



*8th Annual Conference*  
European Environmental Advisory Councils

## ***CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

### **from the 8th Annual Conference of European Environmental Advisory Councils (EEAC)**

The **8th Annual Conference of European Environmental Advisory Councils** held in Sesimbra from 2-5 June 2000 addressed the theme of *The Coastal Zones Sustainable Development Policies in Europe*. In order to promote a more detailed and wider approach to the theme the Conference organised itself in the following four Workshops:

- Integrated Management of Off-shore and Land-based activities.
- The New Water Framework Directive and its Impact on Coastal Zone Management.
- Sustainable Tourism on Coastal Zones.
- Marine Protected Areas and Natural Resources Conservation.

## **I**

### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Conference approved the following general conclusions and recommendations:**

1. The Conference recognises that in some areas of marine protection of coastal zones some progress has been made, but at the same time acknowledges the particular fragility of coastal zones, which are subjected to multiple and conflicting uses and interests. In spite of the pressures that threaten coastal ecosystems, neither governance policies nor public concerns are yet adequate to meet the challenges of sustainable development in these areas. States and individuals tend to reflect a narrow land-based vision which is unable to perceive coastal and sea areas as an essential part of national and European spaces, rather than a border line. The Conference calls for new measures **to raise public awareness of the crucial importance of the conservation and sustainable use of coastal zones**. Business and commercial activity in the coastal zone is a particular concern, and this sector is identified as requiring new educational effort.

2. The Conference underlines the fact that the strong inertia that still prevents the EU and its member States from responding effectively to the various pressures which affect the environmental balance of coastal zones is a compelling mirror of our political, scientific and institutional weaknesses. The absence or delay in producing timely responses demonstrate the lack of integration in current political strategies, the overlapping competence and/or sectoral inefficiency of administrative structures, and the fragmentary and disperse model of scientific research and organisation. Taking this into account, the EEAC Conference actively **encourages cross-disciplinary initiatives to illustrate the economic, social and environmental value of coastal areas and resources**, and commitment to take concrete actions to correct the present situation.
3. The Conference emphasises the critical importance of incorporating coastal zones in future environmental policies, as well as in any sustainable development strategies of the European Union and European countries. The European Union and its member States are confronted with old and new challenges facing coastal areas: diverse types of pollution, fisheries, agriculture impacts, population pressures translated both in urban spreading and out of control tourism growth, port expansion, among others. It is time to both fully implement existing policy instruments, and to develop new tools and mechanisms to enhance coastal sustainability. New indicators are needed to assess the success of new programmes and actions in preventing further environmental degradation, and bringing ecological recovery of coastal areas.

The Conference calls the EU to adopt a **challenging Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) strategy** requiring the development of Coastal Zones Management plans as a pre-condition for EU funding of development projects on the coast. This ICZM strategy should be fully integrated into the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), which should include the ocean space from now on under national jurisdiction.
4. The Conference recognises that the *Demonstration Programme on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)*, announced in 1995 by the European Commission, constitutes, in spite of its shortcomings, a significant step in the right direction. The Conference exhorts the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission to launch further and broader initiatives in this critical area, inspired by a holistic and long term perspective, fostering local specificity, opening ways for **responsible participatory planning and monitoring**. The Conference further recommends that a wider use of combined instruments, aiming at a better resources management respecting the **ecological balance of marine areas**, should shape future policies and be reflected in any changes in existing EU policies, as in the case of the 2002 Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) review.
5. The Conference calls for greater policy support for expanding **marine protected areas**. These areas are particularly valuable to our

knowledge of marine ecosystems and a better understanding of their resistance and resilience before the face of human pressure. The Conference strongly recommends the full integration of marine and land-based protected areas as part of a wider nature conservation and a spatial planning strategies, which may help to overcome a traditional land-biased approach.

6. The Conference considers the **Water Framework Directive to be an important step forward in integrating coastal zones**, including near shore waters, in a more comprehensive water policy. The Conference calls for a rapid and effective implementation of the Directive's aim to restore ecological quality, by controlling land-based and offshore sources of pollution. Institutional adjustments are essential to put into practice this overall strategy.
7. The Conference establishes that the extraordinary **increase in tourism** in recent years, combined with its influence on transport and land use, is a major challenge for the European environment. There is a lack of appropriate mechanisms at different policy levels. In this sense, the Conference strongly endorses the current efforts developed by the European Environmental Agency (EEA), with the aim of providing reliable and flexible indicators enabling better evaluation of the current environmental status, as well as the degree of success of present and future policies and management measures. Describing complex systems and processes with one-dimensional parameters (so called key indicators) can only be a preliminary approach. Rather the EEAC recommends functionality indicators and perspective monitoring due to concrete targets decided in a transparent, participative process. This set of indicators, reflecting the crucial relationship between economic and ecological systems, shall try to be a clear and continuous counterpart to the aggregate and environmentally blind GDP index.
8. The EEAC Conference calls for concerted action, with clear targets and objectives, among all the actors involved in the process of sustainable development in European coastal areas. An enormous and long-term effort is needed in the domains of policy planning, administrative co-ordination and in **the improvement of scientific input into decision-making processes**. In order to attain these objectives, the EEAC actively recommends a more decisive EU leadership and guidance in promoting a **greater integration between development policies regarding coastal areas**.

