

The regions of northern Finland, Norway and Sweden have many common circumstances such as sparse population, harsh climate and long distances. This part of Europe is also specifically affected by globalisation, energy-supply, climate change and demographic change. The region has a population density of only 4.9 inhabitants per km², something that cannot be found in any other part of the European Union.

The NSPA network consists of 14 regions in three countries sharing common circumstances and objectives, working together to raise awareness of the region in the EU institutions, influence EU policy and to provide a platform for best practise.

NSPA-response to the green paper "From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding"

This document highlights some recommendations with regards to the specificities of the NSPA-region, and is therefore not a comprehensive response to the whole EC green paper as such. Nonetheless, the essence in this contribution relates to the questions 8, 14,15 and 16.

Research and innovation strategies for added value to Europe

The EU raw materials strategy recognises the importance of sustainable access to raw materials for European society. The NSPA is one of Europe's most important areas with regards to mineral resources, both in terms of mining and oil and gas extraction. As the region has great potential for further exploitation of natural resources and development of research and innovation activities related to them, the NSPA strongly supports the Commission consideration to launch – in line with the 'Innovation Union' flagship initiative – an Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials.

Pursued efforts to extract and process raw materials will reduce Europe's dependency on imports from the rest of the world. The NSPA can also boast some of the largest fisheries in Europe, combined with huge fields of forest that have spurred the development of biomass energy production and other industries related to non-traditional use of forestry the latest years. This combined with the region's oil and gas resources shows that the region has a key role in securing supply of all kind of raw materials for Europe. A research and innovation policy that promotes both the regions base for extraction and processing of renewable and non- renewable raw materials in the NSPA region should therefore be a common interest for the whole of Europe.

The region is also characterised by great distances between local communities, where infrastructure plays an important role. Developing road-networks, railway connections and new initiatives for shipping and air transport, is essential for the region's development. The challenge is twofold: on the one hand, bringing the resources of the NSPA out to European and global markets in an efficient way; on the other, improving the intra-regional coherence of the NSPA, by facilitating access to services, general mobility and commuting.

It is the NSPA perspective that a smart and sustainable raw material policy is closely interlinked with transport policy. We therefore strongly encourage research and innovation policies that focus in this connection.

A research and innovation strategy for the specificities of the NSPA

Related to these points, this document promotes the **formulation of a coherent common research strategy with programmes** specifically directed towards the issues particular for the NSPA region.

Furthermore an innovation strategy to promote a more effective and environmental friendly use of the region's rich base of natural and human resources must have a holistic approach if the goals in the EU 2020 strategy are to be fulfilled. Some key factors in this perspective are:

- The regions research institutions and private companies should have the right tools to furthermore develop the regions potential.
- Research on how to promote sustainable local communities where the raw materials are extracted and processed are important to secure supply and environmental standards. This includes the regions demographic challenges.
- The NSPA stresses that coordination between EU policies is important and supports the plan of designing a common strategic framework for policies and for financial instruments. The regulations must allow for different types of funding and programs to be mixed and used for research and innovation activities.
- The NSPA emphasises that more synergies should be developed between cohesion funding and research and innovation funding.
- It is important that EU-strategies and the future Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding complement each other and support cross-border cooperation and strategies
- The perspective of the region's indigenous people, the Sami, must be included in the research and innovation policy.
- The Europe 2020 strategy highlights the importance of involvement at the regional and local level for achieving the goals that one has set out. The NSPA emphasises on the importance of multi-level governance in the EU research and innovation programmes.
- The NSPA is one of the first regions to face the demographic trends of ageing and declining population. These phenomena should be acknowledged by the future research and innovation policies as they are one of the most challenging factors for Europe in the coming decades. The NSPA also welcomes the pilot innovation partnership of Active and Healthy Ageing and sees that the region would have a lot to contribute on the field .

Conclusion:

The NSPA-network strongly recommends that the Commission establishes research and innovation programmes that target the development of the specificities in the NSPA region, as this will provide added value to Europe as a whole in terms of both resource access and best practice.

Yours Sincerely

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