



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

## **2016 Annual Aarhus Centres Meeting with focus on green economy and resource efficiency**

**Analysis of the results of the survey on Aarhus Centres' sustainability,  
and presentation of key findings and recommendations**

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**22 November 2016, Vienna**



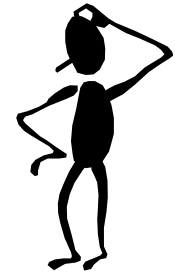
# Survey: Responding ACs

- ✓ 50 ACs responded (out of 60 ACs)

Regional network	Total No. of ACs	No. of ACs responding to the questionnaire	Percentage of responding ACs
South East Europe	14	12	86%
Eastern Europe	4	4	100%
South Caucasus	17	11	65%
Central Asia	25	23	92%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>83%</b>

# **Areas of intervention and improvement**

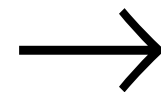
# Future of ACs' network?



- ✓ Would the OSCE encourage the establishment of an increasing number of ACs, and support the consequent expansion of the network?
- ✓ In the face of its expansion, how could the management and sustainability of the network of ACs be ensured?
- ✓ Would the acquisition of a new legal status by the ACs change the structure of the network?

# Reviewing ACs' "Road Map"

- ✓ The current "Road Map" for the ACs are based on the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan (2009-2014) adopted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Parties in Riga in June 2008.
- ✓ The Road Map of the ACs needs to be revised in the light of the new Strategic Plan of the Aarhus Convention (2015-2020) adopted by the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties in Maastricht on 30 June-1 July 2014.
- ✓ It is also recommended that, during this revision, due emphasis should be given on the "Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy".

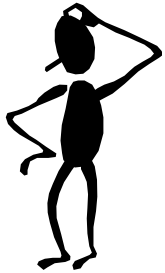


# Reviewing ACs' "Road Map"

In reviewing the current "Road Map" for the ACs:

- ✓ Policy decisions also need to be made regarding the framework and scope of activities expected from the Aarhus Centres. (*"Everything under the sun regarding the implementation of the Aarhus Convention"*?)
- ✓ It is recommended that the activities of the ACs should be redefined in the light of a common vision, identifying more clearly the types of intervention in priority areas.

# Legal Status of ACs



Are the Aarhus Centres *ad hoc* structures? In other words, will they be residual (and thereby their presence would be terminated) upon the “successful implementation” of the Aarhus Convention by the respective governments?

- ✓ This presentation is based on the strong assumption that the “**Aarhus Centres are here to stay**”!
- ✓ The quest for improving the legal and institutional basis of the ACs should thus be built upon a long-term perspective with viable/sustainable options, rather than seeking interim and short-term remedies to their immediate problems.



# Legal Status of ACs

The recent initiatives of the OSCE have enabled significant advances in terms of analysing and discussing different institutional alternatives that are:

- ✓ more likely to provide a suitable legal personality,
- ✓ maintain the partnership structure of the ACs,
- ✓ bring along advantages in terms of organisational and financial sustainability,
- ✓ could be established with relative ease, and
- ✓ operate within a legal framework that can accommodate the specific requirements of the ACs.





# Legal Status of ACs

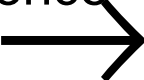
As reflected in the Survey, the establishment of a Foundation currently appears to outweigh other institutional alternatives. Taking this example that would serve as an institutional umbrella for the network of ACs in a particular country:

- ✓ What will distinguish this Foundation from all others established under the same framework? If it becomes only “one amongst the crowd”, how would it be able to perform its bridging function between governmental institutions and NGOs?
- ✓ Would the legislation allow the involvement of governmental institutions (or the OSCE) not only as “founders”, but also as “partners” within the Foundation?



