climate variability and change.

Specific attention must be given to research relating to the development of infrastructure and materials suitable for harsh climatic conditions, the improvement of environmentally sound exploration, extraction and transport technologies for fossil energy and minerals, the development of appropriate transport policies and technologies, and the analysis of socio-economic and environmental changes across the region. In the formulation of research policies and projects, it will be important to seek consultations not only with the various scientific research institutions but also with bodies such as the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To improve communication and information exchange among all sectors of the scientific community in Russia and enlarged EU, encouraging at the same time the involvement of young researchers. This will improve the dissemination of information to the scientific community at large in the region and create a mechanism for stimulating co-operation between the many scientific institutes and universities in the North.*
- *To strengthen research and technology-development activities, particularly in sectors relating to climate change, environmental protection, sustainable management and utilisation of natural resources, safety and security of energy supplies, social and economic developments in the region, maritime safety, transport networks and logistics.*

3.2.3. Public Health and Social Well-being

High priority must be attached to the fight against communicable diseases (especially tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS) in Northwest Russia and the accession countries, as well as to the goal of addressing problems related to general health and social wellbeing, such as the use of illicit drugs, alcoholism and other life-style

related conditions. Society as a whole must be active in health promotion and in the enhancement of healthy lifestyles. Strengthening international co-operation at all levels is key for the achievement of such objectives, inter alia through the establishment of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing⁸.

In addressing these issues, activities will be developed in accordance with the EU strategy on public health (the EU Public Health Programme 2003-2008⁹), with the recommendations adopted by the Fourth Baltic Sea States Summit in St Petersburg on 10 June 2002 on the threat of communicable diseases¹⁰ and with those contained in the Prime Ministers' Declaration at the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 10th Anniversary Summit in Kirkenes on 11 January 2003¹¹.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To address the challenges posed by major communicable diseases, and particularly tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.*

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special attention will be paid to health problems in children and young people, addressing also the social and economic determinants of such diseases.

- *To enhance and extend international cooperation on public health issues more broadly, to address also the determinants of health problems, such as social exclusion and poverty, bad conditions for children (negative social inheritance), social status of the elderly, etc., and the impact of the environment on citizens' health and the structure of health services across the region.*

3.3. ENVIRONMENT, NUCLEAR SAFETY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

3.3.1. Environment

The vast environmental problems in the region are well known, including also such specific factors as the particularly severe impact of climate change in the high north, and the negative consequences of pollution on the fragile marine ecosystem and the Arctic.

It is beyond the capacity of any country or organisation to tackle these trans-boundary problems single-handed. Concerted and co-ordinated action is essential, both on the convergence of environmental standards and policies, and on funding joint cooperation activities. The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership provides a useful example of how a concerted approach can effectively address urgent problems. The Strategic Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development", established between the EU and the States of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in the framework of the global Water Initiative launched by the EU at the 2002 Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, is another example of such a multilateral concerted approach.

In this work, Northern Dimension partners must take full account of monitoring reports provided by the European Union, HELCOM, Baltic 21 and the Arctic Council.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To strengthen the EU-Russia dialogue on environmental issues in the framework of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement, and work for the full respect of international conventions on environment.*
- *To monitor and tackle pollutants throughout the region, principally nutrients, chemicals, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), heavy metals, toxic and urban waste, in relation to inland waters and the Arctic as well as the Barents and Baltic Seas. Particular attention will also be paid to the problem of air pollution and to the promotion of cleaner production systems, which is in line with the decisions from the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in particular with its focus on sustainable consumption and production.*
- *To make full use of multilateral funding mechanisms, such as the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership.*

3.3.2. Nuclear Safety

The immense problems of nuclear waste storage and disposal in the Northern Dimension region, particularly in Northwest Russia are of great concern (including spent nuclear fuel from decommissioned submarines and icebreakers, inadequate or absent storage facilities, and other wastes such as mixed wastes and liquid wastes).

