



Aarhus Centres Guidelines

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A reference document to provide guidance for the strategic orientation, set-up and activities of the OSCE supported Aarhus Centres.

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All reference documents are listed in Annex VII, Bibliography

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This is not a consensus document.

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Overview and Introduction

“...new institutions, such as the “Aarhus Centres” established in several countries, have been created to realize its goals.” UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s welcoming message to the second Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention in Almaty

Background to the preparation of the Guidelines

Since 2002, the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) and the OSCE field presences have been supporting the establishment and functioning of Aarhus Centres (herein referred to simply as: Centres) and Public Environmental Information Centres (PEICs) in the countries of South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. As of March 2009, the OSCE has been supporting the establishment of the Centres in seven countries¹. Some of these Centres have been supported under the umbrella of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), a partnership between the OSCE, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (as an associate partner).

The Aarhus Centres have proved to be an important tool for addressing environment and security related challenges. Reflecting the success of the Centres’ work and other Aarhus-related activities of the OSCE, there is an increasing demand and interest for further enhancement of the OSCE’s Aarhus portfolio. As such OSCE/OCEEA commissioned an independent evaluation of the Aarhus Centres/PEICs². This evaluation had the overall objective to *“generate knowledge from the experience of the Aarhus Centres within the context of OSCE’s efforts to raise awareness on environmental issues as well as promoting participatory approaches in environmental decision-making.”*

The evaluation was performed from 14th April until 13th June 2008 and was conducted *“more as a lesson-learning and forward-looking exercise than a pure assessment of past results.”* The evaluation report presented information about the nature, extent, and wherever possible, the effect of the Aarhus Centres activities. It noted that the institutional set-up and management arrangements of these Centres and PEICs vary widely from country-to-country and even within a country. In addition, the issues of continuing sustainability and stakeholder relations were highlighted.

Some specific recommendations on how to improve the OSCE’s support to Aarhus Convention implementation and the future role and focus of the Centres were developed and presented. These included the recommendation to streamline the Centre activities and

¹ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In the near future Centre is to be set-up in Kazakhstan.

² Dmytro Skrylnikov, (2008 – unpublished report) Independent Evaluation of the Aarhus Centres and Public Environmental Information Centres. 54 pp

to clarify the understanding by stakeholders of the role, function, services and activities of the Centres.

One strong recommendation was to develop a set of Aarhus Centre Guidelines (hereinafter referred to as the Guidelines) with a purpose to provide guidance for the strategic orientation, set-up and activities of Centres and to address the issue of a common understanding by all stakeholders on the role of the Centres. As such these Guidelines were recommended to be developed to cover the following issues:

- *“define the purpose of an Aarhus Centre;*
- *delineate its general functions;*
- *describe the type of services to be delivered;*
- *the type of activities to be conducted;*
- *stakeholders to be involved, including their roles and responsibilities;*
- *options for institutional set-up;*
- *staffing requirements;*
- *possible funding mechanisms.”*

Two consultants³ were hired to work from January 22nd to April 3rd 2009 to prepare these Guidelines. This process involved consultations with the OSCE, UNECE, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders as well as Aarhus Centre Managers in selected countries and desk work and missions to selected countries (Albania, Armenia and Tajikistan). At a meeting of Aarhus Centres in Vienna from 22nd to 23rd January 2009, various elements of the content of the Guidelines were discussed. The inputs of this meeting are also considered within these Guidelines and supported the Terms of Reference as set out by the OSCE for the development of the Guidelines.

Purpose and Scope of the Guidelines

These Aarhus Centres Guidelines are prepared with the purpose of enhancing and streamlining the work of the Aarhus Centres, providing guidance for the strategic orientation, set-up and activities of Centres, and hence ensuring a common understanding of all stakeholders on the role of the Centres. Consequently, it should be noted that the Guidelines fulfil a broad purpose and are meant to help enhancing the overall OSCE Aarhus portfolio, but yet be flexible enough for countries to take into consideration national specificities, local conditions and regional priorities.

As such, they reflect not only the findings and recommendations of the Independent Evaluation of the Aarhus Centres, but also those directions provided by the Riga Declaration and the Strategic Plan for the Aarhus Convention (2009-2014). The policies, procedures, practices and processes they propose are focussed on those areas and issues which have been identified as being fundamental to this purpose.

³ Robert Atkinson, Senior Adviser, Prospect C&S, Belgium and Vadim Ni, Executive Director, Law and Environment Eurasia Partnership, Kazakhstan.

Thus, the Guidelines are developed to be of use to the Aarhus Centres themselves, relevant governmental agencies, OSCE/OCEEA and field presences, and the variety of international, national and local stakeholders concerned with supporting the implementation of the Aarhus Convention through the Aarhus Centres.

Structure and Use of the Guidelines

Since Aarhus Centres are rather diverse in many respect, and they all cover a broad range of topic areas and activities, the Guidelines at hand are generic in nature and allow Centres to use and adapt them to individual circumstances. Thus, the Guidelines are to be seen as a working tool and reference document that looks at the core areas of Aarhus Centres activities and operations and give guidance for the use of the Centres managers and their respective Boards.

The main body of the Guidelines are given under the Guidelines part of the document, each guideline is identified by its title in bold and various notes are given in boxes following them (a summary list of the Guidelines is given in Annex I). There are five main sections that cover the various aspects of the set-up, programme, operations and sustainability of the Aarhus Centres. In total 72 individual Guidelines have been developed under these themes:

- Institutional Issues (25);
- Programme and Activities (35);
- Measurement of Impact: Monitoring and Evaluation (5);
- Resource and Development Requirements (4); and
- Communications: Outreach and Networking (3).

Section 1 covers the institutional base and set-up of Aarhus Centres. It prompts thought on the overall vision, mission and values of the Centres, and gives options for their status, institutional set-up, organisational principles and structures. In addition, the relations with different stakeholders are explored.

Section 2 covers Guidelines for the programme and activities of the Centres and proposes an overall strategy for each pillar of the Convention. Moreover, Section 2 discusses additional related activities and elaborates on the Aarhus Centres Road Map.

Section 3, then, continues with the presentation of methods measuring the impact of Aarhus Centre activities through monitoring and evaluation.

Resource and Development Requirements, in Section 4, covers the issues of sustainability of the Centres, and describes how to measure and address the various resource requirements, such as human, infrastructural and financial resources.

Finally, Section 5 looks at communication and networking aspects, and, as such, describes for instance the development of a corporate communication plan.

Additional supporting documents, resources and specific examples can be found in the Annex. These Annexes are either directly related to the text in the Guidelines or serve for their better illustration, and require additional consideration from each Centre.

Aarhus Centres and their Future Development

“They are really different, different in history and in institutional set-ups.” Dmytro Skrylnikov, Author Independent Evaluation of Aarhus Centres, Vienna 22nd January 2009.

A key finding of the Independent Evaluation of Aarhus Centres, of 2008, was that there are a variety of Aarhus Centres. They can be classified according to various approaches, such as location, institutional set-up, and level of support from government. The Evaluation Report placed the existing Centres into three groups according to their basis of establishment:

1. Centre established on the basis of the Ministry of Environment (Environmental Agency or other relevant institution);
2. NGO-based Centre;
3. Centre as an OSCE project.

Of those 22 Aarhus Centres that were reviewed under the Independent Evaluation, 14 can be placed under government set-up group, six are NGO-based and two are projects. The majority of the Centres financed its staff through OSCE funding, only 4 out of 21 were being paid by the respective Ministries of Environment.

These Guidelines relate to the existing and new Aarhus Centres and Public Environmental Information Centres, including governmental and NGO-based institutions both at the national and regional levels.

For the purpose of these Guidelines an additional classification of the Aarhus Centres based on the following criteria has been created: (1) Institutional set-up, (2) geographical focus, (3) level of work.

(1) Institutional set-up:

Table 1: Two main types of institutional set up.

Type	Description
Governmental	Set up within government agencies (central or regional) and operating within a government structure and with government staff.
NGO-based	Set up within an existing or a new NGO and operating with the involvement of NGO activists. Independent from government.

Geographical focus (alternatively focus of work) is another way of classifying Aarhus Centres as it determines at what level the centres are operating and thus some of its probable activities and competences. There are two focus levels:

(2) Geographical Focus:

Table 2: Geographical Focus.

Geographical Focus	Description
National	Works within the national setting with central government on Aarhus Convention issues. Strives to represent the whole country in its activity. Some of them might be authorized to fulfil certain functions of designated national authorities of the Aarhus Convention.
Regional	Works within a region (perhaps administratively or culturally defined) with local authorities. Focuses mainly on access to information, public participation in decision-making and assistance with access to justice at the local level.

(3) Level of work:

The third classification criteria of Aarhus Centres (though of course they are all inter-linked) is the thematic focus and level (or complexity) of work. A suggested differentiation of levels might be the following one:

Table 3: Proposed levels of Aarhus Centres activities.

Thematic Focus	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Access to information (passive)	<p>Ip1.1. Deals with requests of the public to information possessed by the Centre.</p> <p>Ip1.2. Serves as a community access point and repository of national and local environmental information.</p> <p>Ip1.3. Provides consultations to the public concerning the existing sources of environmental information, the system of public authorities possessing such information and the formulation of requests.</p>	<p>Ip2.1. Analyses domestic legislation and practices for considering public requests for environmental information.</p> <p>Ip2.2. Conducts training of public authorities on the procedures for handling public requests for environmental information.</p> <p>Ip2.3. Conducts training of civil society representatives on issues of access to information.</p> <p>Ip2.4. Implements pilot projects addressed to improved access to certain types of environmental information.</p>	<p>Ip3.1. Assists in the strengthening of legislation regulating procedures of handling information requests and public access to environmental information.</p> <p>Ip3.2. Provides guidance on implementation of provisions of the Convention, national legal requirements in terms of requests of the public for environmental information.</p>
Access to information (active)	<p>Ia1.1. Analyses public needs for environmental information.</p> <p>Ia1.2. Facilitates access to available environmental</p>	<p>Ia2.1. Provides guidance on planning and carrying-out activities on dissemination of environmental information</p>	<p>Ia3.1. Assists in improvement/development of legislation concerning the collection, exchange, storage and active</p>

	<p>information through various tools.</p> <p>Ia1.3. Prepares lists, catalogues (registers) of environmental information.</p> <p>Ia1.4. Renders consultative services on existing information sources.</p> <p>Ia1.5. Issues regular and thematic publications on the environment aimed at the public at large.</p> <p>Ia1.6. Opens, maintains and up-dates Centre website. Place on such sites national or regional state-of-the-environment reports, variety of international, national and local environmental legislative and policy documents.</p> <p>Ia1.7. Opens Centre support libraries of environmental documents.</p>	<p>by various public authorities.</p> <p>Ia2.2. Establishes various electronic environmental databases accessible to the public.</p> <p>Ia2.3. Promote public access to environmental information through web sites of environmental public authorities</p>	<p>dissemination of environmental information by public authorities.</p> <p>Ia3.2. Promotes the development of a voluntary or obligatory systems of environmental labelling of products, services, processes and technologies.</p> <p>Ia3.3. Carries-out explanatory work for consumers on voluntary and/or obligatory environmental labelling.</p> <p>Ia3.4. Assists in ratification and implementation of the PRTR protocol concerning registers.</p> <p>Ia3.5. Provides information on industrial pollution and awareness-raising on the PRTR registers.</p>
Public Participation	<p>P1.1. Develops guidance documents for public authorities and developers on PP procedures.</p> <p>P1.2. Promotes at the earliest the notification of the public concerned on decision-making (especially Regional and Local Centres).</p> <p>P1.3. Consults the public concerned on how to obtain information on decision-making processes and opinions.</p> <p>P1.4. Advocates strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and disseminates good practices on its implementation.</p> <p>P1.5 Provides a platform for participatory national and local environmental and sustainable development action planning.</p>	<p>P2.1. Conducts trainings on facilitation skills and dialogue planning for government institutions, local administrations, NGOs, businesses and investors.</p> <p>P2.2. Promotes the practice of PP in decision-making on planned activities, including organising public hearings.</p> <p>P2.3. Consults potential applicants on how to determine the interested public groups.</p> <p>P2.4. Consults the appropriate public authorities on approaches to registering public comments and proposals and to keep records of public hearings.</p> <p>P2.5. Assists public in obtaining information on decisions and places texts on website. Informs public on environmental impact assessment (EIA) results.</p> <p>P2.6 Promotes public involvement into discussions on strategic environmental decisions taken by national or local authorities, enhancing notification.</p>	<p>P3.1. Assists in improvement of PP procedures within regulations on EIA and IPPC.</p> <p>P3.2. Facilitates EIA processes by offering services for information dissemination and platforms for PP.</p> <p>P3.3. Organises and carries-out public hearings, collects written proposals from the public.</p> <p>P3.4. Promotes ratification of the Almaty amendment of the AC on GMOs</p> <p>P3.5. Promotes improvements in legislation regulating procedures of PP in strategic environmental decision making.</p> <p>P3.6. Develops guidance documents on procedures of PP in strategic environmental decision making.</p> <p>P3.7. Organises public discussion of draft laws related to the environment, including public hearings.</p>
Access to Justice	J1.1. Provides information and guidance to the public	J2.1. Organises training workshops for judges,	J3.1. Assists in the improvement of review

