

## Aragon Action Plan (ARAP)

### I General results of ENCORE 2008

1. At the 8<sup>th</sup> Environment Conference of the Regions of Europe (ENCORE 2008) held in Zaragoza, Aragon (Spain), on 26-27 June 2008, the participating Regions confirmed their commitment to improve the environment and to promote sustainable development in Europe.

2. The Ministers expressed the strong desire to engage in a continuous political dialogue and to strengthen international political cooperation among the Regions of Europe with the aim of:

- having a greater impact on EU decision-making;
- functioning as a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience;
- giving greater transparency to innovative policy practice;
- enhancing the role of the Regions in the development and implementation of environmental and sustainable development policies at the regional, national, European and international level.

The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the large number of political leaders participating in ENCORE 2008. ENCORE 2008 attracted the largest number of politicians with the widest geographic spread in the history of ENCORE. An effort should be made to maintain this level of political commitment since ENCORE is a unique opportunity in Europe for Regional political leaders to meet in a dynamic and interactive setting. The Ministers also congratulated the organization on the participation of high-level EU and UN officials in this Conference edition.

3. The Conference invited the European Regions that have not signed the ENCORE Valencia Charter yet to do so by depositing their formal accession with the ENCORE Secretariat ([www.encoreweb.org](http://www.encoreweb.org)). The Charter, first adopted in Valencia in 1995, and amended in Åre in 2006, sets out the long term strategic vision for the work of ENCORE. The Charter contains the objectives, the instruments and the priority actions of regional environmental policy in Europe. The enlargement of the EU to 27 Member States and therefore to more than 300 Regions gives the Charter a more universal dimension. During ENCORE 2008, 15 new Regions signed the Valencia Charter bringing to total number of signatories to 110.

4. The Conference also confirmed its commitment to monitor the implementation of ENCORE decisions and welcomed the Report on the monitoring of the Åre Action Plan (ÅAP) presented by the President of Jämtland Region. Within the ÅAP, it is appropriate to underline the successful work and excellent results of the ENCORE Working Groups.

5. The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the contacts between ENCORE, the EU institutions and the European headquarters of other international organisations working in the field of environment and sustainable development.

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6. The Regions welcomed the enlargement of the ENCORE Steering Group with representatives of Pilsen (Czech Republic), Warmia-Mazury (Poland), Kaunas County (Lithuania), Jurmala City (Latvia), Lisbon and Tagus Valley (Portugal) and Maramures (Romania). The Conference asked the members of the Steering Group to maintain close contacts with the other Regions in their countries.

7. The Conference welcomed the Terms of Reference about the structure, organization and decision making process of ENCORE drafted by the ENCORE Steering Group and asked the Steering Group to supervise a series of initiatives to be undertaken in the period 2008-2010 as part of a long-term strategic vision for the work of ENCORE.

8. The Conference congratulated the Secretariat with the new design and the new structure of the ENCORE web site. Information about individual regions and their elected officials is now available on-line. This will greatly contribute to the promotion and the diffusion of ENCORE and of its activities.

### II ENCORE objectives and core structure

9. The ENCORE Valencia Charter describes the driving motivation underpinning the work of ENCORE:

*“We believe that solutions to global environmental problems can only be achieved by coordinated actions at all levels of government. In accordance with the principle “think global, act local”, regional governments and regional-level solutions have much to contribute. We recognise the importance of regional differences and the opportunity to test new ideas and policies at regional level. It is important that these are taken into account in the formulation of environmental policies, both at national and EU levels”.*

10. ENCORE activities are organised by individual European Regions or by Regions jointly under the supervision of the ENCORE Steering Group. The Steering Group currently consists of Regional Officials from 14 EU Member States, who act under the direction of their Ministers. The aim of the Steering Group is to include one region of each EU Member State as a member. The Steering Group is Co-chaired by the Officials who represent the Region that will host the next Conference, together with the Region that has hosted the last Conference. The ENCORE Secretariat is led by the Region that will host the next Conference, taking over the work of the former hosting Region.

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11. ENCORE engages in the following core activities:

### *Conferences:*

The driving force of ENCORE is the biennial Conference for the regional environment Ministers. Each Conference has one or more specific themes. During each Conference, a progress Report is presented on the activities carried out since the last Conference.

The conference arrangements and other activities are handled by the Regions in close cooperation with the ENCORE Steering Group.

### *Seminars, workshops, (virtual) working groups, partnerships with other networks, research and (virtual) exchanges of best practice:*

To carry out activities in the period between the conferences, the leaders of the different themes in the work programme will organise workshops, seminars, (virtual) working groups, partnerships with other networks and (virtual) exchanges of best practice to which politicians and administrative staff from European regions and other relevant stakeholders will be invited. Regions may also commission research projects under the ENCORE umbrella.