Ensuring nuclear safety and the safe management of spent nuclear fuels and radioactive waste is a priority

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in the Northern Dimension area. The main problems are the need to provide safe storage facilities for the spent nuclear fuel removed from icebreakers and nuclear powered submarines, the management of a wide variety of radioactive wastes, including mixed and liquid wastes, and the management of submarines that have been taken out of service. Another urgent priority in the region is the early closure and decommissioning of nuclear reactors "at risk". The key objective is to achieve an adequate level of safety across the region.

The present Action Plan thus supports close multilateral co-operation between national authorities, including on legal initiatives such as the agreement on the Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation¹². This will include the effective and timely implementation of projects through the Nuclear Window of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership Support Fund, as well as upgraded monitoring procedures and an effective exchange of information and expertise on the management of nuclear material.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To implement projects through the Nuclear Window of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership Support Fund without delay, following the signature of the agreement establishing a Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation (MNEPR). Priority will be given to the management of spent nuclear fuel, nuclear waste, and the decommissioning of nuclear facilities and submarines.*
- *To strengthen monitoring and the protection of the environment from radiation through increased co-operation, improved co-ordination of national plans for dealing with nuclear safety incidents in the region.*

3.3.3. Natural Resources

The region is rich in natural resources, particularly oil and gas, minerals, fish and timber. These resources are of crucial importance for the economic development of the local communities, although they are under significant pressure. Sustainable use of natural resources is vital if the long-term economic potential of the region is to be realised without negatively affecting the sensitive ecological balance of the area or the indigenous communities that depend on these resources.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, 2002, adopted the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) work programme, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) programme on forests as means to promote sustainable development. Forests of the Northern Dimension have vast global importance because of their broad expanse, their biodiversity, their role in the global carbon cycle, and their actual potential influence on international trade in forest products.

Forests as renewable natural resource are major source of income in rural areas in northern parts of Scandinavia, parts of the accession countries and especially in Northwest Russia. Recognising the importance of forests and of forest sector-based production, the Northern Dimension Forest Sector Programme, prepared by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council Forest Sector Task Force, was referred to in the ND Ministerial Conference of April 2001 in Luxembourg. The priority actions in the programme include the establishment of model forest areas, human resources development and institution building related to

the strengthening of forest management, in order to promote sustainable utilisation of forest resources through partnership of all relevant stakeholders. Recognising the importance of social sustainability of forestry, emphasis will be put on small and medium-scale enterprises development.

To help address these priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following

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key objective (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To help ensure that Northern and Arctic eco-systems and their bio-diversity shall remain viable, vigorous and able to sustain human socio-economic needs, and to encourage the responsible and sustainable utilisation of forests and other natural resources with the active participation of local actors, communities, SMEs and indigenous peoples in the decision-making process.*

3.4. CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Cross-border co-operation must contribute to promoting regional economic development and integration of the whole Northern Dimension area. The responsibility to initiate cooperation among bordering regions based on a genuine partnership lies mainly with the regions themselves. The relevant EU financial instruments must support this co-operation as efficiently as possible. There is also a need to co-ordinate EU and bilateral funds to facilitate co-operation across the border with Russia within the Northern Dimension area.

The various cross-border co-operation arrangements in the area, including Euro-regions and the co-operation between Russia and Lithuania based on the *Nida-initiative*, can form a basis for intensified work focused on the borders with Russia in the Northern Dimension region. To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To implement cross-border co-operation initiatives on priority themes such as economic and social development, environmental protection, transport and telecommunication, border crossings and border management, public health and cultural exchanges.*
- *To strengthen co-ordination among funding programmes operated by the European Union and by other sources, international financial institutions and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Russian Federation shall be involved in the co-financing of activities as much as possible. The European Commission will make every effort to improve co-ordination of EU programmes, and particularly Tacis and INTERREG, including the possible establishment of a New Neighbourhood Instrument as foreseen in the Communication on "Wider Europe: Neighbourhood".*
- *To further stimulate the close involvement of local actors, communities and administrations, strengthening subsidiarity and local ownership of projects. Better results will be achieved by building on existing examples of tri-partite co-operation by using the expertise of regional and sub-regional bodies such as the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation Union of Baltic Cities and the Barents Regional Council.*
- *To address the key challenges faced by the Kaliningrad region in its future development as a Russian exclave surrounded by the European Union. The EU, the Russian Federation and other partners will work on the implementation of cross-border projects dealing with economic and social development, environmental issues, health issues, the fight against organised crime as well as adequate infrastructure on the border crossings and efficient border management.*