## II

### THEMATIC CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition, the Conference also approved the following specific conclusions and recommendations, based on the outcomes of the four thematic workshops.

## **Workshop 1 Integrated Management of Off-shore and Land-Based Activities**

### **1. Workshop 1 adopted the following conclusions:**

- 1.1** Throughout Europe we are experiencing a very rapid rate of change in human activities in both the terrestrial and marine components of the coastal zone. The pace of change is accelerating, especially in marine areas.
  - 1.2.** In addition to commonly recognised pressures such as the growth of coastal tourism, expansion of ports and harbours, expansion of aquaculture, etc., there are emerging pressures for development off-shore in response to mounting restrictions on land.
  - 1.3.** The accelerating pace and increasing scale of change in coastal development are not matched by changes within institutions, policies, legal arrangements, plans or human capacities to achieve effective management of these development pressures.
  - 1.4** Many of the instruments available at EU, national or local levels of government are not adequate to deal with emerging development pressures. It would be wrong to only rely on more effective implementation of such instruments. Instead, we should seek to refine and integrate existing instruments, such as the European Spatial Development Perspective and the Water Framework Directive, and to develop new and more comprehensive tools to guide development in our coastal regions.
- 2.** In summary, there is an urgent need for a radical improvement in institutional arrangements and tools available to promote sustainable use of the coastal lands and waters in all European nations to meet the needs and aspirations of current and future generations. The following **recommendations** are designed to promote such improvements. Workshop 1 requests the EEAC to call for:
- 2.1.** strong leadership by the EU in developing an ICZM Strategy and a programme for its implementation in all Member States. The strategy should incorporate a range of instruments including economic incentives and cross compliance with Structural Funds and other financial instruments to ensure that they are used in a truly sustainable manner. A number of benefits can be derived from the formulation and implementation of holistic coastal management, policies, strategies and plans. These include the effective delivery of international commitments associated with the Habitats, Birds, Water Framework, and EA directives, as well as Natura 2000, and other policies;
  - 2.2.** a more holistic evaluation of the role of coastal land, waters and other natural resources through support for cross-disciplinary studies with the

aim of increasing scientific knowledge. Equal effort should be given to apply this evaluation and research to policy formulation, and to the development of more integrated planning and management processes.

- 2.3. greater EU and national efforts to increase public awareness of the cultural, social, economic and environmental value of coastal land, waters and other natural resources in meeting the objectives of sustainability.
- 2.4. greater integration of EU objectives, policies and regional development strategies to further Integrated Coastal Management planning.
- 2.5. the one mile marine limit of the Water Framework Directive to be extended to match other coastal boundaries. An extension to the 12 mile territorial limit would improve the effectiveness of the Directive and facilitate its integration with support Integrated Coastal Management.
- 2.6. progressive refinement of the WFD to address critical environmental parameters which have a significant influence on coastal processes. These parameters include sediment supply, base water flows in river and estuarine systems, and eutrophication.

## **Workshop 2**

### **The New Water Framework Directive**

3. Workshop 2 adopted the following conclusions:

- 3.1. The Water Framework Directive is potentially a strong governance instrument that is complementary to the coastal zone management policy, and which will provide an important framework for further ICZMs in Europe.
  - 3.2. The contribution of the Water Framework Directive to strategies for sustainable and integrated Coastal Zone Management should be strengthened.
  - 3.3. The European Parliament and the Council should be encouraged to agree to the adoption of the Water Framework Directives.
4. In addition, noting that the conciliation procedures are well advanced and will conclude in mid-July, the EEAC wishes to make some **recommendations** in connection with the implementation Water Framework Directive:
- 4.1. System boundaries, dynamics and definitions of key terms such as water quality, should be treated flexibly, taking into account variations in physical and ecological conditions. Particularly (but not exclusively):
    - the atmospheric transport of pollutants into coastal waters;
    - groundwater flows including transport of contaminants, and mixing of groundwater (e.g. in coastal, wetland and river confluence regions);
    - sediment transport, dredging and deposition;
    - natural and human-influenced processes of change over time (affecting benchmarks for what constitutes an 'undisturbed' ecosystem).

- 4.2. Attention must be given to the development of adequate regulatory frameworks for management of river and estuarine sediments within the context of river and coastal zone management, with particular regard to:
  - the dredging, transport and deposition of sediments, notably their status as wastes (contamination, discharge or reuse);
  - the concentration of economic interests with environmental and territorial administrations to deal with the sources of contamination.
- 4.3. Work must be undertaken to achieve conciliation, and to ensure continuity of coverage, between the WFD and key marine ecosystem quality conventions, notably (but not limited to) OSPAR and HELCOM.
- 4.4. Implementation review mechanisms should be set up to monitor and ensure consistency of approach to implementation across the EU. These mechanisms should include: (a) government-level exchanges on key issues, and (b) meetings of regulatory authorities for exchange of experiences. The review results should be made publicly available.