### *Meetings of politicians*

In the period between ENCORE Conferences, regional ministers meet to discuss current political events. More specifically, the Co-Presidents of ENCORE will convene an annual meeting of the Ministers of the Regions which are represented in the ENCORE Steering Group.

### *Regular meetings with the EU Commissioner for Environment and the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy*

Representatives of ENCORE meet regularly with the European Commissioner for Environment and the European Commissioner for Regional Policy to discuss current political issues as well as the preparation of the next Conference.

### *Cooperation with other European networks*

ENCORE will maintain its current collaboration and seeks to collaborate with other European networks that have an interest in environmental and sustainable development issues.

### *Web site:*

The ENCORE web site consists of a central tool for communicating these activities and for encouraging co-operation between the different partners and the exchange of experiences. The ENCORE Secretariat is responsible for the web site management.

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### III ENCORE strategy

12. At the ENCORE Conference in Aragon in June 2008 the following strategy was adopted by the Regions:

- to strengthen international political cooperation among the Regions of Europe by organising meetings of political leaders and Ministers;
- to strengthen the environment and sustainable development throughout Europe by promoting Agenda 21 at regional level in co-operation with citizens, organisations, enterprises, other governmental levels and other social and economic partners;
- to work in partnership with businesses at regional level and to involve educational and research institutions in this co-operation in order to acquire new environmental research and knowledge - and to implement this in both enterprises and public institutions;
- to co-operate with the European Commission in implementing the renewed Lisbon and Sustainable Development Strategies as well as the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme and to ensure that the practical experience of the Regions in implementing EU law is reflected in the future work of the Commission.
- to coordinate sustainable development policies between the regional, the national and the international level.

To implement this strategy, the Regions will work on selected themes.

### IV ENCORE priorities 2008 – 2010

13. The Conference agreed to the following priority themes for ENCORE for the period 2008 – 2010:

- Water
  - Integrated River Basin Management
  - Water Quality Management
  - Application of the Water Framework Directive
  - Application of the Flood Directive
  - Water Scarcity and Drought management
- Climate Change
  - Renewable Energy and Energy efficiency
  - Sustainable Transport
  - Mitigation of and Adaptation to Climate Change

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- Biodiversity /Natura 2000
  - Implementation of the Fauna/Flora habitat directive.
- Sustainable Development
  - Sustainable tourism
  - Education for sustainability
  - Tools for sustainable development.

### V. ENCORE Work Programme 2008 - 2010

14. The ENCORE 2008 Conference highlighted the special importance of water in relation to the challenge of climate change. The Conference urged the Regions of Europe to adopt innovative and effective policies in these areas and to work with the Steering Group to communicate these policies to other Regions of Europe, associations of regions in member states, national environment ministries and other public bodies, particularly the European Institutions. It is envisaged that seminars, (virtual) working groups and other activities will be an appropriate means of achieving such communication and all Regions of Europe are encouraged to contact the Steering Group with their ideas for such ENCORE events.

ENCORE participants were able to visit the International Exhibition EXPO 2008, taking place in Zaragoza from 14 June until 14 September 2008 around the theme Water and Sustainable Development. The coincidence of time and place of the ENCORE Conference and EXPO 2008 greatly contributed to the success of both. Moreover, a Contribution made by ENCORE is included in the Zaragoza Charter, a document adopted by the Water Tribune.

15. ENCORE has become a forum to communicate ideas and best practice on sustainable development issues. The Steering Group will work with the Regions to develop new ENCORE initiatives and consolidate that forum.

16. The ENCORE Work Programme 2008 – 2010 proposes to continue with the following seven different types of activities:

- A. Contacts with other networks, European institutions and the European headquarters of other international organisations like the UN
- B. Implementation and monitoring of ENCORE decisions
- C. Promoting the ENCORE Valencia Charter
- D. Seminars, workshops, partnerships with other networks, research and exchanges of best practice
- E. Partnerships between "old" and "new" EU Regions

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F. (Virtual) Working Groups

G. Preparation of ENCORE 2010.

### A. Contacts with other networks, European institutions and the European headquarters of other international organisations

16.1 The Conference welcomed the active role that the Minister for the Environment of Aragon and Co-President of ENCORE, Mr. Alfredo Boné, has played in EU events, such as the Green Week and the Open Days, during which he promoted ENCORE and the role of the Regions in the field of Environment. The Conference encouraged the host of the next ENCORE Conference, to continue Mr. Boné's work in these fora.

The Regions of Europe should continue seeking dialogue and co-operation with the EU institutions in the preparation of policies, plans and indicators in the field of environment and sustainable development. The Steering Group was asked to pursue these matters with the relevant European institutions.

There are a number of other bodies with an EU-wide mandate which includes environmental and sustainable development matters. The Conference asked the Steering Group to consider co-operation with such bodies if this could lead to benefits for the sustainable development work in the Regions of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The Conference welcomed the idea to explore collaboration with the Regional Office for Europe of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-ROE).

