

Denmark on track?

By the Danish 92 Group

1. Country Profile

Denmark is situated in the northern part of Europe and is one of the Nordic countries. Denmark is a small country with a population of 5.3 million inhabitants of which 1.2 millions live in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. The service industry accounts for approximately 70 % of GNP and GNP per capita is approximately 35 000 USD. Denmark is a flat country with rich agricultural land situated in a temperate climate zone surrounded by coastal areas. Denmark is working actively in international forums, and is a member of the EU, the UN, and the WTO. Furthermore Denmark has the EU presidency during the World Summit.

Denmark has a multiparty system and in the 1990's Danish policy on environment as well as development assistance have benefited from being based on broad political agreements, which is crucial in creating an environmental sustainable policy that is durable in the long run. However, the new liberal-conservative government broke this tradition with the passing of the national budget for 2002. The budget included a number of measures that compromise Denmark's otherwise good efforts for sustainable development and this have created an uncertainty about Denmark's future commitment towards sustainable development.

2. Process Used for the Shadow Report

Part of the Danish 92 Group's preparation for the World Summit in Johannesburg has been to take stock of the Danish endeavour to promote sustainable development by evaluating the extent to which Denmark has lived up to selected international agreements. This work has led to the publication of *Denmark on track? An Evaluation of Denmark's Compliance with International Agreements on Sustainable Development*. The present paper presents some of the main conclusions of this publication.

The Danish 92 Group is a network of 20 Danish environment and development organisations. "Denmark on track?" was prepared by member organisations of the Danish 92 Group in co-operation with the Danish 92 Group Secretariat. 4 groups of organisations prepared the different parts of the evaluation report, and a draft version of the report was discussed among all the organisations. Politicians and government officials also had a chance to commend on the draft version at a conference held by the Danish 92 Group in Folke-tinget (the Danish Parliament). After this period of hearing, a final version was elaborated and the recommendations in this version were subsequently approved by all the organisations in the Danish 92 Group.

3. Overall Conclusions of the Shadow Report

Denmark has been known as a country not just willing to talk about sustainable development, but also willing to act and pay. This standing is built partly on the progress made nationally and

locally in Denmark and partly on Denmark's international engagement and bilateral co-operation with developing countries.

Nevertheless, *Denmark on track?* reaches the conclusion that Denmark, despite its good reputation, is not consistently complying with its international commitments. Below, the Danish 92 Group has assessed the effort in selected areas on a scale from 0 -10 smileys:

Effort in selected areas on a scale from 0-10 smileys:	
<i>Environmental aid</i>	😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊
<i>Climate and energy</i>	😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊
<i>Production and consumption</i>	😊😊😊😊😊😊
<i>Sustainable food production</i>	😊😊😊😊😊
<i>Biodiversity</i>	😊😊😊

4. Key Findings

4.1. Environmental aid to developing countries

As one of the first rich countries, Denmark made a concrete decision in 1992 to introduce a special budget for environmental aid supplementary to the 1 percent of GNP allocated previously to poverty reduction by means of regular development aid. After some years, environmental aid to developing countries was to make up 0.125% of GNP, and an equivalent sum was to be spent on environmental aid to Eastern Europe. This goal is not yet quite achieved.

Although the Danish environmental aid to developing countries has been high in quantity, the quality can be improved. There is still a need for elaborating methods to ensure that the aid is conducive to sustainable development. The Danish environmental aid to developing countries is spent particularly on building and improving the professional and technical capabilities of recipient countries' government administrations. This is responding to a vast need. However, if this assistance is to make a lasting impact, the Danish 92 Group recommends involving the civil society much more than it is today. It is crucial to insure a high priority to environmental questions in recipient countries and to give the communities a feeling of ownership towards the projects. By signing the conventions on climate change and biodiversity, Denmark has promised to help developing countries fulfil these international agreements too. The Danish 92 Group, therefore, recommends that biodiversity and sustainable energy is given high priority in Danish environmental aid.

With the new liberal-conservative government, it is questionable whether Denmark is currently keeping its promise of additional resources to fight environmental problems in poor countries. As 1% of GNP has been spent on regular development aid since 1992, it is uncertain if Denmark can

still be said to spend additional resources on environmental aid, since it is doubtful if the total amount of aid in 2002 will make up 1% of GNP.