3.5. JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

3.5.1. Prevention and fight against organised crime

Organised crime remains a considerable problem in the region, demanding a concerted effort from all partner countries. A co-ordinated and effective response must be made to problems such as economic crime, corruption, money laundering, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

To help address the above priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objectives (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To improve the co-ordination among national administrations and police forces in order to optimise the use of resources and to develop concrete operational measures between the EU and Russia, and increase the effectiveness of law enforcement cooperation.*
- *To address trafficking in human beings and drugs, and tackle crime targeting children and women.*

- *The EU and the Russian Federation will work for the rapid and effective implementation of the EU-Russia Action Plan against organised crime and other initiatives designed to integrate the activities and expertise of the respective national, regional and local authorities, promote the sharing of intelligence and priorities and improve support for the victims of crime.*

3.5.2. Integrated border management

The development of effective border management is crucial to efforts to avoid the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe, while helping to ensure mutual security, the respect of law and cross-border contacts. The present Action Plan supports the goals of fostering secure and efficient management of the EU-Russia border, to prevent illegal movements but allow easy passage for legitimate trade and travel, reducing waiting times, improving infrastructure, increased co-operation between relevant border authorities, and the harmonisation of legislation, standards and procedures.

The economic aspects of improved border management are addressed under section 3.1 above. In addition, Northern Dimension partners will work to achieve the following key objective (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To combat illegal immigration and other cross-border crime, and facilitate legitimate trade and travel, through improved border management and integrated border management.*

3.5.3. Civil Protection

Ensuring effective standards and procedures for public safety and participation in the governmental processes is of particular relevance to the Northern Dimension area; a key priority will be the development of a common space in which people feel secure.

The new Action Plan therefore supports the goal of improving civil protection, with a particular focus on the Baltic and Barents regions, and to further developing the Euro-Baltic programme.

It will be important to develop the link between civil society and government or business decision-making, to harmonise legislation, and exchange experience and expertise in the fields of safety practices and rescue management.

To help address these priorities, Northern Dimension partners will therefore work to achieve the following key objective (with specific activities as set out in annex):

- *To improve and encourage the convergence of safety procedures, promoting at the same time civil protection, good governance and direct public participation in project planning.*

3.6. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES: KALININGRAD AND THE ARCTIC REGION

As noted above, Kaliningrad and the Arctic region represent two prominent, although not exhaustive, examples of specific regions with specific needs. To ensure a comprehensive attention to these needs, they have been treated here as cross-cutting issues, main-streamed within each key priority of the Action Plan.

3.6.1. Kaliningrad

The responsibility for the development of the Kaliningrad *Oblast* of Russia lies of course with the Russian Federation. Given its particular geographic situation as a Russian exclave surrounded by the European Union it is however particularly important to enhance dialogue and cooperation between Kaliningrad and neighbouring Northern Dimension partners and future EU Member States.

All five priority sectors covered in the present Action Plan have particular relevance for Kaliningrad. Whether in the economic, human resource, environment, cross-border or JHA fields, Northern Dimension activities will be important in allowing Kaliningrad to take full advantage of the opportunities created by EU enlargement.

In the economic field, particular attention will be given to building an enhanced framework for trade and investment, supporting administrative reform, promoting business-to-business links and SMEs development, and ensuring smooth border management; the security of energy supply and the further development of regional transport networks (including shipping lines), with adequate connections to the Trans-European Transport Network will likewise be emphasised.

Attention will also be given to support for human resource development, including vocational and business education, educational exchanges and other joint projects in the field of education, research, culture and youth, as well as joint work to combat threats to public health.

Environmental concerns will be addressed, with a view to resolving existing problems (especially water and soil pollution, urban wastes and chemicals), as well as helping ensure the sustainable development of the region in future. The NDEP Support Fund, as well as financial support provided by international financial institutions and other Northern Dimension partners on a bilateral basis, can help address such challenges.

