CITIZENS' SUMMARY

The North Sea Region programme was approved on 17 August 2015 so there is little to report in terms of concrete achievements for 2015. The main elements of the programme were already complete early in the year and on this basis it was decided to start project development work and launch a first call for proposals before formal adoption of the programme in order to avoid excessive delays in programme start-up. Project applicants were able to submit project ideas for feedback in the weeks up to the launch of the call. This resulted in a record 81 ideas being submitted.

The first call was open from 27th April to 30th June. The programme piloted a two-step application process for the call whereby applicants first submit a short Expression of Interest and, if approved, go on to submit a Full Application for the next call. For the first call, however, it was agreed that projects which had already completed the application development process while waiting for approval of the new programme could go straight to the second step. This resulted in 28 Full Applications and 50 Expressions of Interest – these numbers are broken down by priority in section 3.

The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in London in November. The meeting approved 12 Full Applications and 25 Expressions of Interest. The principle reason for rejection of Full Applications was the weakness of project result indicators. This was also an issue – though to a somewhat lesser extent – with several of the approved projects. As a result a negotiation procedure was initiated with all approved projects after the SC meeting in order to adjust applications before contracting. This was still on-going at the end of the year. The second call for project proposals has been confirmed to run from 15 January 2016 and a project development event was agreed and held in Amsterdam on 9 and 10 December 2015.

The programme operates with 4 inter-linked priority axes:

1. *Thinking Growth: Supporting growth in the North Sea Region economies. Priority 1 supports knowledge transfer, innovation capacity building, innovation demand stimulation and innovative public service delivery.*
2. *Eco-Innovation: Stimulating the green economy. Priority 2 supports carbon reduction and promotion of green economic activity.*
3. *Sustainable North Sea Region: Protecting against climate change and preserving the environment. Priority 3 supports adaptation to climate to climate change and management of ecosystems.*
4. *Promoting green transport and mobility. Priority 4 supports carbon reduction through multimodal and maritime fright transport and sustainable transport solutions.*

In addition the programme has a priority axis on Technical Assistance to cover administration costs.

The outcome of the 1st call was that 12 projects were approved. The grants were allocated as follows:

1. *Thinking Growth 27 % (4 projects)*
2. *Eco Innovation 19 % (2 projects)*
3. *Sustainable North Sea 48% (5 projects)*
4. *Green transport 6% (1 project)*

There is no information to report as yet on indicator achievements for the specific objectives as only one project had been finally approved by the end of the year. Similarly, there are no evaluation results yet as the first evaluations will be launched in 2016.

The first months of implementation have been reasonably positive. Interest in the call was very good and the applications were in most cases relevant and of reasonably high quality (other than the result issue discussed above). There has been very positive feedback about the programme's simplification efforts and its new Online Monitoring System. Work is well underway on the elements still needed to complete implementation arrangements. Interest in the second call seems good and although it is not possible to report many figures as yet, the JS assesses that the programme has made good first steps towards achieving its main targets.

Annex with remaining end of the sentences from section:

3.1. Overview of the Implementation

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Priority axis **Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems**

1 Thinking Growth

for the second call for applications which opened in beginning of 2016.

4 Promoting green transport and mobility

second call for applications which opened in beginning of 2016.