	<p>on court procedures, administrative and judicial appeal possibilities.</p> <p>J1.2. Establishes and provides a database on court decisions in environmental matters.</p>	<p>prosecutors, public authorities on issues of access to justice cases, cases relating to violation of rights to PP in decision making; and issues on access to justice in accordance with para. 3 of article 9 on the Aarhus Convention.</p> <p>J2.2. Promotes the improvement of procedures of access to justice on cases relating to violation of rights to public participation in decision making.</p> <p>J2.3. Assists in determining standards applicable to review procedures, use of remedies, costs related to its use, and to making written decisions.</p> <p>J2.4. Provides assistance mechanisms, such as promoting public interest lawyers, providing lists of lawyers and acting as law clinics.</p>	<p>procedures relating to violation of rights of the public to access to environmental information.</p> <p>J3.2. Facilitates or coordinates legal consultations to civil society organisations and individuals on environmental rights, including the right on access to justice.</p>
Aarhus Convention Procedures	<p>C1.1. Supports and contributes to the preparation of national implementation reports.</p> <p>C1.2. Takes an active role in providing information to the CHM national node.</p>	<p>C2.1. Centre facilitates public participation in the preparation of national implementation reports.</p> <p>C2.2. Centre participates in compliance review and raises public awareness on the compliance mechanism.</p> <p>C2.3. Information support to the CHM national node.</p>	<p>C3.1. Centre drafts the national implementation reports.</p> <p>C3.2. Assists implementation of CC decisions.</p> <p>C3.3. Centre designated as national node for the CHM.</p> <p>C3.4. Supplies services related to public environmental rights for other MEAs.</p>

The fields of work proposed here can be used to define not only the area of implementation support a Centre is working on, but also the level or the complexity of the Centre's work. In order to clarify their actual role and functions, and in order to stimulate discussions about their future development, Aarhus Centres are recommended to engage in respective in-depth discussions based on above table.

The Guidelines

“Aarhus Centres are bridges between good intentions and achieving results, they are the cutting-edge of the Convention.” Jeremy Wates, UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat, Vienna, 22nd January 2009

1. Institutional Issues

1.1 Role & Function of Aarhus Centres (mission, vision & values)

In order to help define the role and function of the Aarhus Centres it is important to begin with setting out the core of their purpose. This can be defined most readily by developing the strategic framework for the Centres. This would comprise standard vision, mission and values statements. A suggested sample strategic framework is presented below which can be amended by Aarhus Centres.

I.1. Guideline: Common strategic framework. All Aarhus Centres should develop a strategic framework, comprising: vision, mission and values statements, plus an organisational description. Though different in part, owing to differences in institutional set-up, they should be comparatively similar.

Sample elements of a strategic framework:

Vision Statement

The vision of the [name] Aarhus Centre is to become a pivotal player in ensuring that the functions of the Aarhus Convention are enshrined in the everyday functioning of government and the wider-society throughout [country/location]. Thereby:

- Promoting more democratic values and practices in the environmental field
- Acting as an inspiration for greater transparency and accountability in all spheres of government
- Improving the state of the environment
- Contributing to the protection of the right of every person, of present and future generations, to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being.

Mission Statement

The [name] Aarhus Centre has a mission to ensure the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in [country/location]. The Aarhus Centre fulfils this mission by:

- Helping government authorities to fulfil their obligations and duties under the Aarhus Convention

- Promoting appropriate legislation and practices in support of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental field
- Acting as a bridge between government, civil society, business and the public
- Catalysing application of the Convention by raising awareness and building capacity of stakeholders
- Serving the wider-community by providing relevant services to them.

Values Statement

The activities of [name] Aarhus Centre are based on core values, as such it strives to:

- Operate within the confines of its mission statement and within the spirit of the Aarhus Convention
- Follow, as the basis of its strategic work directions, the international processes on implementing the Aarhus Convention, including those directions set out in the Strategic Plan 2009-2014, the Riga Declaration and subsequent documents, and national plans for implementing the Aarhus Convention
- Be representative, inclusive, impartial and non-profit-making
- Be clear on its role, functions and competencies - notably towards national or local priorities, by defining a set of standard functions and services
- Foment a professional ethos and working practices, by working efficiently and effectively, and with an emphasis on maximising the positive impact of its interventions
- Strive for the highest possible quality and reliability of the information it provides and services it offers
- Be transparent and accountable towards stakeholders, where disclosure does not contradict the bounds of confidentiality
- Act in a co-operative, open and participatory way, by working equally or in partnership with all stakeholders
- Follow a rights-based approach, ensuring that gender equality, multicultural/multiethnic representation, and minority participation and rights are promoted by the Centres' activities. In particular that women's, ethnic, age and disability issues are considered
- Avoid any conflict of interest, particularly between the interests of stakeholders and donors, and unnecessary competition, particularly with reference to NGOs
- Encourage ownership and involvement of relevant stakeholders in its work, by recognising the common goal of all in implementing the Aarhus Convention.

Within the recommendations of the Independent Evaluation of Aarhus Centres, there are several references to clarifying the role and purpose of Aarhus Centres. The elaboration of a common vision of Centre activities and services are specifically mentioned. These guidelines seek to address this recommendation by tasking all Centres to develop their strategic framework. The strategic framework sets out the main purpose, reason and functions of any organisation, essentially why it exists, what it does and how it does it (somehow the *raison d'être* and *modus operandi* of Centres). The main components of such a strategic framework are: vision, mission and values statements. The following

definitions of these may serve useful to the Centres in further developing their own statements based on those proposed above⁴:

- **Vision** is a statement about what the organization wants to achieve. The vision should resonate with all members of the organization and help them feel proud, excited, and part of something much bigger than themselves. A vision should stretch the organization's capabilities and image of itself. It gives shape and direction to the organization's future.
- **Mission/Purpose** is a precise description of what an organization does. It should describe the business the organization is in. It is a definition of "why" the organization exists currently. Each member of an organization should be able to verbally express this mission.
- **Value statements** are grounded in values (traits or qualities that are considered worthwhile) and define how people want to behave with each other in the organization. They are statements about how the organization will value stakeholders and the internal community. Value statements describe actions that are the living enactment of the fundamental values held by most individuals within the organization.

A further element to these statements is that each Centre should ideally prepare a short organisational description or summary. This would comprise the following elements:

- A brief overview of the history of the organisation
- A description of the organisation's major programmes and services
- An overview of the major accomplishments and other highlights during the history of the organisation.

The advantages of following this guideline include:

- The common purpose of the Aarhus Centres is plainly defined
- Centres and stakeholders will have a clearer understanding of their role and function (and what they don't do)
- The strategic framework can be used for better definition of the programmes and activities of the Centres
- Measurement of achievement can be based against the vision and mission statements
- The strategic framework can act as a guide for a financing strategy or a core ingredient of a communication plan.

1.2 Options for Status and Institutional Set-up of an Aarhus Centre

The establishment of special Centres with the objective to facilitate the implementation of an international Convention is a rather innovative approach. By facilitating public participation and by providing a particular institutional platform, such Centres are on the

⁴ Susan M. Heathfield, Building a Strategic Framework: <http://humanresources.about.com/>

one hand set up to assist governmental bodies in fulfilling their duties as laid down in the Conventions. On the other hand, however, Centres need to be also designed in a way which allows them to provide for a bridging element between these governmental bodies and civil society. Hence, a number of complicated questions may arise while making a decision to establish an Aarhus Centre in a given country. Who may decide that its establishment is needed in a country or a region of a country? What should be the status of an Aarhus Centre? Should it be established as an independent legal entity or can it operate on the basis of a host organization? Should a host organization be governmental or non-governmental? The answers to the above questions predetermine the nature of Aarhus Centres, character and to some extent the scope of their activities.

Each institutional set-up of an Aarhus Centre has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, NGO-based Aarhus Centres, as a general rule, are more open to the public and oriented to engage in activities and services which are demanded by the public. NGO-based Centres may be seen to be more mission-led and thus more committed for implementation of the Convention, but they may have difficulties in building trust with government authorities who could perceive them as being naturally controversial. Governmental based Centres often assist relevant public authorities to perform functions related to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention. Being closer to the government may ease access to certain information, increase chances of sustainability and build trust in official circles, yet other stakeholders may question the Centres' impartiality. Obtaining the status of an independent legal entity may eliminate the above deficiencies but requires much more expenses for its establishment and operation.

The following guidelines are not intended to cover all possible options with regard to status and institutional set-up of Aarhus Centres. They are rather based on the lessons learnt from the previous practice of their development and provide guidance on how to identify better options for status and institutional set-up of an Aarhus Centre under existing circumstances.

I.2. Guideline: Official recognition of Aarhus Centres is necessary. As a rule, the status of an Aarhus Centre as a specialized institution should be recognized by a national environmental authority and/or local government, relevant environmental NGOs and other stakeholders and international organizations. It can be achieved by means of governmental or ministerial decrees, memoranda of understanding or agreements of parties that follow a consultative process with participation of all key stakeholders on establishment of the Aarhus Centre.

The Bylaws of the Aarhus Centre in Dushanbe, for example, define as its main goal assistance to the Republic of Tajikistan with the implementation of the Aarhus Convention. This document was approved by the order of Chairman of the State Committee on Environmental Protection and Forestry of 4th April 2005.

In Armenia, the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Ministry of Nature Protection and the OSCE office in Yerevan on 19th March 2002 laid down the legal basis

for establishment of the Aarhus Centre in Yerevan. The status of regional Aarhus Centres is defined on the basis similar agreements with participation of relevant regional governors.

I.3. Guideline: A separate legal entity is optional. Aarhus Centres may be established without necessarily acquiring the status of a legal entity. Environmental ministries, local governments, existing NGOs and universities can serve as host organizations for them. Under any institutional set-up, efforts should be put forward to guarantee the autonomous status of the Centre, and to ensure that it serves as a link between the government and the host organisation.

Most Aarhus Centres are small organizations with a limited number of staff members and financial resources. Often such institutions do not choose to become legal entities due to financial, administrative and other burdens that can accompany formal legal status. It may involve high extra costs that accompany formal legal status, e.g. registration, reporting to tax, statistical and other authorities, etc.

The reason for ensuring for a certain degree of autonomy from their host organizations is that the mission, functions, principles of organization of activities and management of such centres may not be fully compatible with the mission, functions and principles of their host organizations.

I.4. Guideline: Not-for-profit status. As a general rule Aarhus Centres should be non-profit organizations.

It is important to ensure that Aarhus Centres operate as non-profit institutions even when its host organization is for-profit, e.g. by stipulating non-profit goals of the Centre in its bylaws.

I.5. Guideline: Hosting through official agencies. Generally, environmental ministries or their subordinated organizations serve as host organizations for national Aarhus Centres. In case of regional Aarhus Centres, there might be a variety of host organizations, including regional offices of national environmental ministries, local governments, non-governmental organizations.

The hosting of regional Aarhus Centres might be more complicated than of national ones. At the beginning, there may be lack of interest in and understanding of the role and importance of Aarhus Centres by regional governmental organisations. Sometimes premises of regional departments of the national environmental authority might be

inappropriate for Aarhus Centres, e.g. remote location for visits by the general public, absence of reliable Internet connection, etc.

I.6. Guideline: Hosting through NGOs. The decision to establish an NGO-based regional Aarhus Centre and the selection of the host organization should be made in a manner that would prevent any potential conflict among NGOs. It may require consultations with local civil society organizations prior to making the relevant decisions or development of the Aarhus Centre on the basis of co-operation with generally recognized umbrella associations of NGOs.

The decision to choose an NGO to host an Aarhus Centre can provoke conflicts among local NGOs. However, this potential should not hinder Centres to consider such an option. In some cases there might be only one environmental organization in the region (e.g. in Khujand, Tajikistan) or one leading NGO which serves as an umbrella organization for citizens pursuing diverse public interests, including environmental protection (e.g. in Kurgan tube, Tajikistan).

1.3 Principles of organisation

Based on the expected values of the Aarhus Centres, related to their vision, mission, values and the overall spirit of the Aarhus Convention, there are a number of underlying principles of organisation that apply to all. The main principles are the following:

- Consistency with the principles of the Aarhus Convention
- Openness and easy accessibility of offices of Aarhus Centres to the public
- Free access to certain services and environmental information
- Activities based on a participatory approach
- Accessibility of information on the organisation
- Accountability and transparency.

They are summarised in the following six guidelines:

I.7. Guideline: Consistency with the Aarhus Convention. Operations and services by Aarhus Centres should be consistent with, and complimentary to, the basic principles and requirements of the Aarhus Convention.

The Aarhus Convention sets the international legal regime of access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. Therefore, at the minimum, Aarhus Centres need to ensure that their operations and services are not contrary to the basic principles and requirements of the Convention and many aspects of their activity should be addressed to the gradual improvement of the existing policy and legislative frameworks, as well as practical possibilities to use the public environmental rights found in the Convention.