Cross-border cooperation, focusing on Kaliningrad and the neighbouring regions of the EU, will have a particular importance in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as in promoting people-to-people contacts at the local level.

Joint efforts to combat organised crime, smuggling, illegal migration and trafficking in human beings will help ensure mutual security and the respect of law for the benefit of all.

The European Commission has already made a special effort in many of these areas, and will continue and strengthen these efforts during the life of the new Action Plan. As an example, the Tacis Indicative Programme for Russia for the period 2004-06 includes a special package for Kaliningrad, costed at some €25m over these three years and focusing in particular on sectors such as administrative reform and business development, public health, education, and cross-border co-operation¹³. This is in addition to broader efforts being carried out through the Tacis Russian national programme, and through the NDEP, which are also of benefit to Kaliningrad.

3.6.2. The Arctic

The northernmost areas of the region require a special attention, bearing in mind the harsh climatic

conditions, the fragile environment increasingly threatened by pollution of various kinds, high infrastructure costs in linking scarcely populated areas across long distances, and health problems affecting the indigenous peoples living in the high north.

All five priority sectors covered in the present Action Plan are also relevant for the Arctic, even if the economic, human resources and environment sectors are likely to have a primary importance. It will however be particularly important to enhance broader international co-operation on such themes, involving also partners such as the US and Canada which face similar concerns for their Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas.

Encouraging the economic development of the Arctic region is of crucial importance; such development, however, must take place in full respect of the fragile environmental situation of the region, and must involve local populations and indigenous people in the decision-making process at all levels. Infrastructure issues will have a particular importance, notably with respect to the role which improved ICT networks can play in helping to overcome the constraints of distance and climate.

ICT also has a crucial role to play in fostering human development through distance learning, and in encouraging and preserving local cultures, indigenous languages and cultural heritage.

The University of the Arctic provides a good example of such initiatives. Special attention should be paid to the improvement of living conditions of Northerners engaged in traditional livelihoods such as reindeer husbandry, fishing, hunting and craft making.

Enhanced environmental monitoring in the Arctic, and joint efforts to protect the Arctic environment from chemical, POP and nuclear pollution will be strengthened by building on the research work carried out by the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. The Arctic is also an important global laboratory, and Northern Dimension partners will promote further work in this field through, inter alia, RTD programmes of the EU and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Many of the sectors encompassed in the present Action Plan are of particular relevance for Greenland, as acknowledged by the Commission in a recent communication to the Council and the European Parliament¹⁴. Whenever possible and appropriate, Greenland should be involved in the implementation of this Action Plan through Community programmes open to Greenlandic participation.

In addition, and looking to the wider North, the EU will also pursue its cooperation with the US and Canada in the context of the New Transatlantic Agenda¹⁵ with the US and the Joint Statement on Northern Co-operation with Canada¹⁶. This can help build favourable synergies in fields such as environment, energy, nuclear safety, public health, indigenous peoples and the promotion of sustainable development in circumpolar and adjacent regions.

4. MONITORING AND REVIEW MECHANISMS

The wide range of activities to be carried forward under the Northern Dimension Action Plan, and the need for all partners to work together in a spirit of complementarity and subsidiarity, makes it imperative to have adequate and timely mechanisms for monitoring progress, reviewing achievements and identifying shortcomings. These mechanisms can only be effective if based on the contributions of all partners involved.

The availability of up-to-date and readily-accessible information on the Northern Dimension activities and achievements will also enhance the visibility of our work for all partners concerned (and for the public as a whole), making it possible to clearly identify what has been achieved and by whom, what is underway or under preparation and what remains to be done.

In the context of the First Action Plan, the European Commission has already provided two annual reports on Northern Dimension activities¹⁷. A third such report will be produced by the end of 2003. These documents are essential in informing both the EU Council and the European Parliament on the progress made in the implementation of the Northern Dimension Action Plan, fully involving these institutions in the monitoring and review mechanism. Other reports, such as the annual progress report on *EU-Canada co-operation on northern issues*¹⁸, can also contribute to the overall assessment of the progress achieved on specific issues in the Northern Dimension region.