4.2. The Danish climate policy

Denmark has undoubtedly taken on a pioneering international role in the area of climate change by being one of the countries undertaking the largest per-capita reduction targets, and by playing a significant part in the climate negotiations and the Kyoto process. Denmark has committed itself to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases by an average of 21% over the period 2008-12 as measured against the level in 1990. Through the conversion to cleaner forms of energy as well as the introductions of quotas for the electricity industry's CO₂ emissions, Denmark has come close to be on track to comply with its Kyoto commitment.

Denmark has worked particularly hard to reduce CO₂ emissions, for instance through a large-scale conversion to natural gas and by putting a ceiling on the power plants' CO₂ emissions. In addition, Denmark has strengthened the development and use of renewable energy sources, especially wind power.

However, there has been a shift in the climate policy in 2002, since the liberal-conservative government has taken office. The government has carried out vast cutbacks in the subsidies to the development of renewable energy, which will make it significantly harder for Denmark and the Danes to comply with the reduction targets laid out in the Kyoto Protocol. The development of and conversion to cleaner forms of energy systems has slipped down the list of priorities. For example, there has been a slow down in the enlargement of wind power plants at sea. Furthermore, the liberal-conservative government is keen on carrying out part of the Danish reduction commitments according to the Kyoto-protocol outside the country's borders (via flexible mechanisms). However, the Danish '92 Group recommends that the use of this option is limited, because it may make it difficult for Denmark to meet its long-term reduction needs.

The lion's share of Denmark's energy use is still based on fossil fuels. If the emission of greenhouse gasses is to be sharply reduced in the long run, it is necessary both to convert production to clean energy forms and to develop the appropriate technologies. In the coming years, this will require far-reaching changes in Danish energy consumption and energy systems. This change is technically possible, and Denmark should see it as its mission to show the rest of the world that it is possible to establish a well-run society using cleaner forms of energy.

4.3. Denmark's efforts towards sustainable patterns of production and consumption

The Danish work to achieve cleaner production has brought about: environmental and resource optimisation of energy production; greater environmental management of companies; the spread of cleaner technology; and more focus on developing environmentally-friendly products. All in all, this has moved industrial production a step towards relative decoupling of the relation between, on the one hand, economic growth and, on the other, resource consumption and environmental burden. However, the work is characterised by being too dispersed. There is a lack of clear objectives and plans for how to carry out production and consumption in a sustainable manner.

Denmark has acknowledged the state's role in pioneering the conversion to sustainable patterns of consumption. The public sector is thus obliged to take environmental concerns into account in its procurements. However, so far, the state's green purchasing policy has not gone far beyond declarations of intent. The Danish 92 Group recommends that the state's green policy is implemented in action. Furthermore, not enough has been done to limit, in particular, public and household resource consumption. As far as some resources are concerned, the increase in per-capita consumption exceeds the amount of resources saved through greater resource efficiency and the like.

Still, if decoupling is to underpin the strategy for sustainable patterns of production and consumption, it must, in practice, lead to a level of consumption that does not, in the long run, breach the limits of nature's carrying capacity, while also allowing for greater resource consumption in today's poor countries. Denmark is far from attaining such a sustainable stage. Thus, Denmark's finest role should be to show that social welfare is possible without ruining the environment of future generations.

4.4. Danish food policy

A series of initiatives have been launched aimed at reconverting to organic farming, imposing higher environmental standards on conventional farming, action plans for cleaner water, reduction in the use of pesticides, etc. However, Denmark has failed to carry out a wide-ranging agricultural policy capable of meeting the overall objective of achieving sustainable food production. Excess nitrogen from fertilisers, discharge with pesticide, and so forth still exceed the carrying capacity of Denmark's countryside. These lead to continued degradation of biodiversity on arable land, pollution of ground water and streams, etc.