The Aarhus Centres should follow the fundamental principles of the Convention as reflected in its Preamble and Articles 1 and 3. Among them are the Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment and Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. The first Principle states that: “Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.” Principle 10 states that “environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level.” From the practical point of view, both principles require Aarhus Centres to carry out their activities and provide their services according to the existing needs of citizens and the NGOs.

Another fundamental principle laid down in Article 3, Paragraph 9, of the Convention is the Principle of non-discrimination, according to which the public shall have access to information, have the possibility to participate in decision-making and have access to justice in environmental matters without discrimination as to citizenship, nationality or domicile and, in the case of a legal person, without discrimination as to where it has its registered seat or an effective centre of its activities.

Yet another fundamental principle of the Convention, set out in Article 3, Paragraph 9, provides protection to members of the public exercising their rights under the Convention (“whistle-blowers”). It ensures that “persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Convention shall not be penalized, persecuted or harassed in any way for their involvement.”

I.8. Guideline: Accessibility. Aarhus Centres premises need to be easily accessible for visits by NGOs and other representatives of the public within official working hours. Free, but regulated, access to computers and internet services should be provided, where possible.

Most of the existing Aarhus Centres are open for visits by non-governmental and governmental organizations, teachers and students from universities, environmental experts and activists and other representatives of the public. Nevertheless, in practice Aarhus Centres may face various problems in making their offices open and accessible for visitors, e.g. due to remote or out-of-the-way places/locations, very strict requirements on access of visitors of their host organizations, etc. This principle is of special importance while choosing the premise and office for an Aarhus Centre.

Some Aarhus Centres also promote the policy of free access to their computers and internet services for certain categories of visitors, e.g. NGOs. Normally, such free services can be provided with some limitations, for instance, by certain hours per week or month when an Aarhus Centre has enough office space, computers that can be used by visitors and unlimited access to internet.

I.9. Guideline: Free access to information. Open supply of environmental information to visitors, through the Internet, copying documents and via regular publications should be guaranteed.

At present, most of the Aarhus Centres follow the policy of free access to environmental information whenever possible and in practice they never charge for copying or for providing publications, CDs, video materials, etc. Some Centres ask for a small charge for copying documents and materials limited to their actual costs, e.g. when a number of requested printed copies is excessive. Such fees may be levied to ensure such expenditures of Aarhus Centres within limits of their budgets and prevent unnecessary copying by visitors.

I.10. Guideline: Participatory approach. The activities and the processes promoted by Aarhus Centres should be participatory in nature, . They should be in line with the relevant public participation provisions of the Aarhus Convention, the relevant decisions of its Meetings of the Parties and other Convention bodies; as well as the relevant national legislation

I.11 Guideline: Information accessibility. Aarhus Centres should ensure that information on their objective, functions, services and activities is accessible to the general public.

It is very important for any Aarhus Centre to make sure that its activities and services are known to their constituency, including NGOs, competent governmental bodies, mass media and universities. Various means can be used by Aarhus Centres to disseminate information on their activities, according to the local conditions and the resources available to them. This can include information boards, web sites, publications, information on TV and radio, video materials, etc.

For example, in Khujand, Tajikistan, the Aarhus Centre places and regularly updates the information on its organization, activities and services on the information boards located in public places. In Armenia, the Aarhus Centres' web site www.aarhus.am provides information on all Aarhus Centres in a standardized format, with the following subsections: memorandum, activities, board of experts, library and news announcements.

I.12. Guideline: Accountability. Aarhus Centres should be accountable to the representatives of their key stakeholders, including the NGOs and other representatives of the public.

As a minimum accountability requirement, Aarhus Centres need to have a properly established and actively operating board consisting of representatives of all key stakeholders. Boards should be entitled to receive and review regular and detailed reports on operations and finances of Aarhus Centres by relevant provisions of their bylaws. Also access to such reports might be presented to the general public. For example, the regional Aarhus Centre in Gyumri, Armenia made the annual reports on its operations and finances for 2008 publicly available through publication and the web site.

1.4 Organisational structure and governance of Aarhus Centres

The organisational structure of Aarhus Centres ought to enable them to achieve the strategic goals and objectives to organize their day-to-day functions and operations in an efficient and effective manner. A standard organisational structure of Aarhus Centres includes: a board that includes all key stakeholders and staff that includes the administrative staff, part-time experts, consultants, specialists, and volunteers. In most cases, the full-time staffing of Aarhus Centres is very limited and usually, it only consists of a manager.

Table 4: Sizes of Aarhus Centres by number of staff (according to the Independent Evaluation, 2008).

Number of staff	Number of Centres	Location
1	11	Armenia (Dilijan, Gavar, Goris, Gyumri, Tavush, Kapan, Vanadzor), Albania (Tirana), Azerbaijan (Baku, Ganja, Gazakh)
2	5	Armenia (Hrazdan), Albania (Skodra, Vlora), Kyrgyzstan (Osh), Belarus (Minsk)
3 and more	6	Armenia (Yerevan), Georgia (Tbilisi, Gardabani, Marneuli), Tajikistan (Dushanbe, Khujand)

I.13. Guideline: Operating and governance provisions to be formalised. The minimum provisions necessary for the operation and governance of an Aarhus Centre should be included in the organization's governing documents, such as bylaws, rules of procedure etc. Basic provisions on the status, structure and governance of a governmental Aarhus Centre may also be defined by a governmental act on its establishment, e.g. on the goal, status and main functions, subordination and host organization, governance structure, composition of board members.

I.14. Guideline: Governing bodies to be representative of stakeholders. Each Aarhus Centre should ideally, have a governing Board (Board of experts, Board of advisors) consisting of representatives of key stakeholders - such as civil society organizations, environmental ministries, parliamentarians, judiciary, local governments - with a clear

terms of reference and procedures of work. The Board sets policies and supervises the operations, activities and finances of the organization.

According to the Independent Evaluation of Aarhus Centres fifteen of the twenty-two reviewed centres have a governing board (board of experts, board of advisors). So far, many of them serve rather as advisory bodies and so their power and capacity would need to be strengthened in order to transfer them into real governing Boards. As a first step in that direction, board members should receive and approve periodic reports on the activities and finances of the Centre to ensure that they are consistent with the goals stated in its governing documents.

I.15. Guideline: Role of Aarhus Convention National Focal Points . In case of the national Aarhus Centre, the National Focal Point of the Convention should be involved in the governance and co-ordination of activities of the national Aarhus Centre, e.g., by means of membership or even chairmanship in the Centres' governing Board. The National Focal Points should also be actively engaged in the activities of the regional Aarhus Centres. Such involvement of national Focal Points builds a bridge between activities on implementation of the Convention by Aarhus Centres and governmental bodies.

1.5 Roles of different stakeholders

At present the key stakeholders for the development of Aarhus Centres are the following:

- environmental and related ministries;
- local governments;
- non-governmental organizations;
- OSCE/OCEEA and OSCE field presences;
- UNECE.

Guidelines on their relations are set below:

Environmental and other central ministries

I.16. Guideline: Environmental ministries as designated national authorities of the Convention. Environmental ministries, as the primary national authority responsible for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, can consider establishing and/or supporting the establishment and functioning of Aarhus Centres at national and regional levels.

Environmental ministries are actively involved in the establishment and activities of Aarhus Centres in the respective countries. They are founders or co-founders of most of the currently existing Centres on the basis of agreements (memoranda of understanding) with other organizations, e.g. OSCE field presences, local governments, NGOs. Active

involvement of national environmental authorities also facilitates the recognition of the status of Aarhus Centres as specialized organizations.

At the beginning of the process of development of Aarhus Centres, environmental ministries usually serve as host organisations for all national and some regional Aarhus Centres. It should also be foreseen that they install necessary administrative and financial arrangements for future funding from their central budgets for national and, to the extent possible, for regional Aarhus Centres. Allocations from government resources should be made to separately defined Centre budgets.

As a rule, within environmental ministries, there are focal points serving as designated officers for the goals of communication and implementation of the Convention. They fulfil the key role in facilitating communications concerning matters related to the Convention with its Secretariat and other bodies, interested organizations and persons, the implementation of three pillars of the Aarhus Convention as well as the initiation and commission of periodic national implementation reports. The regularly updated list of Focal Points of the Parties to the Convention is placed on the website of the Aarhus Convention: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/fp.htm>.

In case of a national Aarhus Centre, the National Focal Point of the Convention can be involved in governance and co-ordination of activities of the national Aarhus Centre, e.g. by means of membership or even chairmanship in the Centres' Governing Board. For example, the Convention's Focal Points in Albania, Armenia and Georgia are members of the Boards of the national Aarhus Centres. Such involvement of national Focal Points bridges and constitutes to the fostering of the relationship between the Centres and governmental bodies.

I.17. Guideline: Aarhus Centres as mechanisms for integration and co-operation.

Aarhus Centres may provide platforms for the integration and co-ordination of Convention related activities among a set of governmental bodies (not only Ministries of Environment, but also other governmental agencies) at the national and regional level. By ensuring for the representation of different governmental bodies in the governing Boards, Aarhus Centres can further enhance the integration process.

Involvement of other central governmental bodies should be considered by national and regional Aarhus Centres in accordance with the designated responsibilities and competencies of the government agencies (in particular competencies on collection and dissemination of environmental information, environmental decision-making and environmental enforcement).

Central governmental bodies with competencies on water, land, forestry, agriculture, energy, transport, health, mineral resources, etc. can possess significant amounts of environmental information and they are often decision-making bodies for decisions falling under Articles 6-8 of the Aarhus Convention. A range of institutions are responsible for environmental enforcement and review procedures falling under Article 9

of the Convention, including courts, ombudsmen, prosecutor's offices, police, environmental and nature resources inspectorates, administrative commissions, etc.

Local Government

I.18. Guideline: Ensure involvement of local governments as key stakeholders. The role and influence of local governments in the process of development of Aarhus Centres may significantly vary from country-to-country and it depends, *inter alia*, on the extent of their authority in environmental decision-making. In most cases, local governments should be involved as stakeholders into the process of development of regional Aarhus Centres, which, in turn, would set up conditions for their funding from local budgets.

I.19. Guideline: Local governments as hosting body. In case a local government indicates interest in establishing and maintaining a Centre in its region/province, it can serve as a host organization. In other cases, local governments could also be represented in the governing Boards of regional Aarhus Centres.

In Armenia, the regional branch of the state administration (marzpetarans) are signatories to Memoranda of Understanding on relevant regional Aarhus Centres, together with the Ministry of Nature Protection and the OSCE Office in Yerevan. They provide premises for offices of regional Aarhus Centres and cover their expenses on electricity and heating. Local governments and/or municipalities are represented in governing Boards of all regional Aarhus Centres established in Armenia.

Non-governmental organizations

I.20. Guideline: Involvement of NGOs in the governance of Aarhus Centres. The Aarhus Convention, being the key international legal instrument on public environmental rights, is also unique in terms of involvement of non-governmental organizations in various activities and processes implemented on the international, national and local levels. Ideally, non-governmental organizations should be actively involved in the establishment and management of national and regional Aarhus Centres, through representation in governing Board.

In 2009, the OSCE Centre in Astana, in co-operation with the Ministry of Environment of Kazakhstan, Regional Governorate of the Atyrau Oblast and the Ecoforum of NGOs of Kazakhstan (national umbrella association of environmental non-governmental organizations) established an Aarhus Centre in Atyrau to act as a co-ordinating body for implementation of the Aarhus Convention and facilitate the interaction of government bodies with the NGOs and public in general on the issues of environmental protection in the Caspian Region. that the NGO Ecoforum is a party of the Memorandum of

Understanding on the Caspian Aarhus Centre in Kazakhstan along with the other partners mentioned above.

I.21. Guideline: NGOs as Aarhus Centres hosts. Under certain conditions, such as a specific agreement by key stakeholders, the existence of the will and capacity to do it or the prevention of unnecessary competition with other organizations, a non-governmental organization or a coalition of NGOs can be chosen as the host organization for an Aarhus Centre in a certain region or province.

The modality of NGO-hosted Aarhus Centres is usually the case for regional Aarhus Centres. The first NGO-based Aarhus Centre was established in Khujand (Tajikistan) in 2005. The Aarhus Centres in Osh (Kyrgyzstan) and in Shkodra and Vlora (Albania) are also hosted by NGOs .

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

I.22. Guideline: Recognition of the current role of the OSCE. Since 2002, the OSCE has been supporting the establishment of Aarhus Centres in several countries, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Some of these Centres are supported through the ENVSEC Initiative. The OSCE also plays a key role in promoting the status of Aarhus Centres, as specialized institutions dealing with implementation of the Convention, through memoranda of understanding signed by environmental ministries and local governments when it is appropriate.

I.23. Guideline: New perspectives for the OSCE. As the number of Aarhus Centres is growing it becomes more and more important for the OSCE to facilitate the expansion and improvement of their activities in line with the requirements and strategic objectives of the Convention. The OSCE support should particularly target the following:

- assistance with the definition of the overall strategies and operational plans of the Aarhus Centres;
- facilitating exchange of experience and best practices through regional and sub-regional networking among Aarhus Centres;
- capacity building of existing Aarhus Centres through trainings on the implementation of the three pillars of the Convention, general organisational development and strategic planning.

