



Valencia Charter

on the role of the Regions of Europe in environmental policy

approved by the Environment Conference of the Regions of Europe (ENCORE), held
in
Valencia, Spain, on 21 November 1995 and updated by the ENCORE Conference,
held in Åre, Sweden, on 16 June 2006

1 Role of the Regions in Environmental Policy

- 1.1** We, the regions of Europe, declare that, in view of our common responsibilities for the protection of the environment for present and future generations, the pursuit of sustainable development and the adoption of environmental policies are among our main tasks, focusing on integration, implementation and information. We believe that the citizens of all regions of Europe have the right to a healthy environment.
- 1.2** We believe that environmental policy must address a wide range of challenges from different sources. Accordingly we agree on the importance of incorporating environmental considerations into the formulation and implementation of all our policies if we are to achieve sustainable development.
- 1.3** 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.

- 1.4** We are aware that we have an important responsibility in making our economies operate within ecological limits. We, therefore, strongly believe that we, as “competent authorities”, with extensive practical experience in implementing and enforcing environmental legislation, should be involved in the process of designing new European environmental policies including the arrangements for implementation. We urge the European Union to take into account the practical experience of the regions in implementing and executing European law and sustainable development strategies. In carrying out these tasks, we wish to be active participants, reflecting our aim to play a proactive role and involving our experience, knowledge and interests into the European decision-making process.
- 1.5** We are committed to put into practice the contents of the Resolutions and Action Plans adopted at ENCORE Conferences (formerly known as the Environment Conferences of Regional Ministers and Political Leaders in the European Union), periodically monitoring and evaluating the achievements attained, to promote sustainable growth.

2 Objectives of Environmental Policy

- 2.1** We recognise that the fundamental objective of our environmental policies is to conserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment – climate, air, noise, water, soil and biodiversity. In doing so, we consider the precautionary principle and the polluter-pays principle as the guiding principles in all our actions.
- 2.2** We pursue sustainable development. It is important that the Lisbon Strategy gives equal treatment to economic, environmental and social needs. We refer to the European Strategy of Sustainable Development and aim at the mutual strengthening of the three equal pillars of a sustainable development. By focussing on more sustainable production and supporting sustainable technologies, we believe that the EU can achieve competitive advantage and strengthen its growth and employment strategy. In order to preserve natural resources and biodiversity, we work towards employing eco-efficient methods of production.

- 2.3** We believe that open structures need to be established in all regions to enable the active participation of the citizens in the development of environmental policy and to ensure better implementation and monitoring. We believe that greater public involvement will increase the level of support for measures to protect the environment.
- 2.4** Government must set an example for others to follow. In undertaking our work, we are committed to minimising the negative environmental impacts we create. Not only shall we pursue this in our regional policies and in our own organizations but we shall take it into account when contracting services from other organizations.

3 Instruments of Environmental Policy

- 3.1** In pursuing environmental protection and sustainable development, we the regions of Europe will use all the available instruments, such as:
- legislation,
 - coordination of the different public policies,
 - information systems,
 - market tools,
 - education and training
 - co-operation with companies, social partners, consumers and NGOs,
 - voluntary agreements.
- 3.2** We seek to ensure that greater attention is paid to the experience of the regions in the current efforts into simplifying EU-environmental legislation and codifying legal instruments. We also support the Commission's work on impact assessments and believe that the experience of the regions can assist here also.

4 Priority Actions

- 4.1** We believe that **trade and industry** must make their contribution towards solving environmental problems. We will use all our powers to help to change our economies to ensure more efficient use of energy and natural resources and to minimise waste. Accordingly, we will encourage the implementation of eco-efficient

technologies, the participation in EMAS, ISO 14001, environmental awards, eco-labelling and green procurement. Moreover, we will support voluntary agreements between public institutions and economic partners.

