

The 9th Wadden Sea Conference in Esbjerg in October 2001 – Esbjerg revisited

Jens Enemark, Common
Wadden Sea Secretariat,
Wilhelmshaven, FRG

As announced in the previous Newsletter, the next Trilateral Governmental Conference on the Protection of the Wadden Sea will be held in Esbjerg, Denmark, on October 31, 2001. The 2001 Conference will be an Esbjerg-revisit event. 10 years after the 1991 Conference – same city – same conference center.

The preparation of the Esbjerg conference is well under way. A comprehensive draft Progress Report has been made of the implementation of the decisions of the last conference in Stade including the Wadden Sea Plan. On the basis of the progress and the recommendations of the Quality Status Report 1999, including the recommendations of the Scientific Symposium held last year in Groningen and recent information, a draft Policy Assessment Report has been elaborated. The Policy Assessment Report entails an integrated analysis and evaluation of the status of the Wadden Sea and the implementation of the Stade Declaration and the Wadden Sea Plan. It therefore defines the main policy and management issues to be addressed by the Conference.

The draft Ministerial Declaration has been developed during the past months. The Declaration is the central document of the Conference. It will be discussed by the ministers, outstanding issues solved, and finally be approved. The draft version of June 2001 is currently subject to a wide consultation process in the countries. In addition to decisions on the follow-up of the Stade Declaration and the Wadden Sea Plan, there are basically three issues of wider interest.

The first of those is the potential nomination of the Wadden Sea national parks and nature reserves or parts thereof as a natural World Heritage Site. A recent feasibility study concluded that an inscription in the World Heritage List under the current conservation and management arrangements is feasible. The World Heritage List entails natural and cultural heritage monuments unique on a worldwide scale. Currently consultations are ongoing in the countries with a view to have the nomination considered at the conference.

Closely related to this issue is the intention to develop sustainable development scenarios with the stakeholders. Inhabitants of the Wadden Sea

Region expressed their wish to have greater influence on the planning of the trilateral policy and management and the trilateral projects and actions in order to secure economic development and quality of life. The future trilateral policy and management should reflect ways and means to further integrate nature protection and economic development to also ensure a greater public acceptance of the Wadden Sea Cooperation. It is intended that a stakeholder forum will be given this task and will report to the following conference, which is anticipated to be held in 2005. This issue very nicely connects to the poster theme of the Wadden Sea "Man and the Wadden Sea" (see preface and cover).

A third issue is shipping safety. A topical issue of great concern for the communities of the Wadden Sea region. One of the most interesting topics to be discussed in this context is whether the Wadden and an adjacent zone should be designated as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area. As agreed at the Stade Conference, a feasibility study has been made by the cooperation. The report and its recommendations will be discussed in the countries in the coming period.

Finally, it is important to notice the substantial progress made by the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation. It launched the NetForum project on sustainable tourism and recreation in the Wadden Sea Region in the past period. The collaboration will table a proposal for a common policy on sustainable tourism to be discussed by the ministers.

In 1991, the 6th Wadden Sea Conference was in Esbjerg. It was at this conference that the common principles and policies for the overall protection and management of the Wadden Sea were adopted, which laid the foundation for the Wadden Sea Plan, adopted at the last Conference in Stade in 1997. Will the 2001 Conference also pave the way for new developments and guide the cooperation onto new frontiers as the 1991 Conference did? On October 31 we will know more.

Jens Enemark,
Common Wadden Sea Secretariat,
Virchowstrasse 1
D-26382 Wilhelmshaven
enemark@cwss.whv.net