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

I.24. Guideline: Recognising the overall role of UNECE. The Aarhus Convention was negotiated and adopted under the auspices of UN Economic Commission for Europe in 2003 at the Fourth "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in Aarhus, Denmark. Its governing body and its subsidiary bodies are serviced by the UNECE

Secretariat. Hence, the Centres need to keep abreast of the current international processes, activities and directions coming from the functions of the UNECE Secretariat.

The Meeting of the Parties is the main governing body of the Aarhus Convention and it comprises all Parties to the Convention. Currently regular meetings of the Parties take place every three years. The Working Group of the Parties oversees the implementation of the work programme for the Convention between meetings of the Parties. It has the same composition as the Meeting of the Parties itself but meets more regularly.

Other Convention's bodies include the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties, Compliance Committee, and three Task Forces on Access to Justice, Electronic Information Tools, Public Participation in International Forums. A Task Force on Public Participation will be established in the near future.

I.24. Guideline: Role of the Secretariat of the Convention. The Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention is a part of the UNECE Secretariat and helps the Parties to monitor the implementation of the Convention. The Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention also maintains the Aarhus Clearinghouse on Environmental Democracy to share good practices in environmental democracy and to promote the Convention's application. The Convention Secretariat has an important role in promoting the Aarhus Centres as partners in the implementation of the Convention; in linking them to the relevant Convention activities; in facilitating networking among Aarhus Centres; and in strengthening their capacities in the three pillars of the Convention.

The main tools for monitoring the implementation process of the Convention used by the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention are the preparation of synthesis reports on the basis of national implementation reports and compliance reviews done by the Compliance Committee (See also subsection Compliance Review, and the information on Clearinghouse mechanisms presented in the Guidelines (2.5))

2. Programme and Activities

This section of the document addresses possible thematic activities to be carried-out by Aarhus Centres. It starts with some aspects of strategic planning of their activities and followed by the specific guidelines on how to organize the following thematic areas:

- implementation of the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention (access to information, public participation and access to justice);
- major processes related to participation in the regime of the Aarhus Convention (preparation of periodic national implementation reports, compliance review, Clearinghouse mechanism);
- promotion of the Protocol to the Aarhus Convention (Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers);
- application of principles of the Aarhus Convention beyond the immediate scope of the Convention (public participation in international forums, implementation of the provisions on public environmental rights of various multilateral environmental agreements);
- the Aarhus Centres Road Map (a practical tool for development of the Centres' strategies and action plans).

2.1 Overall strategy

P.1. Guideline: Aarhus Convention is at the heart of the Aarhus Centres' strategy.

The overall strategy is determined by each Aarhus Centre independently. However, due attention should be given to ensure that the Aarhus Centre activities are in compliance with and contribute to the goal, principles and strategic objectives of the Aarhus Convention, through:

- facilitating the effective implementation of the Aarhus Convention
- contributing significantly to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being;
- promoting good and transparent environmental governance.

The Aarhus Centres Road Map serves as strategic analysis of the Strategy Plan for Implementation, and the organisational development of the Aarhus Centres. As such the development of an Activity Plan based on this document is recommended.

P.2. Guideline: Participatory process throughout the development of the Centres' strategy. The development of the overall strategy for Aarhus Centres should be based on a participatory approach. Depending on the issues under discussion, the development of the strategy may require the consultation with expert councils and the competence of the Boards/Councils, etc. For newly established Centres, it is important to involve all relevant stakeholders starting from the early stages of strategy development.

P.3. Guideline: Supporting National Implementation Plans. The Aarhus Centres should be actively involved and/or lead the development and implementation of a national plan for implementing the Aarhus Convention. .

2.2 Access to information pillar

P.4. Guideline: Supporting access to information. With regard to the information pillar, the activities of Aarhus Centres should be aimed at both, the improvement of “passive” access to environmental information, based on handling information requests to public authorities, and “active” access provided via its publication in various media sources, through internet, etc.

The Aarhus Centres, in terms of “passive” access, should propose ways of improvement of procedures and practices of providing requested environmental information to the public from public authorities. The major requirements for “passive” access to information are covered by the Article 4 of the Aarhus Convention. Aarhus Centres, however, might only be able to play a rather limited role in terms of implementation of this Article of the Convention due to the existence of official procedures for handling information requests by the public. In other words, national regulations might allow only the respective civil servants to handle such information requests. In such cases, it is important for Aarhus Centres to focus on how to improve legislation and practice of the handling of public requests for environmental information by public authorities, rather than to serve as a broker between the public and public authorities possessing environmental information (see below Table 5 for a listing of possible options).

Table 5: Possible activities and services: Article 4 of the Convention.

Provision	Obligation	Possible activities and services by national and regional Aarhus Centres	Expected positive influence
Article 4, para. 1	Requires public authorities to make available upon request	1) To analyze domestic legislation and practices of considering public requests for environmental information; 2) To assist in strengthening legislation regulating procedures of handling information requests and public access to environmental information; 3) To provide guidance on implementation of provisions of the Convention, national legal requirements and procedures in terms of requests of the public for environmental information; 4) To conduct trainings for public authorities on procedure of handling public requests for environmental information; 5) To conduct trainings for representatives of civil society organizations on issues of access to	Improved possibilities to get information without stating interest and in a requested form
Article 4, para. 2	Sets time limits for public authorities		Faster provision of information
Article 4, para. 3	Optional exceptions		Reduced number of refusals of requests for information
Article 4, para. 4	Optional exceptions and if they adversely affect certain interests		Reduced number of refusals of requests for information

Article 4, para. 5	Ensures that the information request will reach the appropriate public authority	information, including preparation and sending requests to public authorities in order to obtain environmental information; 6) To provide consultations to the public concerning the existing sources of environmental information, the system of public authorities possessing such information, the formulation of requests, etc.; 7) To deal with requests of the public to information possessed by the Aarhus Centres; 8) To serve as community access points and repositories of national and local environmental information; 9) To implement pilot projects addressed to access to certain types of environmental information, for instance, to improve opportunities to get documents in electronic form.	Increased public awareness of public authorities possessing environmental information
Article 4, para. 6	Ensures that even if some of the information requested falls under the exceptions, the remaining information will be made available		Reduced possibilities to treat requested information as confidential
Article 4, para. 7	Procedures for refusals		Improved possibilities to appeal refusals
Article 4, para. 8	Optional charges for information		Less costly provision of information

The “active” dissemination includes the provision by public authorities of public access to certain types and certain amounts of environmental information through its publications, public telecommunications networks, mass media, etc. The respective requirements are covered by Article 5 of the Aarhus Convention, and the Aarhus Centres can actively facilitate their implementation by Parties.

Table 6: Possible activities and services: Article 5 of the Convention

Provision	Obligation	Possible activities and services by national and regional Aarhus Centres	Expected positive influence
Article 5, para. 1	General obligations for Parties to ensure that public authorities collect, possess and disseminate environmental information	1) To analyze public needs in environmental information; 2) To assist in improvement/development of legislation concerning the collection, exchange, storage and active dissemination of environmental information by public authorities; 3) To provide guidance to various public authorities on environmental information that should be actively disseminated and how to provide public access to it effectively; 4) To facilitate access to available environmental information through various tools (web-site, information boards, publication of newsletters, etc.).	Increased volume and quality information collected and updated by public authorities
Article 5, para. 2	Practical arrangements for making information accessible	1) To make up lists, catalogues (registers) of environmental information; 2) To render consultative services on existing information sources; 3) To issue regular and thematic publications on the environment aimed at the public at large.	Increased public awareness on accessible information and availability of more user-friendly environmental information

Article 5, para. 3	Aims to ensure that information will eventually become available electronically	1) To open, maintain and up-date web-sites of the Aarhus Centres; 2) To establish various electronic environmental information data bases accessible to the public; 3) To place on web-sites national and regional state-of-the-environment reports, various international, national and local legislative and policy documents related to environmental protection;	Improved access to information through Internet
Article 5, para. 4	Requires state-of-the-environment reports	4) Promote public access to environmental information through web sites of environmental public authorities;	Improved access to information on the state of the environment
Article 5, para. 5	Requires the government to disseminate legislation and policy documents	5) On the basis of Aarhus Centres to open and support libraries containing international and national documents in the sphere of environmental protection.	Improved access to information on legislation, policy and international law
Article 5, para. 6	Applies to the public dissemination of privately held information	1) To promote the development of voluntary system of environmental labelling of products, processes and technologies; 2) To carry out explanatory work for consumers on voluntary environmental labelling.	Improved access to information through voluntary schemes of eco-labelling, eco-auditing, etc.
Article 5, para. 7	Requires the government to publish information concerning environmental decision-making and policy-making	1) State bodies should provide – via Aarhus Centres – information on implementation of the Aarhus Convention; 2) To provide, in particular through regional Aarhus Centres, information and consultation to the public concerning services related to environmental protection.	Increased awareness on activities of governmental bodies to ensure effective implementation of the Convention and public rights to the healthy environment.
Article 5, para. 8	Requires mechanisms for disseminating environment-related product information	1) To promote development of the system of obligatory requirements on environment related product labelling; 2) To develop and implement public awareness programmes on the mandatory environmental labelling.	Increased public awareness on the impact of products on human health and the environment
Article 5, para. 9	Concerns the development of national systems for maintaining information on pollution releases and transfers	1) To provide information and capacity building services on industrial pollution; 2) To raise awareness on the protocol concerning pollution release and transfer registers to the Aarhus Convention; 3) To assist in ratification and implementation of the protocol concerning pollution release and transfer registers. It is considered in more detail below under sub-clause 2.4.4 of the Guidelines.	Improved access to information on environmental pollutions

P.5. Guideline: Information pillar as a starting point for all Aarhus Centres. Newly established Aarhus Centres are recommended to focus their efforts and activities initially on the access to information pillar which forms the basis for the other two pillars of the Convention.

Aarhus Centres mostly start their activities within the access to information pillar. They have libraries of environmental information and publish books, brochures and bulletins on various environmental topics. Most of the Aarhus Centres in Albania, Armenia are still named as Public Environmental Information Centres although they also deal with the public participation pillar and to some extent the access to justice pillar.

P.6. Guideline: Geographical focus of activities on the access to information pillar.

National Aarhus Centres are advised to focus on issues of public access to environmental information held by national public authorities, whereas regional Aarhus Centres are recommended to aim at provision of access to environmental information held by the local authorities and regional departments of central ministries and agencies.

P.7. Guideline: Complementary character of the Centre's function for provision of information.

In the case of providing access to environmental information upon information requests from the public, such services by Aarhus Centres should be complementary to, and should not mitigate the obligations (in accordance with Article 4 of the Aarhus Convention) of relevant public authorities to provide public access to environmental information, and should not depreciate the pre-existing conditions for public access to environmental information.

Normally, Aarhus Centres may provide access to environmental information of which it is in possession. In certain cases, they can also assist with public access to information which is in the possession of public authorities and therefore improve its accessibility to the public. For instance, the processing of information requests through Aarhus Centres may enable a more rapid access to the requested information.

The Aarhus Centre in Minsk, Belarus, provides upon public request, access to the environmental information on: the state of the environment (water, ambient air, soil, and radiation), the activities of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection - plus its territorial departments and subordinate organizations - in oral, written and electronic forms. However, such services by the Aarhus Centre do not exclude possibilities to request this information directly from the ministry, its territorial departments or subordinate organizations.

P.8. Guideline: Information services should reflect both access and improvement aspects.

Services rendered by Aarhus Centres may include both the provision of public access to certain types of environmental information and certain data, as well as the improvement of certain aspects (features) of public access, such as reduction of periods for processing requests and provision of information in more user-friendly formats.

An important part of the activities of the Centres is to make environmental information more appropriate, user-friendly and oriented to the general public. Aarhus Centres in Khujand, Tajikistan, and Osh, Kyrgyzstan, utilize information boards in public places as primary means for dissemination of environmental information. This is appropriate in small cities where access to computer and internet services is very limited. As a simple and cost-effective tool, the boards have proved to be highly efficient in providing updated information to the general public. Several Aarhus Centres, such as the Aarhus Centre in Tirana, Albania, disseminate periodic environmental bulletins.

P.9. Guideline: Information services provided free of charge. The Aarhus Centres' information services should be provided free of charge whenever possible and levy only the costs of CDs or DVDs or of copying of a significant number of pages. Such an approach is, inter alia, supported by the advanced use of electronic tools for dissemination of environmental information.

2.3 Public participation pillar

P.10. Guideline: Public Participation activities of Aarhus Centres. The activities of Aarhus Centres on facilitating the implementation of the public participation pillar may relate to the following types of environmental decision-making processes:

- specific activities with a potentially significant environmental impact;
- plans, programmes and policies relating to the environment;
- preparation of executive regulations and/or generally applicable legally binding normative instruments relating to the environment.

The public participation requirements for those decision-making processes are subject of regulation by Articles 6-8 of the Aarhus Convention.

Activities and services of Aarhus Centres can be focused on assistance with implementation of the concrete obligations of the Parties under Articles 6-8 of the Aarhus Convention. Article 6 covers the requirements on public participation in decisions on specific activities (projects), e.g. on construction of large facilities, Article 7 – on plans, programmes and policies, and Article 8 – on legislation. The three tables below (7, 8 and 9) provide examples of possible activities and services which might be carried out by an Aarhus Centre to implement those obligations under the Aarhus Convention according to the local needs and its capacity.