### **Workshop 3**

#### **Sustainable Tourism in the Coastal Zone**

#### 5. Workshop 3 adopted the following conclusions:

- 5.1. Tourism is a priority sector and driving force. It has significant benefits and impacts from the economic – social – cultural – environmental points of view.
- 5.2. The role of tourism in coastal sustainable development has been underestimated at EU and national levels.
- 5.3. A framing policy/strategy is needed at EU, national and local levels to integrate environment and tourism interests. New and flexible cost/benefit indicators will play a key role in supporting mechanisms for assessment, benchmarking of progress, alternatives and continuous monitoring.
- 5.4. There is a need to establish basic rules for tourism development, such as:
  - determining (economic – social – cultural – environmental) carrying capacity of tourism locations;
  - tackling the seasonal aspects of tourism in many areas;
  - assuring consistency of tourism strategies with related urban and rural development;
  - making a difference between natural and potential areas.
- 5.5. Tourism requires improved internal and external integration:
  - with land use and spatial planning, transport and infrastructures development;
  - to close the gap between distant operators (and countries' net producers) and destinations (or net recipients);
  - to use a mix of related instruments (economic taxes, technological innovation, social/behavioural patterns) to improve tourism management.

- 5.6.** Improved information dissemination and awareness raising is needed through:
- free dissemination of best practices and success stories;
  - fostering education and training at all levels (user/consumer, economic agents, policy/administrative)
  - stimulating research on driving forces and behavioural market force indicators.
- 6.** In order to achieve these goals, Workshop 3 formulates the following **recommendations**:
- 6.1.** Tourism should be included in the European Union sustainability strategy and as a sector in the “Cardiff initiative” (sectoral strategy required).
- 6.2.** The plans and strategies relating to other policies and sectors must be continuously scrutinised for interaction with tourism.
- 6.3.** Tourism should be promoted as a theme for the 6th EAP.
- 6.4.** Forthcoming European Council Presidencies should be encouraged to make tourism a priority. They should promote assessments and prospects at European Union and national levels (including a specific assessment of the tourism development in the Mediterranean and the effects on non-European Union countries).
- 6.5.** Member States should be encouraged to support the “European Spatial Development Perspective” as a framework for sustainable land use, planning, coastal management and tourism.

#### **Workgroup 4**

#### **Marine Protected Areas and Natural Resources Conservation**

- 7.** Workshop 4 adopted the following conclusions:
- 7.1.** The current strategy of establishing a network at European level of Special Marine Protected Areas (SMPA) should be implemented at EU and national levels, taking into consideration:
- national/international ocean policies, such as NATURA 2000, HELCOM, OSPAR, Barcelona Convention;
  - national/European plans for integrated coastal zone management;
  - a considerable reduction in land-based impact on the coastal sea.
- 7.2.** HABITAT, NATURA 2000, HELCOM, OSPAR and Barcelona Convention were reviewed to consider how each might contribute to the establishment of a European network of SMPA. It was, however, concluded that:
- existing instruments are not sufficient for the purpose of establishing an adequate network of SMPA;
  - there are gaps in legislation which ought to be filled;

- there is a need to recognise the negative impact of certain activities (such as fisheries, aquaculture, leisure and diving), in addition to the various sources of pollution.
- 7.3.** The criteria for definition of SMPA were examined. Those criteria selected as important were:
- the representativeness of biodiversity within a biogeographical area;
  - ecosystem functionality;
  - boundaries related to natural features rather than to political/administrative jurisdictions;
  - the development of management plans at a strategic “network” level and at a local level for each SMPA;
  - local communities should be engaged and their citizens should be at the forefront when making decisions regarding changes to be implemented;
  - research and monitoring of coastal marine ecosystems should be promoted.
- 7.4.** The following gaps were identified:
- more education and information is needed in relation to the legal and management options existing at EU level;
  - more participation and communication is needed, in particular among EU bodies and NGOs;
  - more and better legal, financial and fiscal tools are required;
  - major changes in culture are required with regard to certain sectors which have the greatest impact on marine environment, such as fishing, aquaculture, harbours and shipping, in order to reduce their negative impacts on the coastal zone.
- 8.** In order to achieve these goals, Workshop 4 formulated the following **recommendations**:
- 8.1.** The EEAC should support the application of the Habitats Directive within the National Exclusive Economic Zones without questioning international laws and conventions.
- 8.2.** The European countries and Member States are called upon to work towards the establishment of MPA for the protection of biodiversity of the high seas, seamounts and deep seas.
- 8.3.** There is a need to promote a special Directive on SMPA at European level.

Sesimbra, Portugal, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2000