

Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe

Terms of Reference



1. Definition

ENCORE stands for **Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe** and is a political platform and forum for Environment Ministers and other relevant political leaders of the regions of Europe dealing with Environmental and Sustainable Development issues.

2. Objectives

The Environmental Conference of the Regions of Europe is dedicated to political co-operation between the regional Environment Ministers and other relevant political leaders of the regions. ENCORE aims through this cooperation to contribute to the effective implementation of EU environmental policy, to improve environmental governance and to contribute to sustainable development in the regions of Europe.

Moreover ENCORE:

- Provides politicians with a forum for discussing environmental issues of regional significance,
- Enables regions to establish a common position and exert their collective influence on the formulation of environmental policy within the European Union, and
- Allows cooperation, exchange of experiences and common activities among regions in environmental issues.

3. ENCORE participation

Participation in ENCORE is open to all European regions.

Participation is voluntary, with no fee and no legal commitments.

4. Valencia Charter

The Valencia Charter has been agreed by the ENCORE Conference and sets out the commitment of the Regions of Europe to improve its environment and to promote sustainable development. The Regions of Europe are encouraged to formally sign up to the Charter.

5. ENCORE Core Structure

ENCORE has three working levels:

Firstly, the Conference is a biennial meeting addressed to the Environment Ministers and other relevant political leaders of the regions of Europe as well as authorities of the EU institutions dealing with Environment and Sustainable Development issues.

Secondly, the Steering Group meets twice a year and its members act on behalf of their regions following their Ministers' instructions.

Finally, the Steering Committee meets once a year.

6. Conference

The Conference is ENCORE's driving force and is intended to be a high political level summit taking place every two years.

ENCORE Conference is a political forum where the Environment Ministers and other relevant political leaders of the regions of Europe discuss EU policy, exchange points of view, establish common positions towards EU legislation and set regional cooperation.

Moreover, the Conference takes stock of the progress made in between Conferences, approves the political strategy and the Action Plan to be developed during the next two years and decides on the location of the next ENCORE Conference, following a voluntary offer from a region.

In addition, ENCORE Conference analyses in depth selected specific environmental issues.

7. Steering Group

The Steering Group consists of a group of regions that are voluntary involved with the day to day responsibilities of ENCORE.

The Steering Group members act on behalf of their regions and following their Ministers' instructions.

The Steering Group aims to have one representative region of each member state of the EU. The region represented in the Steering Group should inform and report the rest of the regions within its country about ENCORE activities and decisions.

The Steering Group's main aims are to supervise the development of the Action Plans, to support the organization and planning of the Conferences and to make decisions on the everyday issues of ENCORE.

Decision-taking within the Steering Group is by consensus.

Members will try to find this consensus.

8. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee consists of a group of Environment Ministers or other relevant political leaders from the regions of Europe that are voluntary involved with the political issues of ENCORE.

The Steering Committee pursues to hold an informal yearly meeting. The Steering Committee meetings are held in the framework on ENCORE Conferences when these are held, while the year that ENCORE Conferences do not take place, the Steering Committee meeting is held in one of the regions that will host the next Conference.

The aim of the Steering Committee meetings is to discuss current political events and strengthen the political power of ENCORE.

9. Ruling ENCORE

ENCORE is presided over by the Minister for the Environment or the relevant political leader of the Region that will host the next Conference together with the equivalent that hosted the last Conference. The Co-Presidents lead and promote ENCORE at political level.

The Steering Group is chaired by the representative of the Region that will host the next Conference together with the representative of the Region that hosted the last Conference. They are responsible for chairing the meetings, representing ENCORE at other networks and institutions, and preparing the meeting agendas and other necessary documents.

10. ENCORE Permanent Secretariat

The ENCORE Secretariat is the executive office of ENCORE and responsible for the maintenance and development of the ENCORE website. Moreover, the Secretariat is responsible for the maintenance of the SG communications and the support of the Co-Presidents.

The ENCORE Secretariat is permanently managed by staff from the region of Aragon, appointed to that by Ministers' consensus at the ENCORE Conference 2010.

(www.encoreweb.org)