Moreover, the EU's agricultural policy is far from living up to the aims of fostering sustainable European agriculture and securing food security in the third world. Danish agricultural policy is closely related to that of the EU. Arguably, Denmark's chances of fostering sustainable agriculture are thus constrained by the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP). This policy is currently helping to preserve intensive production, and provide incentives off incorporating marginal land into agriculture. Denmark supports extensive reforms of the CAP, and the Danish 92 Group recommends that Denmark takes more advantage of the opportunities, which after all exist within the EU's agricultural support schemes, for environmentally-conditioned support and environmentally-friendly agricultural measures.

The EU's common agricultural policy, including domestic and export subsidies and more direct trade barriers, is also obstructing the market access of developing countries. Meanwhile, world-market prices are pushed to the bottom to the detriment of small-scale farmers in poor countries. Denmark's policy so far has been to promote liberalisation of the food trade by removing trade barriers and subsidies that distort competition, so far only with limited success. In this regard, it is important to stress that better market access is not automatically benefiting the poorest countries and farmers. Consequently, this measure must be supplemented by more support for agricultural development in developing countries.

4.5. Denmark's biodiversity policy

Ten years after the Rio conference, Denmark is still without a policy able to live up to the Biodiversity Convention. In several areas, Denmark has yet to begin to comply with the aims of this convention:

Firstly, Denmark has not rehabilitated enough destroyed natural habitat. In 1999, Denmark had only re-established natural ecosystems on 0.2-0.3 percent of the country's land surface. Furthermore, the remaining areas of wild nature are generally too small, too scattered and of a too low-quality to ensure the processes characteristic of a diverse, healthy ecosystem.

Secondly, Denmark is not integrating biodiversity concerns sufficiently into other sectors, particularly farming and fishing. Although agriculture has, as a whole, diminished the discharge of nutrients, the level remains significantly above nature's carrying capacity. Overfishing has meant that biologically-safe boundaries have been broken in the case of several important commercial fish species.

Thirdly, the Danish trade in tropical timber (and, incidentally, also in timber from Eastern Europe) is problematic. Throughout the 1990s, virtually nothing has been done officially to follow up on the nationally adopted objective that all tropical timber imported after 2000 should be sustainably produced. Not until 2001 did the Folketing (Danish parliament) decide to change the public purchasing policy to ensure that public and semi-public institutions will henceforth only buy legal and sustainably-produced tropical timber.

Despite this, the Danish progress, measured against the standards of other EU-countries, is, in fact, relatively good.

5. Perspectives on Denmark's Efforts

The conversion to sustainable development is one of mankind's major challenges in the coming decades. As one of the world's richest and most highly educated countries, Denmark ought to take advantage of its opportunities to contribute as much as possible to this endeavour. The liberal-conservative government has drawn up a national strategy for sustainable development containing a number of good intentions, but far too few concrete means and ends. NGO's call for ambitious targets in the short as well as in the long term, if the ongoing trends are to be steered in direction of sustainability. Denmark should demonstrate that it is feasible to organise everyday life, production and consumption in an environmentally-friendly manner and in accordance with the principles of globally-sustainable development.

Thus far, Denmark has made a difference internationally, and this ought to continue. In some areas, Denmark's work in favour of the environment – e.g. regarding aid and energy – has been of first class compared to what has been possible to agree upon internationally. Lately, the Danish and South African efforts to strike a "Global Deal" on the occasion of the World Summit in Johannesburg has been one of the more positive contributions to the process. This is precisely why it is important that Denmark's efforts in other areas, such as biodiversity, patterns of production and consumption and agricultural policy, comply with international agreements.

"Denmark on track?" was published in May 2002, and can be read in its full length (in Danish) on www.92grp.dk.

The Danish 92 Group is a network of 20 Danish environmental and development organisations:

BirdLife Denmark, CARE Denmark, DanChurchAid, Danish Association for International Co-operation, Danish Hunter's Association, Danish Organisation for Renewable Energy, Danish United Nations Association, Greenpeace Denmark, Ibis, KULU - Women and Development, Nature and Youth, Nepenthes, Network for Ecological Education and Practice/Econet, The Danish Outdoor Council, The Danish Society for the Conservation of Nature, The Danish Youth Council, The Ecological Council, The Labour Movement's International Forum, The Swallows in Denmark, Association for International Social Development, WWF Denmark.

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