- 4.2 We believe that deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions are necessary if the rise in global temperatures is to be kept below the level at which more dangerous **climate change** becomes probable. We, therefore, support the European Programme on climate change and its specific measures (eg. the EU-wide regulation for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community) as well as the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.
- 4.3 We believe that reduced **air pollution** can benefit human health and the environment and can be achieved without negative impacts on economic growth. We, therefore, support solving air quality problems caused by particulates, ozone and other matters. We also support the efforts of the Commission to develop a long-term, strategy to reduce the effects of air pollution on human health and the environment.
- 4.4 There is a need for a **shift to more sustainable forms of transport** if we are to succeed in decoupling economic growth from resource use and pollution. Accordingly, we shall promote the development of integrated transport systems.
- 4.5 We believe that **more efficient use of energy** in all sectors of society is an important criterion for progress towards sustainable development. We will therefore encourage reduced use of non-renewable sources of energy in favour of renewable sources and more efficient conversion from primary energy to applied energy.
- 4.6 We believe that **noise** produced by cars, trains and aeroplanes considerably restricts the quality of life for many people and that constant exposure to noise can also pose a health risk. We will therefore support the development of strategies for the protection against noise as a whole, including objectives to reduce the number of people affected by noise in the longer term.
- 4.7 We also believe that **the better use of water** through responsible management, providing both high drinking water quality and protecting ecosystems, is essential

for sustainable development. **Better use of water can also help to** preserve biodiversity and to avoid desertification in some European areas. Current initiatives to encourage better planning in the protection and use of water resources and in particular efforts to adopt a more sparing use of water and the recycling of water resources should be developed and expanded.

- 4.8** We will encourage the use of those **agricultural practices**, which are compatible with the conservation of nature and the general wider adoption by farmers of stricter measures to protect the environment.
- 4.9** We will encourage **fishing and aquaculture practices**, which contribute to the sustainable management and use of marine resources.
- 4.10** We are convinced that **forests** are an important resource and, therefore, we will encourage all interested parties to develop and implement regional forest strategies, which are based on the sustainable management of this resource.
- 4.11** We believe that **tourism** is an economic sector with great present and future importance. Therefore, we shall seek to use our powers to make its development compatible with the conservation of the natural heritage and environmental quality.
- 4.12** We are convinced that **soil** is a vital and largely non-renewable resource increasingly under pressure and we seek to end activities, which reduce soil quality. This may require measures and strategies, which emphasise less intensive land usage.
- 4.13** We believe that the impacts of many environmental problems are felt most strongly in urban areas. Accordingly, we encourage specific **land use planning systems and concepts of spatial planning and urbanism** which seek to improve the environmental performance and quality of urban areas while also taking into account the related economic and social issues.
- 4.14** We are convinced that the changes in behaviour needed to face the challenges of sustainable development require changes in **public awareness**. Education is essential in promoting public awareness. Regions play an important role in education

and will use that role to support and strengthen educational efforts in the field of sustainability.

5 Interregional co-operation and co-operation with partners

- 5.1** We encourage all European regions to join the ENCORE network and invite them to bring their ideas and make their contribution to the work of Europe's regions in creating a sustainable environmental policy for Europe. We also invite representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Presidency and the Committee of the Regions to work in co-operation with ENCORE in this policy.
- 5.2** We commend the ENCORE web-site, as a platform for interregional co-operation and for the exchange of environmental experience and information. To increase our effectiveness, we also support co-operation with other European networks and international networks.
- 5.3** To strengthen the environment and sustainable development throughout Europe we shall co-operate with citizens, organisations, business, other levels of government and other social and economic partners. We shall work in partnership with businesses at a regional level and also with educational and research institutions to acquire new environmental research and knowledge. We shall seek to implement the lessons drawn from this new knowledge in public institutions and more widely across our communities.

6 Final Provisions

- 6.1** This Charter, drafted in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, and translated into the other official languages of the member States of the European Union, will be deposited at the Ministry of Territory and Housing of the Valencia Regional Government (*Conselleria de Territorio y Vivienda, Generalitat Valenciana*), which will send a copy to each regional Government in the European Union and to the relevant European institutions.

- 6.2** All regions of Europe are encouraged to send their accession to the depositary region.
The regions that signed the original Charter of Valencia will be asked to also sign
the Revised Version.
- 6.3** The Charter will be applied for an unlimited period of time. However, it can be revised
in the following “Environmental Conferences of the Regions of Europe, ENCORE”.

Adopted in Valencia, Spain, 21st November 1995

Revised in Åre, Sweden, 16th June 2006