

UK: North East Region

REGIONAL CO-ORDINATOR

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1. A Brief Description of Regional Characteristics (in terms of population, the specialisation in economic sectors etc.)

The North East of England is the smallest of the English regions both in area and population. The region comprises two County Councils, covering the largely rural sub-regions of Durham and Northumberland which operate within a two tier local government system. The majority of the urban area, the Tees Valley and Tyne & Wear, is covered by 10 unitary authorities. It is a region of contrasts: extensive rural areas as well as major urban areas along the river corridors of the Tyne, Wear and Tees. Approximately 70% of the population reside in the riverside conurbations that developed to serve the traditional industries of the North East: mining, shipbuilding, steel and heavy manufacturing. The region has seen enormous change over the past 30 years, having lost over 100,000 jobs in the primary and manufacturing industries. Although less than 15% of the workforce is still employed in manufacturing, it remains an important sector in the regional economy. The region has diversified into new areas such as microelectronics, biotechnology, automotives and the offshore industry as well as services which are now one of the largest sectors in the region, including public administration, education and health. The financial and business service sector in the region is weak.

- Geographical size: 8,592 km²
- Population: 2.5 million of which 48.6% (1,233,500) are male and 51.4% (1,305,800) are female
- Economically active: 74.1% of people of working age
- Unemployment: 6% (UK 4.7%)
- Gross Value Added (GVA): at current basic price in 2002 was £12,078 per head (£15,614 UK)

The region has a low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in comparison with other UK regions (equal poorest with Wales) and within Europe. Unemployment remains stubbornly higher than elsewhere in the UK, and relatively low rates of new business formation and growth in new sectors contribute to relatively slow new job creation. A higher proportion of people claim income support than in any other UK region except Northern Ireland. Despite this the North East region is committed to the development of a knowledge based economy with the universities as key partners.

2. Characteristics of the HEIs in the Region (the number of HEIs; a basic profile of each institution to be involved in the project in terms of student numbers, balance between teaching and research functions, territorial focus etc.)

The North East has five campus universities plus a regional office of the Open University. In addition there are 17 further education colleges offering a wide range of higher education courses. The participating universities are:

- Durham: 12,500 full time students, 1,300 part time students
- Newcastle: 15,000 full time students, 2,000 part time students
- Northumbria: 16,000 full time students, 7,500 part time students
- Sunderland: 9,000 full time students, 4,000 part time students
- Teesside: 8,600 full time students, 10,600 part time students

Overall the North East has more student places than students originating from the region, with a consequent net outflow of students. As a small region with three modern and two traditional universities, the region has a relatively small academic research base for historical reasons. Taking national benchmarks of research performance, the balance of institutions means that the region has the lowest relative level of higher education research and development (R & D) expenditure and the lowest aggregate score in the research assessment exercise.

3. A Brief History of HEIs' Engagement in the Regional Development

The universities in the North East have been committed for some time both individually and collectively to supporting the local needs of industry and local communities. The North East was the first English region to establish a university association in 1983 (HESIN – Higher Education Support for Industry in the North), aimed at targeting the needs of regional business and local communities. Now renamed, Universities for the North East, the regional association is a key player in promoting collaborative activity and in promoting the civic and regional mission of the universities. All the individual universities have established regional offices and have developed a wide range of activities to support local economic development and to widen participation in education.

Agreement are currently being developed between all the region's universities and One NorthEast, the Regional Development Agency, on a range of collaborative activities including:

- Research excellence
- Knowledge transfer to support the development of businesses
- Graduate Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
- Improving access to university expertise and facilities
- Developing higher level skills
- Raising aspirations and widening participation through targeted outreach and new provision
- Cultural developments in partnership with other agencies e.g. theatres, museums and galleries

4. The Scope and Level of Involvement of Regional Stakeholders in the Project

5. Resources for Further Information on the Region (i.e. web-site, published report etc.)

Government Office North East www.gos.gov.uk/gone

North East Assembly www.northeastassembly.gov.uk/

One NorthEast www.onenortheast.co.uk