Table 7: Possible activities and services: Article 6 of the Convention.

Provision	Obligation	Possible activities and services by national and regional Aarhus Centres	Expected positive influence
Article 6, para. 1	Requires Parties to guarantee public participation in	1) To assist in improvement of public participation procedures within regulations on environmental impact assessment and integrated pollutant	Application of public participation requirements in a

	decision-making with potentially significant environmental impact	prevention and control, state environmental expertise; 2) To develop guidance documents for public authorities, developers on public participation procedures; 3) To conduct trainings on facilitation skills and dialogue planning for government institutions, local administrations, NGOs, business community and investors; 4) To facilitate the EIA process by offering the services for information dissemination and platforms for public participation, where appropriate; 5) To promote the practice of public participation in decision-making on planned activity with potentially significant environmental impact, including organization of public hearings on such matters.	clear and consistent manner
Article 6, para. 2	Sets requirements for notifying the public concerned about the decision-making	1) To promote the notification of the public concerned about the decision-making procedure at its earliest stage; 2) To use possibilities to notify the public concerned, first of all, by regional Aarhus Centres.	Notification of the public concerned at early stage in adequate, timely and effective manner
Article 6, para. 3	Sets time-frames for public participation procedures within a decision-making process	1) To improve legislation regulating environmental impact assessment as well as state environmental expertise in terms of public participation; 2) To develop guidance documents for public authorities on public participation procedures.	Allowed adequate time-frames for public participation
Article 6, para. 4	Requires that public participation take place early in decision-making		Provision public participation possibilities at an early stage of decision-making
Article 6, para. 5	Encourages exchange of information between permit applicants and the public	1) To consult potential applicants on how to determine the interested public groups; 2) To assist in carrying out exchange of information between the applicant and the public on request for planned activity with potential significant environmental impact.	Holding discussions between applicants and the public concerned before applying for a permit
Article 6, para. 6	Requires public authorities to provide the public concerned with access to all information relevant to the decision-making	1) To consult the public concerned on how to obtain access to interested information; 2) To provide services to the public for to get free access to information relevant to the decision-making.	Availability for the public concerned of all information relevant to the decision-making.
Article 6, para. 7	Procedures for public participation	1) To consult the public on issues how to get opinions on decisions taken; 2) To organize and carry out public hearings, collection of written proposals from the public.	Allowed possibilities to submit comments in writing or at a public hearing
Article 6,	Parties must ensure	To consult appropriate public authorities on	Increased influence

para. 8	that decision takes due account of public participation	approaches how to register comments and proposals from the public, and keep records of public hearings in the final decision.	of the outcome of the public participation on decisions
Article 6, para. 9	Parties must be informed of final decision	1) To assist the public to get access to texts of final decisions, including their placement on web-sites; 2) Informing the stakeholders on the results of the EIA follow-up, where possible.	Improved possibilities to appeal the decisions taken
Article 6, para. 10	Public participation if activities are reconsidered or changed	To assist in carrying out public participation in case of reconsidered and modified types of activities.	Improved public participation in reconsidered decisions
Article 6, para. 11	Decisions on genetically modified organisms	1) To promote ratification of the Almaty amendment on genetically modified organisms to the Aarhus Convention ⁵ ; 2) To implement public participation in decision-making concerning the release of genetically modified organisms into the environment.	Improved public participation in decision-making on genetically modified organisms

Table 8: Possible activities and services: Article 7 of the Convention.

Provision	Obligation	Possible activities and services by national and regional Aarhus Centres	Expected positive influence
First sentence	Requires parties to provide public participation during preparation of plans and programmes relating to the environment	1) To advocate for the SEA and disseminate good practices on its implementation; 2) To promote public involvement into discussion of strategic environmental decisions taken by national or local public authorities including better notification; 3) To discuss plans and programmes related to the environment in Aarhus Centres, including discussions organized via public hearings, collection of comments, etc; 4) To provide platform for participatory local environmental and sustainable development action planning.	More transparent and fair framework for public participation during the preparation of plans and programmes
Second sentence	Sets time-frames for public participation procedures Requires public participation to take place early in process Parties must ensure that the plan or programme takes due account of public participation	1) To improve legislation regulating procedures of public participation in strategic environmental decision-making; 2) To develop guidance documents on procedures of public participation in strategic environmental decision making; 3) To consult public authorities on public participation procedures, approaches to registering comments and proposals submitted by the public and recording results of public discussion and reflecting it in the final decision.	More effective public participation with due account of the outcome of public participation in final decision
Third sentence	Requires the relevant public authority to	To consult on how to determine organizations and persons who may be involved in public	Proper identification of the participating

⁵ Adopted at the second session of the Meeting of the Parties in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The amendment has not yet entered into force.

	identify the participating public	participation procedures.	public
Fourth sentence	Public participation in preparation of policies relating to the environment	1) To promote the development of national and local environmental policies basing on public participation, including such promotion through the development of key documents of Aarhus centres; 2) Aarhus centres should carry out various raising awareness activities involving the public aimed at development and implementation of policies relating to the environment.	Broad application of public participation requirements in environmental policy-making

Table 9: Possible activities and services: Article 8 of the Convention.

Provision	Obligation	Possible activities and services by national and regional Aarhus Centres	Expected positive influence
First sentence	Requires Parties to promote public participation in the preparation of laws and rules by public authorities	1) To advocate for the SEA and disseminate good practices on its implementation; 2) To organize public discussion of draft laws relating to the environment, including public hearings.	Public participation at appropriate stage, and while options are still open
Second sentence	Sets elements of public participation procedures	1) To assist in improving legislation regulating public participation procedures in strategic decision-making; 2) To develop guidelines for procedures of public participation in strategic environmental decision-making.	More effective public participation
Third sentence	Parties must ensure that public participation is take account of	To consult public authorities on approaches of registering comments and proposals submitted by the public, and keeping the results of public participation and reflecting it in the final document.	Increased influence of the outcome of the public participation on decisions

P.11. Guideline: Facilitation of public participation processes. Aarhus Centres, particularly regional ones, may render certain services related to public participation in decision-making on planned activities with potential significant environmental impact, including: services on determination of interested public groups, services on notification of the interested public, providing access to environmental impact assessment materials, and providing platforms for public participation; as appropriate. However, such services should be facilitative and they should not substitute the fulfilment of obligations of public authorities in accordance with the Article 6 of the Aarhus Convention.

Currently, a number of Aarhus Centres carry-out activities on the public participation pillar. They can usually hold, in co-operation with the relevant authorities, public hearings on various environmental matters. For example, in 2007-8 the Aarhus Centre in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, hosted three major public hearings for projects dealing with waste management in Tashkomur, gold mining in Chatkal and a cement factory construction in

Kyzyl Kiya. The efficiency of these participatory processes encouraged the local government to make further use of the public hearing mechanism.

P.12. Guideline: Fee-based services should conform with the fundamental values of the Aarhus Centre. Aarhus Centres may render certain paid services related to ensuring public participation in decision-making on planned activities with potential significant environmental impact. However, such paid services should not contradict the mission and values of the organization, and the fee, conditions and procedures of taking the fee should be regulated by the board or other appropriate Aarhus Centre decision-making body.

In most of the countries, the costs associated with environmental impact assessment process, including those related to public participation procedures, are to be covered by the proponent of the specific activity with a potentially significant environmental impact. Therefore, such services of the Aarhus Centres may need to be financed by the proponent of the activity in question. In these circumstances, due attention is needed to avoid any potential conflict of interest with the mission and values of the organisation.

In case of strategic environmental decisions on programmes, plans, legislation relating to the environment, relevant services of Aarhus Centres can be financed through national and local budgets.

P.13. Guideline: Aarhus Centres as facilitator in the revision and development of environmental legislation, strategies and programmes. Aarhus Centres can facilitate the participatory development of draft laws, strategies, programmes and plans stipulating active public participation; for example, the development of local environmental protection plans or documents regulating public participation procedures.

The local environmental strategy and action plan for the city of Taboshar, Tajikistan was approved on 27th December 2007. Initiated by the Aarhus Centre in Khujand, the strategy and action plan formulation process was conducted in a participatory manner involving all stakeholders. The inhabitants of Taboshar identified and prioritized the environmental problems and suggested necessary measures for inclusion in the action plan.

P.14. Guideline: Aarhus Centres' role in public debates. Aarhus Centres can be actively involved in the organization of public discussions of plans, programmes and laws related to the environment, which are drafted by national and/or local public authorities. National Centres may provide such services for projects that are developed at the national level, whereas regional Centres can be involved in the organization of public discussions for regional and local level initiatives.

Public hearings are the primary mechanisms utilized by most of the Aarhus Centres contributing to public participation in strategic environmental decisions. They provide effective means of communication between governments and citizens, interest groups, businesses and other parties and get opinions from the public on proposed draft strategies, programmes, plans and regulations relating to the environment.

For example, on 30th November 2007 the Yerevan Aarhus Centre organized a public hearing on the draft Law on Hunting. This brought together the Ministry of Nature Protection, the National Academy of Science, members of the National Assembly, members of the Aarhus Centre Advisory Board, NGOs and the media. As a result of the extensive discussions and consultations that took place through the public hearing, the interest groups came up with over one-hundred proposals for further improvement of the draft law and over sixty of these amendments were incorporated into the final text.

2.4 Access to justice pillar

P.15. Guideline: Aarhus Centres and the promotion of Access to Justice. Based on the provisions of Article 9 of the Convention, Aarhus Centres should aim at carrying out activities (see Table 10 for examples) to ensure the improvement of access to justice for the public on three types of cases:

- on access to environmental information in accordance with the provisions of Article 4 of the Convention;
- on public participation in accordance with the provisions of Article 6 of the Convention; and
- on challenging acts and omissions by private persons and public authorities which contravene provisions of their national law relating to the environment.

Table 10: Possible activities and services: Article 9 of the Convention.

Provision	Obligation	Possible activities and services by national and regional Aarhus Centres	Expected positive influence
Article 9, para. 1	Provides review procedures relating to information requests under Article 4	1) To assist in improvement of review procedures relating to violation of rights of the public to access to environmental information; 2) To organize training workshops for judges, prosecutors, public authorities on issues of access to justice on cases relating to violation of rights to access to environmental information.	Improved access to justice with regard to public access to environmental information
Article 9, para. 2	Provides review procedures relating to public participation under article 6 and other relevant provisions of the	1) To promote the improvement of procedures of access to justice on cases relating to violation of rights to public participation in decision-making on the planned activity having the potential significant environmental impact; 2) To organize training workshops for judges,	Improved access to justice with regard to public participation in decision-making processes falling under article 6 of the

	Convention	prosecutors, public authorities and the public on issues of access to justice on cases relating to violation of rights to public participation.	Aarhus Convention
Article 9, para. 3	Provides review procedures for public review of acts and omissions of private persons or public authorities concerning national law relating to the environment	1) To promote the improvement of review procedures on cases relating to acts and omissions of private persons or public authorities concerning national environmental law; 2) To organize training workshops for judges, prosecutors and national authority on issues of access to justice in accordance with para 3 of Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention.	Improved possibilities for the public to enforce national law relating to the environment
Article 9, para. 4	Minimum standards applicable to access-to-justice procedures, decisions and remedies	1) To assist in determination of standards applicable to review procedures, use of remedies, costs related to its use, and to making decisions in the written form. 2) To organize training workshops for judges, prosecutors and state authorities on the above mentioned issues.	Availability of adequate and effective legal remedies More fair, equitable, timely and less expensive review procedures
Article 9, para. 5	Requires Parties to facilitate effective access to justice	1) To facilitate/co-ordinate legal consultations to civil society organizations and individuals on environmental rights, including the right on access to justice; 2) To provide information and guidance to the public on court procedures, administrative and judicial appeal possibilities; 3) To carry out training workshops for NGOs, lawyers and other representatives of the public on issues of access to justice on environmental matters; 4) To provide assistance mechanisms such as promoting public interest lawyers, providing list of lawyers, and acting as law clinics; 5) Establish and provide a database on court decisions in environmental matters.	Increased public awareness on access to justice on environmental matters

P.16. Guideline: Practical focus of Aarhus Centres on access to justice. Aarhus Centres' activities on the improvement of the legislative framework for access to justice on environmental issues should, *inter alia*, be focused on the following important aspects:

- Criteria for standing of representatives of the public to initiate each of the three cases stipulated by Article 9, paragraphs 1-3, of the Aarhus Convention, namely the cases about the rights on access to environmental information and public participation in decision-making, as well as the right to challenge violation of national law relating to the environment;
- availability of prompt and inexpensive review procedures, in particular with regard to access to environmental information;
- provision of adequate and effective remedies to representatives of the public, including injunctive relief;

- mechanisms to removal of potential barriers to access to justice, including financial barriers.

P.17. Guideline: Informing the public on review procedures. Aarhus Centres may carry out activities aimed at informing the public on administrative and judicial review procedures to protect environmental rights, including those falling under the three types of Aarhus cases (stipulated by Article 9). For that, different means can be used, including consultations of lawyers, preparation and disposal of special information materials and coverage of appropriate issues in mass media sources.