The 2001 and 2002 Commission reports gave a comprehensive overview of activities carried out by the European Community in pursuit of Northern Dimension objectives and priorities, but were limited in that they could not give a comprehensive account of relevant activities carried out by other Northern Dimension partners. It will be important to correct this deficiency during the implementation of the Second Action Plan.-. In accordance with its overall co-ordination role, the European Commission will prepare these comprehensive annual reports, drawing on contributions received from all partners

In addition to these annual reports (and as the basis on which later reports can be prepared), it will also be useful to consider the establishment of an Internet-based system of providing timely updates on key activities. Such a system, whose effectiveness would very much depend on the active contributions of all partners, could be prepared in connection with the entry into force of the present Action Plan.

Building on this regular and comprehensive reporting, Northern Dimension partners will be able to keep the progress and achievements of the Action Plan under regular review. To this end, a meeting of Senior Officials should be convened every second year to assess the implementation of the Action Plan, review progress to date and identify any areas in which a further stimulus might be necessary. Political guidance on the implementation of the Action Plan, and on its future development will have to be provided by Ministerial Conferences, to be held every second year, when the Senior Officials meeting is not convened. In this connection, the Ministerial Conference in 2005 will be able to make recommendations on the

follow-up to the Second Action Plan, and on the issues to be addressed after 2006.

The meetings of Senior Officials should normally be held in the spring of every second year, and should bring together representatives from European Union institutions, EU Member States, Partner Countries, Northern Dimension regional bodies, and the international financial institutions. The participation of representatives of regional and local authorities, of the business community and of civil society should be encouraged.

To provide for the broad participation of civil society groups in reviewing progress under the Action Plan, it would also be helpful if the European Economic and Social Committee would be able to organise annual Fora on the implementation of the Action Plan, bringing together representatives from the social and economic organisations represented in the Committee. This would build on the useful experience of similar fora organised in 2001 and 2003. In the same vein, it would be valuable if the EU Committee of the Regions might organise similar fora on a regular basis, bringing together representatives of local and regional administrations of the Northern Dimension area.

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ANNEX 2 ¹⁹

The Second Northern Dimension Action Plan, 2004-06 Specific activities to be pursued in addressing the priority objectives set in the Action Plan

The priority objectives to be addressed under the Second Northern Dimension Action Plan are set out in the main text, for each of the five priority sectors included in the Action Plan. This annex, which represents an integral part of the Action Plan, elaborates on these objectives by setting out the specific activities, in terms of both dialogue and cooperation actions, which Northern Dimension partners will pursue in implementing the Action Plan and addressing these priority objectives.

Many of the activities listed here have been proposed by EU Member States, partner countries or regional bodies in the context of the wide consultation process carried out by the Commission from November 2002 to March 2003. Others have been proposed by the Commission, building on and strengthening existing EU dialogues or programmes. The active implementation of these activities, by Northern

Dimension partners as a whole or bilaterally by the different regional bodies and other stakeholders will ensure that the wide range of issues covered by the Northern Dimension are most effectively addressed.

The list of activities given here should not however be considered as exhaustive, since there are other initiatives under implementation or being developed by individual partners that can also contribute effectively to the achievement of the key Action Plan objectives. It will be important in reviewing progress towards these objectives that all relevant activities are kept in mind.

In the implementation of all the objectives of the Action Plan, a key role will be played by the EU-Russia PCA dialogue, by Community programmes such as Tacis, Phare and INTERREG, and in the future by Structural Funds (also for the new Member States) and by the activities of all Northern Dimension partners, including regional bodies and other stakeholders.

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Northern Dimension activities, by priority objective, 2004-06

1. ECONOMY, BUSINESS, INFRASTRUCTURE

1.1. Trade, Investment promotion and business co-operation

To improve the framework conditions required for the establishment of a favourable business climate, including inter alia removal of technical and other barriers to trade and investment and enhanced networking and co-operation among the business community across the region.

Continued effective pursuit by the European Union and the Russian Federation of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement dialogue in fields related to economic reform, regulatory convergence and competition policy. Continued efforts in the framework of the creation of an EU/Russia Common European Economic Space, building on the joint concept which should be agreed by end-2003. This means, inter alia, removal of non-tariff barriers to trade.