### B. Implementation and monitoring of ENCORE decisions

16.2 The ENCORE 2008 Conference asked the Regions of Europe to contribute actively to the monitoring of ENCORE activities carried out by the Regions in the period 2008 - 2010. The Steering Group was asked to work together with the Aragon Region on the Monitoring Report of the Aragon Action Plan that will be presented at ENCORE 2010.

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<sup>1</sup>. Examples include: the Environmental Platform of the Regional Offices (EPRO), the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), Eurocities, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions in Europe (CPMR), the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), European Network of Environmental Agencies (ENEA) and the Network of European Regions on Education for Sustainability (RES), Euro Region Baltic (ERB), Euro Region Adriatic (ERA).

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The Conference accepted the work by Jämtland on the ÅAP Monitoring Report and expressed its appreciation for it. The Report includes a description and analysis of the ENCORE activities that took place in the period in between the ENCORE 2006 and the ENCORE 2008 Conferences.

### C. Promoting the ENCORE Valencia Charter

16.3 The ENCORE Secretariat will from now on be the depository of the ENCORE Valencia Charter. The list of Regions that have signed the Charter is attached to the ARAP. The Secretariat will contact the other Regions and invite them to sign the Charter.

### D. Seminars, workshops, partnerships with other networks, exchange of best practice and research on specific themes and topics

16.4 The Regions are invited to present to the ENCORE Steering Group initiatives that they would like to develop under the ENCORE umbrella, in particular in relation to the implementation of the ENCORE Valencia Charter and to the priority themes listed in Article 13. So far, the following activities have been announced:

#### *Thematic seminars/workshops*

1. **Sustainable energy and tourism (Jämtland, Aragon)**
2. **Biodiversity (Liguria)**
3. **Education and Sustainable Development (Bavaria)**
4. **Strategies for Adapting to Climate Change in the Regions of Europe (North Rhine-Westphalia)**
5. **Sports and Sustainable Development (Drenthe)**
6. **Defining the role of regions in European Climate Policy (South Holland)**  
\* seminar cancelled
7. **OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Workshop “Improving the information base to better guide water resource management decision making” (Aragon)**

#### *Partnerships with other Networks*

1. **Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD)**

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2. **European Network of Environmental Authorities (ENEA)**
3. **Network of European Regions on Education for Sustainability (RES)**

### *Thematic Research Projects*

1. ....

### *Exchange of best practice*

1. **Voluntary agreements as instruments of environmental policy (Bavaria)**
2. **Sustainable energy and sustainable tourism (Jämtland and Aragon)**
3. **Livestock manure (Aragon, Warmia-Mazury, North Rhine-Westphalia)**
4. **Aragon and Emilia-Romagna**
5. **Interreg IV-C (7 partner regions)**
6. **Earth Sciences and Information Systems (Bavaria, Emilia-Romagna and Catalonia)**

### **E. Partnerships between "old" and "new" Regions**

16.5 The Conference asked all Regions to continue to improve contacts, and to start partnerships with Regions from the new Member States, and recognized that the enlargement of the Steering Group will facilitate this process.

1. **Cooperation between Bavaria and different Polish regions**

### **F. (Virtual) Working Groups**

16.6 The Conference recognized the importance of the ENCORE Working Groups that guarantee continuity and visibility of ENCORE activities. The three existing Working Groups will continue their activities during the next two years.

1. **Virtual working group on climate change (North Rhine-Westphalia)**
2. **Virtual working group on Biodiversity (Tuscany)**
3. **Virtual working group on Water (Aragon)**



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### G. Preparation of ENCORE 2010 – Warmia-Mazury, Poland

16.7 The Conference welcomed the offer of the Region Warmia-Mazury in Poland to host the next ENCORE Conference in 2010 and asked the ENCORE Steering Group to work with Warmia-Mazury to organize a successful conference.

As of the closure of the ENCORE 2008 Conference, the Co-Presidency of ENCORE is in the hands of Aragon and Warmia Mazury.

The Conference thanked Jämtland for its commitment to ENCORE as Co-President during the last 4 years.

17. The Steering Group was asked to keep the Regions of Europe informed of the progress on all these issues through the ENCORE website, e-mail and other forms of communication. The Steering Group was asked to produce a full report on its work in 2008-2010 at the next Conference in Olsztyn in 2010. This report should also include its proposals for the following two years. These proposals are to be debated and agreed upon at ENCORE 2010.

Adopted by the Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe (ENCORE), Zaragoza, Aragon, Spain, 27 June 2008.

Minister Robert Uitto	Minister Alfredo Boné Pueyo	Mr. Jarosław Słoma
Jämtland Regional Minister for the Environment	Minister for the Environment. Government of Aragon.	Member of the Representative Council for the Environment. Warmia-Mazury.
Co-chair Period 2004-2008	Co-chair Period 2006-2010	Co-chair Period 2008-2012
Signature:	Signature:	Signature: