

## First Meeting Trilateral Wadden Sea Forum

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The first meeting of the trilateral Wadden Sea Forum<sup>1</sup> was held in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, on 30 August 2002. The meeting was attended by some 40 members, representing regional organizations for agriculture, fisheries, tourism, industry, energy, nature protection and local and regional authorities. National and Federal Governments authorities, as well as Wadden Sea Advisory Boards, were present as observers.

In his introductory speech, the chairman of the Forum, the Queen's Commissioner in the Province of Fryslân, Mr. Nijpels, stressed the unique character of the Forum. „To my knowledge“, Mr. Nijpels stated, „it is the first time ever that an international independent group of interested parties has been asked to provide advice to three governments on how to specify and substantiate future policies for sustainable development of a unique area.“ He furthermore pointed to the problems associated with making the concept of sustainable development tangible but was confident that the Forum could manage this task.

The Forum elected as vice-chairpersons Mr. Andresen of the council of the Danish county of South-Jutland and Mr. Klimant of the government of the German District Dithmarschen.

In the course of the meeting several members underlined the need for coming to concrete results. Only by elaborating practical, constructive and understandable results would it be possible to achieve a better public understanding and support for sustainable development.

An important instrument for reaching practical results are the so-called Thematic Groups. It was decided to install five of these working groups, namely for agriculture, energy, fisheries, industry/harbor and policy/management. Tourism and recreation, as well as infrastructure and spatial planning, will be addressed by each of the groups. The first task of the groups will be to develop more concrete proposals and ideas regarding sustainable development, which will serve as a basis for discussions at the second plenary Forum meeting.

The meeting furthermore agreed that four studies would be carried out, which should provide a firm information basis for the work of the Thematic Groups and the Forum. It concerns:

1. An overall inventory of socio-economic facts:  
The collection of basic data regarding employment, turnover, profits, property structures etc. of all main activities in the Wadden Sea region (tourism, fisheries, energy, shipping, industry, agriculture, coastal defense etc..
2. A socio-economic perspectives analysis:  
A general study into socio-economic perspectives (short term, medium term) for the various sectors in the Wadden Sea region.
3. An investigative capitalization of natural values :  
Several attempts have been made to express the value of nature (also the Wadden Sea) in monetary terms. These attempts should be evaluated and a first assessment of the suitability/applicability for the Wadden Sea be given. If appropriate, the methodology should be developed further.
4. A comparative analysis of policy and management:  
Perspectives for integrated management structures.

In addition more specific studies may be carried out if the need for such studies can be substantiated by the Thematic Groups.

A prerequisite for all studies is that the Wadden Sea Forum project will receive financial support from the EU Interreg IIIB Program. An application under this Program was submitted at the end of September. The decision of the Interreg IIIB Steering Committee is expected by the end of November.

The first meetings of the Thematic Groups are scheduled for the period February-March 2003. The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Forum will be held in Tønder (Denmark) on 24-25 April 2003.

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<sup>1</sup> Background information on the Forum is in WSNL 02-1