Continued co-operation in the Barents Working Group for Economic co-operation, including in its task forces on forestry and customs in order to enhance conditions for business activities in the Barents Region i.a. through further strengthening of the involvement of regional economic and business actors through the Barents Business Advisory Group.

Continued efforts carried out by the CBSS Working Group for Economic Co-operation, with the involvement of the Baltic Business Advisory Council (BAC) to tackle barriers in the fields of economy, trade and investments.

To support economic reforms and regulatory convergence in Russia, reinforcing the transparency and predictability relations.

Enhanced co-operation among all partners to identify and remove obstacles to trade and investment through appropriate studies, benchmarking and reporting.

Strengthened dialogue, networking and co-operation among the business community across the region (all partners), including notably activities carried out through such bodies as EU-Russian Industrialists' Round Table, the *ScanBelt* project supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the *BaltPartenariat* of the Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association and the Euro-Arctic Chambers of Commerce.

Strengthened dialogue, networking and co-operation among consumers' groups and regulatory bodies across the region, building on the work being carried out by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

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To promote the creation and development of SMEs, especially Russian SMEs, and their adjustment to the European Northern Dimension Partners will work to facilitate SMEs' access to capital, encourage the exchange of best practice training and promote better knowledge of regulations.

Continued promotion and development of SMEs on the basis of the European Charter for Small Enterprises, adopted by the Feira European Council in June 2000²⁰ and the Nordic Charter for Small Innovative Companies, Entrepreneurs and Independent Inventors adopted by the Nordic Council Ministers for Business and Industry on 7 October 2002.

Enhanced participation of SMEs and other stakeholders from Member States, acceding countries, Iceland and Norway in the EU Multi-annual Programme for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship in order to improve the business environment and implement the European Charter. This must be done through the exchange of best practice and the stimulation of the debate between public authorities and the business community on the most efficient policy tools and measures to foster business development. Through the European Investment Fund it is now possible for financial institutions in Member States and acceding Countries to operate in the sector of venture capital and borrowing to SMEs. Support is provided by the network of Euro-Info Centres, 68 of which presently cover the Northern Dimension region ²¹.

Continued support provided to Nordic SMEs by the Nordic Project Fund (*Nopef* – Nordic Council of Ministers), through loans and grants for co-financing of feasibility studies aiming at an investment into a new market. During the period 2004 – 2006 *Nopef* will start at least 300 new feasibility studies in Northwest Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The result will be around 120 new investments, especially in Northwest Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but also in Poland and Ukraine. Russia will in 2004-2006 continue to be the main market of *Nopef* with 25% of the feasibility studies.

Continued support provided by the CBSS (including Baltic 21) and BEAC Working Groups on Economic Co-operation in benchmarking and exchanging best practices 22.

Pursuit of the stimulation of competitive and innovative business through projects such as CONNECT, supported by INTERREG until May 2005, involving 25 regional technology transfer agencies in Norway, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

To support industrial enterprises in their moves towards more sustainable production, in order to improve performance while addressing environmental concerns and offering socio-economic opportunities to the indigenous region.

Continued financial support to be provided by the Nordic Finance Group of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic countries, consisting of the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), the Northern Development Fund (NDF) and the Nordic Project Fund (Nopef) to companies and SMEs working on cleaner production programmes.

Continued effective implementation of Cleaner Production programmes, such as training courses, introduced in the Russian part of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, under the supervision of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and with financial support from NEFCO Revolving Fund for Cleaner Production.

Pursuit of dialogue and networking by all Northern Dimension partners on economic incentives and eco-efficiency tools, implementation of international conventions and agreements to promote management of environmental issues in industry.

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Continued implementation of initiatives such as the COMPASS project (Competitive Alternatives for Sustainable Private Sector Investments in the Baltic Sea Region) led by Northern German Laender, with INTERREG funding.

Strengthened attention to be paid by all Northern Dimension partners to indigenous interests in relation to economic activities, and in particular extractive industry, with a view to protecting inherited rights of self-determination, land rights and cultural rights of indigenous peoples of the region.