# Legal Status of ACs

Any institutional model (particularly the Foundation option) is proposed to incorporate relevant provisions in its formal regulations/by-laws to accommodate, among others, the following requirements:

- Ensure that the international dimension is merged, and particularly the involvement of the OSCE is secured, not only “on paper”, but as an integral aspect of the governance mechanism.
- Ensure that the exceptional position of the ACs in providing a bridge between the governmental institutions and NGOs is appropriately integrated, as well as further ensuring that a relative balance is maintained between them so that the NGOs would not be overpowered (and frustrated) due to the influence of the governmental institution “partners”. 

# Legal Status of ACs

- ✓ Ensure that the participatory setup and functioning of the Boards of the ACs are maintained or appropriately reinforced by similar governance structures encouraging horizontal co-operation.
- ✓ Coupled with the Boards (or similar structures), ensure that the overall “governance” aspect is maintained, with explicit measures to enhance participatory and harmonised decision-making.
- ✓ Ensure that the “umbrella” aspect of the new legal structure is reinforced by relevant provisions to maintain the relative autonomy and flexibility of the individual ACs comprising the country network. (In the case that the nature of the relationship between the ACs are narrowed down into a mere “centre-branch” affiliation, the new legal structure would turn into a single centralised organisation instead of functioning as a “network”.) →

# Legal Status of ACs

- ✓ Ensure that due emphasis is given in the new legal setup to improve and sufficiently meet the staffing requirements, including the payments and the status of the permanent staff, engagement of qualified experts and consultants, active involvement of volunteers, etc.
- ✓ Ensure that the financial framework of new legal setup would also equip the ACs with the necessary tools for financial sustainability, including measures for sustainable flow of funds, and mobilising alternative sources of fundraising.

# Legal Status of ACs

- ✓ It is recommended that a “**legal gap analysis**” should be initiated by the OSCE to identify the suitable and advantageous aspects, as well as the bottlenecks and deficiencies in the existing legislation in terms of the preferred institutional model that would bring the Aarhus Centres under a joint and single roof.
- ✓ Issues related to implementation should be carefully reviewed and scrutinized before proceeding to formally establish the selected model.

# Financial base & fundraising

Financial sustainability of the ACs is directly linked with the model to be selected for their legal status. The new institutional setup should ensure, among others, the following:

- ✓ Contributions by public institutions should not be conceived as one-sided “favor” made by the government.
- ✓ Governmental “partners” should not overpower and dominate NGOs on the basis that “they pay the money”.
- ✓ Particular emphasis be placed on developing more than one source of income (diversity of origin), as well as multiple methods of generating income (diversity of type).



# Financial base & fundraising

The fundamental objective of the financial sustainability strategy of the ACs should be to enable them to become more self-reliant, and to encourage them to strengthen their own resource mobilization. The following sources are considered:

- ✓ Core funding for bottom-line operations
- ✓ Grants
- ✓ Matching funds
- ✓ Training course fees
- ✓ Consultancies
- ✓ In-kind contributions
- ✓ Other income

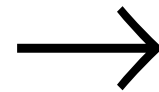
# Joint Action Plan for ACs

- ✓ The development of an Action Plan for the organisational and financial sustainability of ACs is recommended, preferably as a “rolling plan”, with a year added in lieu of each completed year.
- ✓ The Action Plan for the ACs should be developed in parallel with the Action Plan (2015-2020) adopted for the Aarhus Convention, itself. The Action Plan is also recommended to be closely linked to the Road Map developed under the “Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy”.
- ✓ Each AC is anticipated to review and refine in particular the specific actions and steps to be taken, in compliance with the joint Action Plan.



# Consolidation of efforts

- ✓ Advocating for increased political support to the Aarhus Centres
- ✓ Visibility & Communication
- ✓ Monitoring & Evaluation
- ✓ Consolidation of projects in support of ACs
- ✓ Decentralisation of capacity building programmes by the OSCE



# Consolidation of efforts

Complementary tools for OSCE's support:

- Coordination Board of the ACs
- Advisory Committee
- Compiling “good and best practices” on sustainability
- Establishing “twinning” relationships between ACs
- Utilising the “benchmarking” tool
- Continued emphasis on “gender mainstreaming”

Despite bottlenecks & problems,  
the journey continues...