P.18. Guideline: Supporting the judiciary. Ideally, the activities of Aarhus Centres should be aimed at strengthening the capacity of judiciary, prosecutors and other governmental bodies to ensure better access to justice on the three types of Aarhus cases. Thus, Centres can take part in the development and publication of appropriate training materials, organization and carrying out trainings and workshops on access to justice matters.

According to the Independent Evaluation report, access to justice activities are the most weakly represented in the portfolio of the Aarhus Centres. However, some Centres have already carried out some activities on the third pillar of the Convention. For example, the Aarhus Centre in Tbilisi provides free legal consultations to individuals on issues related to the Aarhus Convention and offers trainings on environmental rights and obligations governed by national environmental legislation and the Aarhus Convention.

Trainings for judges and other legal professionals on the Aarhus Convention seem to be very important and conducting such activities could be one of the main tasks for the Aarhus Centres in promoting the access to justice pillar. In December of 2008, the OSCE Centre in Astana in co-operation with the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan published a handbook for judges on implementation of the Aarhus Convention. In addition to it, a training module has been developed to conduct trainings of trainers in 2009 and then further capacity building by co-ordinators of educational programmes from regional courts and future Aarhus Centres.

2.5 Possible participation in the Aarhus Convention procedures

Aarhus Centres can play a significant role in the process of implementation of the Aarhus Convention not only through the various activities and services related to the obligations of Parties under Articles 3-9, but also through actively being involved in some relevant procedures of the Aarhus Convention, such as the following:

- Preparation of national implementation reports;
- Review of compliance;
- Clearinghouse mechanism and its national nodes.

In all three procedures, the possible role by Aarhus Centres may vary significantly from country to country.

2.5.1 Preparation of national implementation reports

P.19. Guideline: Role of Centres in National Reports. Aarhus Centres should be considered as organizations that can significantly contribute to the process of preparation of national reports and should be invited to take part in the consultations on implementation of the Aarhus Convention at the national and local levels respectively. While ministries of environment are usually responsible for the preparation of national implementation reports, they may organize this work through Centres. Centres' possible contribution into this process can include:

- Gathering information to be included in reports;
- Drafting national implementation reports or their certain sections;
- Providing public access to draft national implementation reports for by organizing public/stakeholder consultations.

P.20. Guideline: Centres as drafters of national implementation reports. In case an Aarhus Centre is tasked by the relevant government agency to prepare a national implementation report, it is important to follow relevant guidance documents provided by the Convention Secretariat. As a rule, this work should be started with the identification of those issues to be reflected in the report (defining the content), followed by preparation of a first report for public comments, finalizing it by taking into account public/stakeholder comments and then preparing it for submission to the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention.

P.21. Guideline: Centres as facilitators of preparation of national implementation reports in a participatory manner. Aarhus Centres should promote public participation throughout the process of the preparations for national implementation reports, such as through the promotion of public access to draft reports and the facilitation of public/stakeholder consultations.

According to decision I/8 of the Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention, each Party should submit periodic national implementation reports in advance of every ordinary meeting of the Parties. For the second reporting cycle the deadline for their submission was set as 180 days in advance of the Meeting of the Parties in Riga. In 2007, the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee prepared the guidance document on reporting requirements with the aim of assisting the Parties in fulfilling their obligations with regard to reporting. This document is available in English, Russian and French at <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/Reports.htm>.

Parties to the Aarhus Convention are required by provisions of decision I/8 to prepare their reports while involving the public through a transparent and consultative process. The guidance document also contains a subsection explaining on how dialogue with the public should be ensured during the process of preparing the reports. It stresses the importance of providing an opportunity to the general public to be involved both at an early stage and throughout the consultation process.

The entire process of public/stakeholder consultations on a national implementation report can be organized by environmental ministries through Aarhus Centres. Also Aarhus Centres may initiate the process of public/stakeholder consultations on a draft national implementation report by requesting the Ministry of Environment to ensure appropriate public participation possibilities and to provide access to draft reports for the public. Furthermore, they can be instrumental in facilitating the process of preparation and submission of public comment on them and assist with their incorporation into the final version of the report.

In practice, Aarhus Centres in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Tajikistan were involved in the preparatory process for national implementation reports. For example, the Aarhus Centres in Armenia and Georgia published the draft national implementation reports on their web sites for public comments.

2.5.2 Compliance review

P.22. Guideline: Participation of Centres in compliance review. Aarhus Centres can contribute significantly to the Convention Compliance Mechanism in different ways, in particular, by:

- Disseminating information on it;
- Informing the public on cases related to their respective countries;
- Assisting the respective Parties with the implementation of decisions aimed at bringing them into compliance with the Convention.

P.23. Guideline: Raising public awareness on the compliance mechanism. Aarhus Centres should disseminate information on the Convention's compliance mechanism. This can include: distribution of information at the national and regional levels on specific cases reviewed by the Compliance Committee through thematic presentations at training seminars, workshops and other meetings on the Convention, and through guidance on its procedures and by putting such information on their web sites.

Compliance by Parties with the Convention is reviewed by the Compliance Committee, whose members are nominated by governments and environmental NGOs. It is mandated to investigate complaints against any Party by another Party, by NGOs or by members of the public. The Convention's Secretariat may also bring evidence of possible non-

compliance to the Committee's attention. Communication from the public is the most actively used prompt for the compliance review mechanism. Members of the public may communicate the following alleged non-compliance problems with the Aarhus Convention:

- A general failure by a Party to take the necessary legislative, regulatory or other (e.g. institutional, budgetary) measures necessary to implement the Convention as required under its Article 3, paragraph 1, in a manner which is in conformity with its objectives and provisions;
- Legislation, regulations or other measures implementing the Convention which fail to meet the specific requirements of certain of its provisions; and
- Specific events, acts, omissions or situations which demonstrate a failure of the State authorities to comply with or enforce the Convention.

Detailed information on the Aarhus Convention Compliance Mechanism is available at <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/compliance.htm>. It contains the information sheet, in English and Russian, which provides guidance on how members of the public can submit communications on alleged non-compliance with the Aarhus Convention to the Compliance Committee.

Aarhus Centres can provide assistance to citizens, NGOs seeking to ensure effective implementation and compliance with the Convention by the respective governments. For example, the Aarhus Centre in Tbilisi, Georgia, has provided expertise to the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) and Compliance Surveillance Council on the matters related to the then submitted communication by the NGOs to the Compliance Committee (reference number ACCC/C/2008/35).

P.24. Guideline: Assistance with the implementation of decisions of the Compliance Committee. Assistance of Aarhus Centres to the governments with implementation of measures addressed to specific cases of non-compliance with the Convention may include, *inter alia* services on:

- Facilitating dialogue with the public and various stakeholders on implementation of measures;
- Providing information and guidance on certain issues;
- Capacity building of public authorities.

P.25. Guideline: Implementation of decisions of the Compliance Committee in a participatory manner. Aarhus Centres should promote the overall implementation of measures addressed to Parties concerned to solve those problems of non-compliance in a transparent and participatory manner. It may involve, *inter alia*, the organization of public/stakeholder consultations on planning measures, and the preparation of progress and final reports on the measures taken by the Party concerned.

An important role of Aarhus Centres is to promote the processes of implementation of the Aarhus Convention in their countries in a participatory manner. It also relates to the implementation of measures addressed to specific cases of non-compliance with the Convention by the Compliance Committee or the Meeting of the Parties. So far, a number of decisions by the Compliance Committee and the Meeting of the Parties concerning compliance of certain Parties, with obligations under the Convention, require the implementation of recommended measures, e.g., the MoP decisions III/6a on Albania, III/6c on Kazakhstan, III/6d on Lithuania.

2.5.3 Aarhus Clearinghouse Mechanism

P.26. Guideline: Information support to the Clearing House Mechanism national nodes. Aarhus Centres may assist the respective governments by providing information on national and international information to national nodes of the Aarhus Convention clearinghouse mechanism.

P.27. Guideline: Centres as designated national nodes. A national Aarhus Centre may be requested, by the appropriate environmental ministry, to maintain a web site with information related to the nationwide implementation of the Convention and to serve as the national node of the clearinghouse mechanism.

The Aarhus clearinghouse mechanism has been launched to share good practices in environmental democracy and promote the Convention's application. It includes:

- UNECE secretariat assigned to service the Convention's information pillar (the "central node");
- Administrators designated by the Parties or Signatories to the Convention and responsible for compiling and communicating legal and practical information on issues related to the Convention at national level, linked to the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy (the "national node");
- Other stakeholders involved in the production and exchange of information related to the Convention's implementation; and
- Technical infrastructure underlying this information exchange, such as software, Internet sites and email.

Aarhus Centres can play an active role in providing information to national nodes of the Aarhus Convention Clearinghouse Mechanism. Furthermore, national Aarhus Centres staff can be designated to serve as contact points for providing the necessary information for the central node of the Convention's Clearinghouse mechanism and to disseminate information on it to the public. In December 2008, the Aarhus Centre Georgia was recognized by the Bureau of the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools as "Best National Node 2008".

2.6. Promotion of the PRTR Protocol

P.28. Guideline: Promoting the ratification of the PRTR Protocol. Aarhus Centres should play an active role in enhancing public access to information on environmental pollution, and promote the ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR Protocol) to the Aarhus Convention. The Aarhus Centres could particularly target the following::

- Capacity-building for governmental bodies, enterprises and civil society on PRTR;
- Support government in developing effective PRTR reporting tools and mechanisms;
- Raise awareness on PRTR of all relevant stakeholders;
- Sharing relevant information on international practice.

The PRTR Protocol requires polluting companies to provide information on their releases of certain polluting substances, such as greenhouse gases, dioxins and heavy metals, to a national register accessible and searchable through the Internet. The Protocol was adopted in 2003 at the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in Kiev and entered into force on 8 October 2009.

P.29. Guideline: Facilitation of design and set-up of the PRTR in a participatory manner. Aarhus Centres, in particular national ones, may assist governments in the design and set-up of national PRTRs and with increased public involvement in accordance with the Protocol's provisions on public participation. After the establishment of a national PRTR, Aarhus Centres should provide information and guidance to the public on how to get access to its data.

In 2008, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe published the Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Aarhus Convention. It is aimed to assist Parties in implementing the PRTR Protocol. The document is available in English, French and Russian under <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/guidancedocs.htm>

2.7 Activities on the implementation of principles of the Aarhus Convention beyond the immediate scope of the Convention

2.7.1 Almaty Guidelines on public participation in international forums

P.30. Guideline: Promotion of the application of the Almaty Guidelines. At their respective levels, national and regional Aarhus Centres should promote the application of the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus

Convention in International Forums. It may include activities on raising awareness of public authorities, non-governmental organizations and international organizations, providing information and guidance on practical application of the Almaty Guidelines.

The Second Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, 25-27 May 2005, adopted a set of guidelines on promoting the principles of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment (Almaty Guidelines). The primary purpose of the Almaty Guidelines is to provide general guidance to Aarhus Parties. The text of the Guidelines in English, Russian and French is available at <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/ppif.htm>.

P.31. Guideline: Review of progress with the Almaty Guidelines at the national level. National Aarhus Centres could review the progress of application of the Almaty Guidelines in their respective countries. Additionally, they can share information on good practices and submit comments relating to their experience with practical application to the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention.

Prior to the Third Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention in Riga Parties, Signatory States, other interested States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), interested international forums and other relevant actors were invited to submit comments to the Secretariat of the Convention - for consideration by the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums - relating their experiences regarding the application of the Guidelines. The Secretariat has received comments from a number of Parties and NGOs, which were included in a special document on the outcomes of the consultation process.

2.7.2 Provisions of other multilateral environmental agreements on public environmental rights

Aarhus Centres can play an active role in facilitating the implementation of the provisions of various multilateral environmental agreements that have implications towards the promotion of public awareness and public environmental rights. In particular, on issues related to: access to information, public participation, access to administrative and judicial review procedures, and challenging decisions affecting their environmental rights.

P.32. Guideline: Specific services relating to public environmental rights for other MEAs. Aarhus Centres, particularly national ones, will co-operate with designated national authorities and focal points of various multilateral environmental agreements that contain provisions on public awareness and public environmental rights.

This approach will enable Aarhus Centres to develop plans and carry out certain activities and services tailor-made for the specific needs of public awareness and educational programmes; and ensure the wide availability of information on and a participatory decision-making opportunities related to various multilateral environmental agreements.

The table below provides information on those provisions on public awareness, access to information, public participation and access to justice under various multilateral environmental agreements. It also includes examples of activities and services relating to implementation of those obligations that can be carried out by Centres.

Table 11: MEAs and the possible role for Aarhus Centres.

