

# Villach Resolution

*The fifth Environment Conference of the Regions of Europe (ENCORE) meeting at Villach, Carinthia, Austria, on 27th and 28th September, 2001, adopted this Resolution consisting of a preamble and 3 parts:*

1. The Sustainable Economy – the Integration of Environmental Concerns into Economy
2. Towards a Sustainable Enlargement Process
3. Review and the Future of ENCORE

## **Preamble**

### **The Villach Conference**

- reaffirms the Resolutions of the previous four Conferences of Regional Ministers and Political Leaders in the European Union and the Valencia Charter.
- welcomes the large number of Regions from the Applicant Countries (AC) attending the Conference for the first time and looks forward to working together with them to make progress on sustainable development.
- Wishes, in particular, to present proposals to achieve a more sustainable economy and on integrating sustainable development into the enlargement process of the European Union, while realising that Sustainable Development can be achieved only as a global strategy, shared by rich and poor countries, implemented by actions at an international, regional and local level, aimed at protecting the interests of present and future generations.

### **1. Sustainable Economy - the Integration of Environmental Concerns into Economy**

1.1. The Villach Conference being of opinion that:

1.1.1. global environmental problems can only be met if the use of natural resources and material mass flow per product or service is reduced, i.e. eco-efficiency and resource productivity is increased.

1.1.2. eco-efficiency (creating more welfare with less resources) is a central requirement in creating a sustainable economy. It is one pillar of sustainable development with a strong economic and social dimension. Promoting eco-efficiency on a regional level will contribute considerably to progress toward sustainable development.

1.1.3. the internalisation of costs, a modification of fiscal policies and other financial tools should be used

1.1.4 it is necessary to carry out evaluation of plans and programmes

1.1.5 implementing eco-efficiency in the EU regions, as well as in the AC regions, will make the regions more attractive: the use of resources and environmental

impacts will be reduced and the opportunities for technological innovation and greater competitiveness of industry and business will be attained.

1.1.6. the efforts of the European Commission to foster a sustainable economy are very much welcomed by the regions. The concept of the Integrated Product Policy (IPP)-Strategy, as developed in the EU-Greenbook, is important and deserves detailed consideration by the regions.

1.1.7. support programmes such as regional and structural funds as well as any support for the Applicant Countries need to contain eco-efficiency requirements in addition to the established social and economic ones.

1.1.8. the regions need to consider comparable headline indicators for sustainable development, which could further the goal of a consistent integration of environmental concerns into the policies of the European Union and Applicant Countries.

1.2. The EU Regions, where their respective competencies allow, commit themselves to

1.2.1. seek to reduce the demand on natural resources and increase eco-efficiency in their regions.

1.2.2. adapt regional funding and legislation to comply with these goals.

1.2.3. regard eco-efficient products and services as important criteria for public purchasing.

1.2.4. encourage projects for the promotion of eco-efficiency in partnership with other EU, AC as well as other CEE and Euro-/NIS-regions

1.2.5. initiate public awareness programmes for eco-efficiency and promote green purchasing

1.2.6 support and participate in projects to develop comparable headline indicators for sustainable development

1.3. The regions ask the European Commission to

1.3.1. support the work undertaken by the regions and interregional networks on sustainable development indicators.

1.3.2. develop specific action programmes for eco-efficiency on a regional level.

1.3.3. continue work on developing guidelines for green purchasing and eco-efficient products and services.

1.3.4. develop mechanisms, which encourage the consumption patterns to change towards eco-efficient products and services

1.3.5. to support specific actions to implement environmental evaluation practices in plans and programmes

1.3.6 stimulate training of facilitators as a new profession to guide on public participation

## **2. Towards a Sustainable Enlargement Process**

2.1. The Villach Conference acknowledges the outcomes of the European Forum in Trieste on enhancing environmental co-operation between EU regions and regions of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) Applicant Countries, stressing in particular that:

2.1.1. environment issues are among the most challenging in the "acquis communautaire" for countries seeking accession to the European Union.

2.1.2. the approximation process is an opportunity for all Applicant Countries to develop and organise competent regional government and administrative bodies.

2.1.3. the CEE Regional Authorities, which are facing serious environmental problems, need to receive adequate public funds and human resources, in order to cope with their new responsibilities.

2.1.4. many CEE regions still have an abundance of areas with an unspoiled natural environment and a rich biodiversity as well as a less wasteful lifestyle than that of many EU regions.

2.1.5. greater inter-regional co-operation between the public, business and non-governmental actors in the environment sector can assist sustainable development in the Applicant Countries.

2.2. The Villach Conference concludes that

2.2.1. the strengthening and deepening of contacts, the exchange of experiences and technologies and the development of common projects between AC, EU as well as in other CEE and Euro-/NIS (New Independent States)-regions along the new eastern EU borders should be strongly encouraged particularly in relation to:

- Implementation of EU standards of environmental protection (water resources, pollutant emissions, sustainable waste management, control and monitoring systems, environmental impact of new projects).