To facilitate trade and economic relations along the old and new border of the European Union, through the improved integrated border management. Clearance time for border crossings of goods should be reduced to a maximum of 15 minutes. Northern Dimension partners will achieve this objective particularly by encouraging the convergence of custom legislation, fighting corruption, and through the modernisation of border-crossing infrastructure and the rationalisation of procedures at borders.

Continued effective implementation of Tacis projects assisting the modernisation of border-crossing points along the border of the enlarged Union for enhanced people-to-people contacts, smooth transit of goods and for tourism purposes.

Continued construction or modernisation of Polish border-crossings, in particular along the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast. Grzechotki – Mamonovo II border crossing and modernisation of **Goldap – Gusev crossing.**

Continued construction or modernisation of Lithuanian border-crossings, in particular along the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast. Border inspection posts constructed with Phare assistance in Kybartai-Chernyshevskoye (rail) and Panemunė-Sovietsk (road).

Enhanced co-operation between Northern Dimension national administrations, in particular through the Task Force II for Customs Co-operation under the Working Group for Economic Co-operation of the BEAC and the CBSS Working Group for Economic Co-operation, the Baltic Sea Region Border

Implementation of projects such as *Telematics in Foreign Trade Logistics and Delivery Management* (TEDIM), aimed at developing logistics and related information processing in Baltic Sea region. TEDIM development areas relate to border crossing IT procedures, information management on rail and at sea, logistical service networks and harmonising this potential. Participating companies provide project funding, but funding has also been available from EU TEN Transport, INTERREG, Phare and Tacis.

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Strengthened co-operation for the introduction or improvement of integrated border management with the full engagement of all parties involved, according to the methodology of the *Laufzettel* project, developed within the framework of the *Baltic Sea Customs Conference* (BSCC).

Harmonisation of the application of customs legislation in accordance with EU legislation, WTO regulations and according to the methodology of the Green Corridor concept, developed in the framework of the Task Force II for Customs Co-operation under the BEAC Working Group for Economic Co-operation.

1.2. Energy

To help develop the electricity and natural gas networks in the Northern Dimension region, thus contributing to the competitive operation of the EU internal energy market and to the security of energy supplies across Europe. Northern Dimension partners will work to improve the co-ordination of energy production and supply, and to achieve full integration of the accession countries in the EU priority axes for energy networks and into a Common European Energy Market.

Continued efforts by the European Commission to identify the priorities for energy infrastructures. These will be established in the revised Guidelines for Trans-European Energy Networks (TEN-E), adopted by the Commission in 2003. The full integration of the accession countries in the EU priority axes for energy networks will be also analysed in the course of 2003, including the improvement of security of existing infrastructure and increased transportation of oil by pipelines, with particular attention to environmental protection. The Commission's recent

Communication on energy policy for the enlarged European Union²³ sets guidelines to face up to the challenges of growing external energy dependence between the EU and its neighbouring countries. It also examines the need to address infrastructure issues on a regional level, to diversify sources of energy, at both geographical and technological level, and to broaden the basis for energy trade in Europe and its adjoining countries.

Continued preparations and implementation of an electricity connection (Power Bridge) between Lithuania and Poland as part of one of the EU TEN-E priority axes.

Further encouragement to the development of mutually beneficial regional electricity market, through European Commission participation in the joint committee of Baltic Sea states on electric power

industry BALTREL²⁴, on the basis of the 2002 study: "Towards a Common electricity Market in the Baltic Sea region", which presented an analysis of the main issues for the development of an open electricity market in the Baltic Sea region.

Further encouragement to the work of Baltic Gas with thirteen participating gas companies to further develop the gas pipeline and gas storage infrastructure in the region.

Enhanced work and co-operation in the framework of the Baltic Sea Region Energy Co-operation (BASREC), encompassing Denmark, Poland, Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland. The European Commission is represented by the Directorate General for Energy and Transport.

Continued implementation of projects such as BalticCHAIN²⁵ (funded by the INTERREG Programme) on provision of legislative information to generate concrete projects and establish structures such as a Project Preparation Fund or Guarantee Agencies.