Multilateral environmental agreement	Provision on access to information or public participation	Obligation	Possible activities and services by national and regional Aarhus Centres
UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context	Article 2	Requires to provide public participation opportunities in transboundary EIA	To assist with development of the national procedure for public participation in a transboundary EIA
	Article 3	Sets requirements on notification of the public about decision-making	To promote public participation in transboundary EIA by offering the services for information dissemination and providing platform for public participation, where appropriate
	Article 4	Gives opportunities for the public to submit comments to the EIA documentation	To conduct trainings and consultations for the public authorities and NGOs on procedure of public participation in transboundary EIA To provide public access to information about relevant decision making process on web sites To collect comments from the public (through consultations, public hearings etc.) and submit them to the relevant public authorities
UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes	Article 16	Requires to make information on transboundary waters publicly available Requires to provide information for inspection free of charge and copies for reasonable fee	To maintain data bases and registers on transboundary waters To provide consultations to the public on the existing sources transboundary waters, the system of public authorities

			<p>possessing such information, the formulation of requests, etc.</p> <p>To disseminate relevant information through web sites, bulletins, information boards and other printed and electronic products</p>
UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents	Article 9	<p>Ensures public access to relevant environmental information</p> <p>Provides public participation opportunities in relevant procedures</p> <p>Provides to natural or legal persons with access to relevant administrative and judicial proceedings</p>	<p>To provide with public access to information systems and data bases and on trans-boundary effects of industrial accidents</p> <p>To assist the public with requests for the relevant information from the public authorities and companies/investors</p> <p>To put the relevant data and information about procedures on web-sites, disseminate it among the public concerned (through delivery lists, bulletins and other mass media)</p> <p>To consult the public representatives on issues how to take part in relevant procedures of decision-making</p>
Convention on Biological Diversity	Article 13	<p>Requires proactive dissemination of information on biodiversity</p> <p>Promotes cooperation in developing educational and public awareness programmes</p>	<p>To disseminate the information by different printed products and electronic tools</p> <p>To maintain and provide access to data bases on biodiversity</p> <p>To participate in topical networks and discussion lists, educational and information programmes and projects, events</p> <p>To consult how to develop thematic educational and public awareness programmes</p>
UN Convention to Combat Desertification	Article 19, para. 3	<p>Promotes cooperation in undertaking and supporting public awareness and educational programmes</p>	<p>To join topical networks and discussion lists, educational and information program and projects, events</p> <p>To provide with consultation on how to develop public awareness and educational programmes on combat desertification</p> <p>To highlight topical issues on</p>

			web-sites, bulletins and mass media
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	Article 6	Requires Parties to promote and facilitate: (i) the development and implementation of educational and public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects; (ii) public access to information on climate change and its effects; (iii) public participation in addressing climate change and its effects and developing adequate responses.	To provide with consultation on how to develop public awareness and educational programmes on climate change To develop thematic educational and training courses for schools and universities To provide consultations to the public on how and where get information on climate change To carry out trainings and consultations on how to participate in relevant procedures of decision-making
Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context	Article 3	Requires Parties to provide assistance and support to the public to exercise their rights on participation in SEA	To conduct trainings and provide consultations to the public and authorities on the SEA procedure
	Article 5	Provides opportunities for public participation in the screening of plans and programmes	To place on web-sites plans, programmes and relevant information including announcements on the SEA process To consult the public on how to take part in the screening of plans and programmes To collect (through consultation, public hearings etc.) comments on plans and programmes, and submit them to the authorities
	Article 8	Sets requirements on the public participation procedure in SEA	To conduct trainings for governmental bodies on public participation requirements in SEA To assist with development of relevant procedure
	Article 10	Requires to inform and give possibilities to forward public opinions on draft plans, programmes	To put on web-sites draft plans and programmes, collect comments on them (through public hearings, consultations with the public, etc.) and submit to the authorities
	Article 11	Ensures informing the public on final decisions	To assist relevant governmental authorities with informing the public on final decisions through publications on web sites, periodic newsletters, etc.

Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes	Article 9	Requires to enhance public awareness	To assist with development and implementation of public awareness programmes on the importance and the relationship between water management and public health, relevant rights of the public
	Article 10	Requires public authorities to make information available upon requests Requires to provide information for inspection free of charge and copies for reasonable fee Ensures making information publicly available through publication	To provide consultations to the public on the rights and entitlements to water and corresponding obligations under private and public law how and where get information To promote development of integrated information systems on water and public health and public access to them To provide consultations to the public and public authorities on procedure of handling requests for water and public health information To assist the public with access to information on water and public health issues through thematic publications, web sites, mass media
Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biodiversity	Article 23	Promotes and facilitates public awareness and education programmes Requires public consultations in decision-making processes	To assist with development and implementation of public awareness and educational programmes on GMOs To promote labelling of GMO products To assist with development of public participation procedures in decision-making on GMOs To carry out trainings and consultations on how to participate in decision-making on GMOs
Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	Article 10	Requires to ensure that the public has access to information on POPs, e.g. through possible establishment of information centres at national and regional levels Requires development and implementation of educational	To serve as information centres at national and regional levels To assist relevant governmental bodies with establishment and maintenance of data bases on POPs, dissemination of information through mass media, user-friendly publications

		and public awareness programmes Requires public participation in relevant activities	To assist with development and implementation of educational and public awareness programmes on POPs To assist with involvement of the public in relevant activities on POPs
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2.8. The Aarhus Centres Road Map

P.33. Guideline: Road Map provides guidance for further development of Aarhus Centres. The Road Map provides for a practical tool for new and existing Aarhus Centres and is designed to improve the development of their strategies and action plans, in particular to define their activities:

- Supporting achievement of the Aarhus Convention strategic objectives;
- Strengthening their performance, efficiency and impact.

Planned activities should be provided with indication of time-frames, possible partners, needed resources and performance indicators.

P.34. Guideline: Road Map used as tool to plan Aarhus Centre activities. The Centres can utilise the Road Map as a basis of their activities. As such, Aarhus Centres may focus on all or a part of suggested types of activities; though specified according to the local needs and capacities and on the support of those relevant components of the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan found within the Road Map.

P.35. Guideline: Road Map utilized as a tool to strengthen performance, efficiency and impact of Centres. While developing the various activity or action plans, Aarhus Centres should additionally consider the Road Map as a basis for reporting their performance; this should be done by setting indicators of achievement (see Section 3., Measurement of Impact below).

The Road Map for Aarhus Centres was developed by the OSCE Secretariat and discussed at the Aarhus Centre Meeting (22-23 January 2009, Vienna). It identifies the entry points and activities by the Aarhus Centres to support the relevant components the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan (2009-2014) that was adopted at the Third Meeting of the Parties held in Riga on June 11-13, 2008. In addition to the thematic issues the document defines the actions to strengthen the performance and efficiency of the Aarhus Centres.

See Annex II for the full Road Map document.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a need to enhance the monitoring and evaluation procedures for the Aarhus Centres. The following guidelines set out ways to address this perceived need.

M.1. Guideline: Common Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework. All Aarhus Centres will need to follow a similar framework for the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of their activities and accomplishments. This framework will enable progress to be measured across the Aarhus Centre Network and to enhance visibility of the Centres' activities and results achieved. In addition, the impact of the Centres work should be reported to their Boards, the Centre Network, OSCE and other relevant stakeholders.

A suggested Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework is set out in the notes below and some templates for recording indicators can be found in Annex III. Essential guidelines for each of the three main stages of this framework are given below; as are five core Indicators for use by the Aarhus Centres.

M.2. Guideline: Continuous monitoring of activities and development. Aarhus Centres are required to monitor their activities and development on a continuous basis. At the minimum this monitoring system should be structured to annually measure the Centres activities within the frame of the Aarhus Centres Road Map and the objectives expressed therein.

Aarhus Centres will be expected to select those relevant parts of the Road Map that will comprise their own objectives. Centres should elaborate those activities (Action Plan) that it will carry-out to achieve the selected objectives. Objectives from both sets of Road Map objectives, thematic and organisational, should be selected. As such only the attainment of Road Map objectives that are appropriate and relevant to each individual Centre will be monitored.

Indicators of achievement will need to be elaborated by the Centres for each objective and associated activities. Centres will need to devise and set down indicators that enable measurement of their effectiveness, efficiency and impact in attaining these objectives. Therefore measurement from both quantitative and qualitative aspects is essential.

M.3. Guideline: Evaluation systems. All Aarhus Centres should put in place a system to evaluate the impact of their activities and their progress towards achieving their aims. This evaluation should be viewed primarily as a learning exercise.

A similar framework for evaluation should be followed. It is recommended that the evaluation be simple and focussed, as Aarhus Centres are small organisations with finite staff and resources. Essentially the evaluation should reflect the information gathered through the monitoring process, but also the views of stakeholders and constituents. Therefore it is recommended that evaluation information should be gathered through three key techniques: direct measurement, stakeholder surveys and focus groups.

The evaluation process should result in an Evaluation Report (a suggested format is given in Annex III) Aarhus Centres should demonstrate how they have or will react to the results of the Evaluation Reports.

M.4. Guideline: Reporting processes set-up. Aarhus Centres are expected to report the results of their evaluations to relevant stakeholders. Evaluation reports should be made publicly available. An annual Aarhus Centres Network meeting would be the principal place for reporting and discussion of performance. A suggested structure for the Centres evaluation report is given in Annex III. In addition the results of the evaluation should be spread to Aarhus Centre boards, stakeholders and constituents through appropriate mechanisms.

M.5. Guideline: Basic Impact Indicators. Aarhus Centres should, as a minimum, use the following five indicators for measurement of their impact. The methods of measurement of these should be adapted by each Centre according to their programme:

Table 12: Suggested basic impact indicators for Aarhus Centres.

Impact Indicators	Information gathering (type, method, period, source)
Assisted government authorities in fulfilment of obligations and duties under the Aarhus Convention through a commonly-agreed role or activities.	Quantitative: Qualitative:
Measurably raised public awareness of their rights under the Aarhus Convention from the previous year.	Quantitative: Qualitative
Substantially increased available environmental information to the wider community through appropriate information services.	Quantitative: Qualitative:
Successfully brought together different stakeholders in public hearings relevant to the Convention.	Quantitative: Qualitative:

Demonstrates the capacities of stakeholders it has enhanced to carry-out their role within or to utilise the Aarhus Convention.	Quantitative: Qualitative:
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An important element in streamlining the work of Aarhus Centres is to ensure that they are all working towards similar aims or objectives. Within these Guidelines there are a variety of procedures, processes or policies put forward which support this. However, monitoring and evaluation, and the associated reporting of the results of that, are crucial as they will enable Centres to assess the quality and impact of their work against their specific action plans and their overall strategic direction (the Aarhus Centres Road Map). For this the setting of indicators of achievement of these aims and objectives (performance criteria) is required.

The devising, setting down and agreeing on commonly-based performance criteria, and associated processes, are an important step proposed in these Guidelines. Such criteria will ensure that the Centres and their stakeholders know what is to be expected of them and whether they are achieving their aims. These criteria – defined herein as indicators of achievement – need to be integrated into a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework. However, such a framework needs to be elaborated in-line with the overall purpose, role and activities of Centres. Because of that it is suggested that the main expression of the Centres strategic objectives – the Aarhus Centres Road Map – be the basis for measurement of their performance.

However, both monitoring and evaluation are more than pure measurement of performance and are also geared towards learning from what Centres are doing and how they are doing it in order for them to make future improvements. Initially, it is important to clarify what is meant by monitoring and evaluation:

- **Monitoring:** Systematic method of collecting appropriate information/data and of checking whether project/programme activities and outputs correspond to the objectives/approved work programme and verifying the progress made.
- **Evaluation:** using the information/data collected through monitoring, complemented by primary (e.g. survey) and secondary (e.g. statistics) sources of information, to draw conclusions or lessons about the efficiency, effectiveness, progress and impact of project/programme activities).⁶

There can be various degrees of complexity in measurement – and thus the depth of evaluation - of the Centres work. These go from measurement, through indicators, of outputs through outcomes (results) to the resulting impact. The appropriate level used will depend on the activity being monitored and evaluated.

⁶ Workshop notes: Self-Monitoring and Self-Evaluation for NGO Projects. PHARE Partnership Networking Conference. Thessaloniki, Greece, 23-24 June, 2000.

Therefore, indicators can only be defined once there has been proper planning against which to assess progress and achievements. While many Aarhus Centres may work towards attaining the same objective as described in the Aarhus Centres Road Map, the method or activity will be different depending on the local requirements and conditions or the resources that are available. Consequently, the indicators used to measure the level of achievement will also have to be different.

Thus, the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Centres includes a system for developing indicators as part of the monitoring system. Indicators are variables and can be quantitative or qualitative in scope, but the method of measurement must be defined at the beginning. The process recommended through these guidelines is the following:

- 1) A responsible person in each Centre should be identified and assigned.
- 2) All Aarhus Centres will be required to select those objectives from the Aarhus Centres Road Map that they will work on. It should be remembered that the objectives set out in the Road Map either focus on the thematic work of the centres (Part A) or on the organisational development level (Part B). The method for deciding on the target objectives should involve the Board of the Aarhus Centre concerned and key stakeholders as necessary.
- 3) The activities to be carried-out under the selected objectives should then be elaborated in terms of: actions, outputs/expected results, timing and required resources. In practice, this should be in the form of an action, or programme, plan. It should be recalled that the activities defined within the Road Map are labelled as 'indicative' and individual Aarhus Centres may develop different activities to attain each objective.
- 4) Once activities have been defined, then the Centre will have to set out the various indicators that will be used to determine performance of the activities and the attainment of the objective. The indicators set should ideally refer to performance from various perspectives: efficiency, effectiveness and impact, how far the objective has been attained and what is the progress of the activities (see the box below for more on the setting of indicators). The use of both quantitatively and qualitatively-based indicators for this is recommended, especially as it will help to define the method for gathering and analysing data.
- 5) Periodically, information required by the indicators will need to be gathered. The period, type, source and method for gathering information to be collected should also be set out.