- Development of skills in environmental protection institutions.

- Promotion of environmental awareness, education and access to information and a stronger role for civic organisations and citizens in the planning and decision-making process

- Encouraging appropriate institution building in the environment sector

- promotion of a process of Regional and Local Agenda 21

2.2.2. the use of the ENCORE website can assist AC and EU regions in developing contacts and inter-regional partnerships.

2.3. The Villach Conference invites:

2.3.1. all AC and EU regions to accede to the Valencia Charter, representing the common position of EU regions, on their role in advancing Community policy on the environment.

2.3.2. all AC, EU and as well as in other CEE and Euro-/NIS (New Independent States), as appropriate, to support the principle of sustainable development and to promote collaboration in the environmental field, including the use of the relevant EU programmes on trans-boundary and trans-national co-operation.

2.3.3. all AC and EU regions, with respect to the citizens of all ages, to encourage, improve and promote environmental awareness, education, information and public participation

2.3.4. all AC and EU regions to take an active part in the ongoing debate on governance launched by the European Commission White Paper

2.3.5. the AC regions, in their efforts to meet EU environmental standards, to take into account the need to reduce total material and energy flow to preserve natural resources and biodiversity. The sooner the "acquis communautaire" is implemented the greater the benefits will be for the environment as well as for sustainable development.

2.3.6. all AC and EU regions to recognise the fact that the rich biodiversity still to be found in many regions will enrich considerably the natural heritage of the EU. There may be substantial costs involved in protecting these

resources, but these will be justified in the interest of protecting this important ecological and economic endowment. 2.3.7. the AC regions to increase eco-efficiency and to promote environmentally friendly methods of production and patterns of consumption, thus enabling citizens to fulfill their aspirations for economic prosperity and quality of life, and the national economies to become more competitive on the world markets.

2.4. The Regions invite the European Commission to

2.4.1. increase the scope and the budget of its programmes aimed at promoting co-operation between regions on sustainable development and environmental protection

2.4.2. simplify the funding procedures for interregional co-operation

2.4.3. ensure a strong role for the regions in the enlargement process

### **3. Review and the Future of ENCORE The Villach Conference**

3.1. welcomes the conclusions of the Göteborg Council of 15 and 16 June 2001, that:

3.1.1. sustainable development is a fundamental objective under the EU Treaties.

3.1.2. the Council is invited to finalise and further develop sectoral strategies for integrating environment into all relevant Community policy areas with a view to implementing them as soon as possible.

3.1.3. clear and stable objectives for sustainable development will present significant opportunities. This has the potential to unleash new methods of technological innovation and investment, generating growth and employment.

3.1.4. the Council underscores the importance of consulting widely with all relevant stakeholders and invites Member States to establish appropriate national consultative processes.

3.2. recognises that there have been achievements in progress towards sustainable development, but, as has been highlighted in the resolutions of previous ENCORE Conferences, notes an outcome of previous conferences that much work remains to be done, particularly in the following fields:

3.2.1. integration of environmental considerations into all policy areas, for instance, through strategic environmental and sustainability assessment of policies, plans and programmes.

3.2.2. internalisation of external costs to give correct and visible market conditions for those products and services that have least effect on the environment.

3.2.3. environmental awareness, transparency and participation. Increased public participation of all stakeholders is not only necessary to improve the environment, but will also enhance democracy across the EU and in the Applicant Countries

3.3. asks the regions to work in partnership with the European Commission in the implementation of the European Strategy on Sustainable Development and the 6th Environmental Action Programme.

3.4. notes the great amount of work being undertaken on sustainability indicators and asks the Steering Group to consider whether this work should be co-ordinated in order to obtain useful results for the regions.

3.5. invites all regions to use the ENCORE network – particularly the ENCORE website and its links to other networks – as an effective political tool for inter-regional co-operation, thereby benefiting from the sharing of knowledge and experience about the best ways to protect the environment and promote sustainable development.

3.6. invites one region from each AC, as representative of all the regions in that country, to join the Steering Group in an observer capacity pending their countries becoming members of the EU

3.7. invites the European Commission, in co-operation with the signatories of the Valencia Charter, to explore the possibilities for synergies between the Valencia Charter and the Aalborg Charter and to report to the next ENCORE Conference and, if possible, to the Earth Summit 2002.

3.8. invites one representative each from the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament to co-operate with the ENCORE

Steering Group in order to achieve full implementation of the 6th Environmental Action Programme.

3.9. asks the Presidents of the Conference, the Environment Ministers of Carinthia, to send this resolution in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish to the relevant institutions of the European Union, including the Committee of the Regions, and to the AC and EU regions.

3.10. welcomes the offer of the Region of Gelderland (The Netherlands) to host the 6th ENCORE in 2003.

3.11. asks the Steering Group to organise the 6th ENCORE 2003, taking account of the terms of this resolution with due regard to the outcomes of the Earth Summit 2002.

3.12. asks the Steering Group to propose ways to assess the implementation of the Villach Resolution and to present the results to the 6th ENCORE.