



**Arc Manche Assembly response to the  
consultation on the draft  
Operational programme Objective 3  
Transnational Territorial Co-operation  
North West Europe**

**15th September 2006**

The following statement reflects the views of the Arc manche Assembly, which comprises 5 French Regions and 7 British local authorities bordering the English Channel<sup>1</sup>.

The Arc Manche Assembly engages in dialogue, reflection and initiates proposals. The Assembly's two main objectives are:

- Representing the interests and the uniqueness of Arc Manche as a coherent co-operation area in the European Union ;
- Strengthening the partnerships in the Channel area by facilitating the setting-up of joint projects of varying sizes and with different categories of stakeholders.

First of all, we welcome the opportunity to comment on the Operational Programme via the consultation process and congratulates the International Working Party for the valuable work done during the past few months on the draft Operational programme. Please find below our responses to the questionnaire.

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<sup>1</sup> Région Nord-Pas-de-Calais ; Région Picardie ; Région Haute-Normandie ; Région Basse-Normandie ; Région Bretagne ; Kent County Council ; Brighton & Hove City Council ; West Sussex County Council ; Hampshire County Council ; Southampton City Council ; East Sussex County Council ; Isle of Wight Council.

## 1. Analysis of the present situation

We agree with the analysis made in chapter 2. In terms of relevant material, we enclose the «Espace Manche Development Initiative» Strategic Vision (project partly funded by the current programme) which provides an analysis of the current situation in the Channel area generally and on 5 specific themes (tourism; integrated coastal zone management; fisheries and fishing resources; maritime safety and intermodal transport; R&D and technology transfer).

This vision is a very valuable complementary piece of information. For example, the Channel area is facing challenges such as:

- Global issues (globalisation of the economy; increasing pressure on marine ecosystems; sustainable management of freight flows and maritime traffic; energy, climate change and preservation of marine ecosystems; demography);
- European issues (gateway to North West Europe; a coveted area close to highly populated regions such as Paris and London; an area of European integration between the British Isles and continental Europe).

The Operational Programme analysis seems relevant to us. Nevertheless, we would like to insist on the characteristics of maritime areas, specially the Channel area. We share the same challenges as the North West Europe area with regards to economy, environment, accessibility and demography. But we also have our own challenges such as coastal management (erosion, intermodality...) or sea issues (pollution prevention, maritime safety...), which are not enough underlined in the OP.

## 2. Strategy, priorities and objectives

We agree with the overall strategy, priorities and objectives for the programme. We particularly welcome the references to the English Channel on issues such as maritime safety and accessibility. We are also keen to promote innovation, sustainable use of natural resources (in particular coastal zones) and better accessibility (key in particular for the UK as an island). Stakeholder networking and co-operation actions should be encouraged, namely in the research field, in order to promote the Channel area's economic development and its contribution to the Lisbon strategy's success.

Furthermore, bearing in mind that the Channel area is the hinterland for the North West Europe capital cities (London, Brussels and Paris), it seems important to ensure a balanced development of the whole area, in particular concerning the relationship between the Arc Manche regions and these strategic centres.

We particularly agree with the promotion of a vertically, horizontally and geographically integrated approach and with the idea of developing «a co-operation culture» at an institutional level. For several years, the Arc Manche Assembly members have shown their willingness to work together on common issues.

The involvement of diverse institutions in co-operation projects will enable a better management of the development and resources of this common area.

### 3. Actions which could bring additional benefit for the development of the area

The Strategic Vision for the Channel area produced by the «Espace Manche development initiative» project, lists a number of priorities and projects, some of which are relevant for this programme for example:

- Improving intermodal links with the hinterland and facilitating modal shift for freight and passengers from road to more sustainable modes such as maritime, rail and waterways transport;
- Development of cross-Channel centers of expertise;
- Improving consultation in the response to and prevention of marine pollution;

Really innovative projects delivering concrete results should be encouraged. Projects gathering partners who know each other very well, such as the Arc Manche Assembly members or other networks, should be promoted as well because they will know how to work together to achieve better results.

As far maritime co-operation is concerned, a clearer distinction between cross-border and transnational projects should be made even if we fully understand the territorial and spatial specificities of the North West Europe programme.

### 4. Corridors and zones as a strategic approach

We are delighted that the Arc manche Regions are mentioned as a potential strategic corridor. We welcome this approach and it should be implemented. Our common maritime corridor should be linked to land corridors through the Channel ports.

We welcome the idea of organising thematic seminars on strategic initiatives and we ask for a representative of the Arc manche assembly to be invited and for a specific seminar on the Channel corridor to be organised.

Friday 15 september 2006, Maidstone Kent,