Setting Indicators of Achievement

For monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework proposed for the Aarhus Centres, the setting of appropriate indicators is critical to its success and credibility. Classically, indicators are set at different levels, such as for objectives, activity or results. Within this framework, the indicators to be set by the Centre's focus on the activities they will do to attain the objectives of the Road Map. The purpose of this process is to evaluate the impact of the Centres, including their efficiency and effectiveness, in carrying-out their work and achieving the set objectives. As such it is suggested that for each

objective/activity set there are indicators that help to determine this.

In practice, setting indicators can be difficult depending on the type of activity or objective to be measured. Ideally the objectives set out in the Aarhus Centres Road Map conform to the **SMART** model. That is being: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound. If they are then the setting of appropriate indicators will be more straight-forward. Whatever is the situation, under each objective/activity set a variety of indicators should be determined, three main types are foreseen:

Output Indicator: A simple measurement of activity, such as number of information requests processed.

Outcome/Result Indicator: Measuring the outcome or result of the activity, integrating value measurements such as increases or improvements as a result of the activity. As an example: increase in public information requests answered on time as a result of a new service or its promotion.

Impact Indicator: Showing the eventual consequence of the activity. It is sometimes problematic to prove that change is due to a certain project and different impacts might occur at different times (so long- and short-term effects should be considered). As an example: improved involvement of specific organisations, sectors or target groups in public participation processes.

In the setting of the indicators the method for measurement (quantitative, qualitative or both) should also be thought out. Simply put, how will it be shown/demonstrated in practice and what data will be gathered? This is important for the evaluation process later on.

A simplified way of recording the results of these steps is given in the accompanying Action Plan Summary Table in Annex III.

Allied to the monitoring part of the proposed framework is the actual evaluation process itself. It is recommended that the evaluation made should be selective in scope (as opposed to comprehensive) and as simple and straightforward as possible. Not least this is to limit the costs and staff resources spent on this exercise. As mentioned under the monitoring section it is recommended to designate one person in each Centre to organise the evaluation process and to collect/collate results that match the indicators that have been set for each objective/activity set.

There are many methods for gathering and analysing the information required and the evaluation of them. Three key methods are considered for the evaluation of Aarhus Centres:

- **Direct Measurement:** gathering quantifiable of classifiable data. Usually this is recorded internally on an ongoing basis. Examples include: number of information requests, or financial costs. – Quantitative.
- **Stakeholder Surveys:** Centres can consider gathering data through surveys or opinion polls of stakeholders/constituents or by asking Centres service users to fill

in a questionnaire (such as a satisfaction survey). – Quantitative and/or Qualitative.

- **Focus Groups:** made up from key stakeholders used to analyse specific/complex issues, identify attitudes and set priorities. – Qualitative.

These three methods will ensure that both quantitative and qualitative information can be gathered. Each method will need to be linked directly to the indicators set during the monitoring design process. Because of this it is difficult to prescribe the sorts of data and questions to be researched in this process. For this reason a column in the action plan summary (information gathering) is dedicated to this.

The following process should be considered for the implementation of the evaluation:

- **Pre-Study:** Select person(s) responsible for the evaluation process; formulate the study methodology and plan of implementation.
- **Data Collection:** gather the information needed for each objective and activity set (direct measurement and stakeholder surveys); ensure information is collected/collated for all objectives and activities of the Aarhus Centre.
- **Data Analysis:** check, analyse and interpret the data gathered, present and discuss the findings with key stakeholders (focus group); prepare conclusions and recommendations.
- **Reporting:** present conclusions and recommendations in a report and disseminate the results (see below).

With regard to reporting the Guidelines concentrate on the dissemination of the evaluation. The reasoning behind this is that Recommendation 8 of the Independent Evaluation was that Annual Meetings of the Aarhus Centres be held in order to “share information on progress achieved and future plans are shared with a variety of stakeholder.” As such the focus of the evaluation reports should concentrate on two principal audiences: the Aarhus Centre’s own Board (and key local stakeholders) and the international donor/stakeholder community. These audiences represent the constituents that will have most interest on the impact of the Centres and therefore the most influence on their future sustainability.

It is recommended that Centres prepare an evaluation report at least annually. This might be part of the preparation of usual annual reporting or could be timed according to the proposed Aarhus Centres meeting or other management/board meetings. Naturally, an appropriate timing for production of these reports should be devised so as to reduce workloads.

A possible structure for the Centres evaluation report is given in Annex III. While this report format may seem laborious, a Centre, by addressing the issues covered within this format, will be sure to bring out the key issues behind its performance and impact.

Whatever is decided, such reports could be a significant subject within the proposed annual Aarhus Centres meetings, comprising evaluation of performance and being useful

prompts for future planning. Possibly an overall report for the Aarhus Centres Network could be compiled from these reports. Such a report would have its use for management and development functions, but also for communications and outreach purposes.

The spreading of the results of the monitoring and evaluation do not have to be limited to the proposed report. There are other methods where these materials can, and should, be further disseminated. These include: preparing summaries/factsheet summaries with descriptions of activities or projects, conclusions and recommendations; publishing results in their annual report; developing thematic reports, with presentations of themes and examples from special studies; placing materials (activities and results) on their website, presenting the results through seminars, conferences, workshops or PR events; and discussing results with stakeholders. In this way, the Centres will demonstrate that they have a healthy, pro-active regard for their own accountability towards their stakeholders and constituents. Such dissemination is an integral part of the Communication Plan.

4. Resource and Development Requirements

Aarhus Centres should make, at least annually, an assessment of the resources they require to carry-out their programme. This will essentially be based on a series of plans and budgets that defines the required resources, both financially and materially. Centres will need to make an assessment of the budget required for their operation and planned activities, including costs of new developments. Human resource plans (internal and external) and infrastructure needs will be a part of this calculation, as will any investment in capacity building. To find the financial resources to cover the planned resource requirements a financing strategy should also be developed. The main elements to be considered for this are described in the associated guidelines below.

Within the scope of the Independent Evaluation, the review considered resources mainly on the source of the finances that supported the operation of the Aarhus Centres. Other than defining the staffing levels, no other type of human or infrastructure resources was assessed. In addition, there is no evaluation of the resource requirements (in staffing and infrastructure) versus the activities or programme of the Centres. Also there has been no formal assessment of the training needs against required competencies of Centres staff.

Within the various memoranda between OSCE and the countries on the set up of the Aarhus Centres, there has been some definition of the resources to be made available by the various parties. This includes the location of the centre, and thus the accommodation provided; the equipment and furniture; publications and materials; website and internet costs; and provisions for employees. This description is useful in defining the basic infrastructure needs of the centres and the staff levels foreseen. However, the further elaboration of the Centres' activities and professionalization may make further demands

Regarding the actual development needs, in terms of infrastructure and capacity building, this has to be defined individually. However, during the Aarhus Centres meeting held in Vienna in January 2009 each Centre highlighted some infrastructural and capacity challenges:

- **Limited human resources:** Several have only one staff member and are thus under-staffed for their expected role.
- **Knowledge training needs:** Staff trainings are required, to build them as established experts. One notable area mentioned was for implementation of the third pillar, which meant that the training of staff on environmental law is requested.
- **Skills training needs:** Centre managers/coordinators have a multitude of tasks; as such they are required to have a wide-range of skills. Those areas of training need expressed by Centres were: resource optimisation, financial management, mediation and facilitation.
- **Limited technical capacities:** such as the Centres' website or for the creation of databases.
- **Extension of activities:** plans to open local areas are unrealistic without the

required resources.

This list is thus an indication of the development needs identified by the Centres themselves. Further elaboration is therefore required, guidance on how to approach this are given in the following sections.

4.1 Human Resources

4.1.1 Staffing Requirements and Key Competences

R.1. Guideline: Human resources planning. Aarhus Centres will need to make an assessment of their staff requirements against their role and function, defined via their planned activities. Within the activity plan the staff requirement is defined for each activity. When added together the human resource requirements (internal and external) can be determined. This is a part of the Resources Assessment and Plan. Each position thus defined should have a 'job description' that follows a standard basic structure. From these the key competencies for the various positions can be set out.

An example of how to frame this is given in Annex V. In addition staff performance may also be addressed.

The Independent Evaluation stated that many of the Aarhus Centres have only one staff member. Though they tend to be the locally based ones, as such a number of two-to-four appears to be a standard number to fulfil their current activities . Several key positions can thus be identified:

- Aarhus Centre Manager or Co-ordinator
- Project Manager(s) or Officer(s)
- Office Assistant/Administrator.

Other possible positions, depending on the activities of the Aarhus Centre could be: information expert, IT expert, accountant/book-keeper, legal expert, and trainer. Some job positions can be covered by external people (such as the accountant) or volunteers. Volunteering is a realistic option and might involve traditional volunteers (such as students or Peace Corps) to contributions in time from NGOs, professional services from businesses or seconded staff from the government.

The costs of this staffing will depend on the market price for such people in each country and the status of the Centre. So, it would be difficult to estimate ranges of salaries and costs of human resources.

All positions should have a job description that would cover the duties, responsibilities, required qualifications, and reporting relationships of a particular job. They should be based on objective information obtained through job analysis, an understanding of the competencies and skills required to accomplish needed tasks, and the needs of the

organisation's work. They should comprise: position title and relationships with other positions (hierarchy and supervisory roles); tasks/functions and responsibilities, knowledge and skills needed; and working conditions, tools, and equipment used.

Ideally competencies for such positions will need to be devised in order to ensure that the correct staff is hired and that training is focussed appropriately, by adapting competencies into learning objectives. Competencies are those abilities that are needed to be able to carry out a particular job or function, while the job description lists the tasks and responsibilities. A suggested approach for framing competencies is given in Annex V.

In the long-run a human resource policy would contribute to a better assessment of Centres professional needs and a shared understanding of the staff responsibilities and work objectives. This would form a sound basis for staff management and performance appraisal.

4.1.2. Capacity Building Needs

R.2. Guideline: Capacity building needs assessment and planning. Aarhus Centres should undertake a regular assessment of their capacity building requirements (as opposed to capacity building they do within the thematic objectives) and formulate a plan for sourcing and carrying-out its findings. It is a component of the Resource Assessment and Plan, but is also an element of the organisational objectives of the Road Map and that of the overall Activity Plan.

Such an assessment would be based on a structured process (see Notes below) and on the training needs of the individual staff members identified through the competencies required (see 4.1.1 above).

Objective B.2 of the Aarhus Centres Road Map states that: Capacities of Aarhus Centres strengthened in order to better respond to the challenges in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention. The corresponding activity (B.2.1) is: Identify capacity-building needs of the Aarhus Centres' staff and conduct trainings at the national and regional centres. The plan will be incorporated into the overall Activity Plan.

A simple training needs assessment framework is given in Annex V as part of the proposed Resource Assessment. This can be used to develop a more comprehensive assessment of needs. In addition, once the job competencies have been defined for each position (see 4.1.1) learning or training objectives can be set for each individual staff member. However certain key training areas for Centres can be assumed:

- Strategic planning of activities
- Fundraising strategies
- Communication and/or PR strategies
- Financial management
- Project management systems

- Advisory services
- Community organizing and planning
- Database design and maintenance
- Environmental impact assessment
- Environmental legislation and policy-making
- Legal advocacy
- Negotiation/facilitation
- Public meetings
- Public participation.

4.2. Infrastructure

R.3. Guideline: Infrastructure inventory and planning. All Aarhus centres should identify their office and equipment requirements and a plan for procurement; this is a part of the Resource Assessment described above. It would comprise a description of what is available, where it is required and a plan together with budgetary requirements.

For the set-up of Aarhus Centres the following basic infrastructure requirement is foreseen – see Table 13 (this is based on those Centres working at the national level). Centres should use this as a basic guide and amend it according to the local requirements and projects (a further checklist of equipment is given in Annex V). The purchasing of materiel should be based on the values of the Centre and on the best quality for price.

Table 13: Aarhus Centre basic infrastructure requirement.

Office	<p>Office should be well located (central or near to good transport links) and in a secure, yet easily accessible building. It should be comfortable for the staff and visitors alike and should be in sufficient repair. The look of the building and office interior ideally should match the image of the Aarhus Centre.</p> <p>Office space should be adequate for the number of staff permanently present. Space for meetings (15 persons minimum), temporary staff and a library space are also required. Offices should have adequate catering and toilet facilities for the use of staff and visitors.</p>
Equipment	<p>Desktop or laptop for each staff member Software (complementary to other Aarhus Centres) Printer Photocopier Typewriter Data projector TV/DVD player Furniture: chairs, desks, filing cabinets, shelves</p>

	Lighting
Supplies	Toners and cartridges as necessary Wall charts, flipcharts Stationery envelopes, paper, pens, staples hole punches Catering, cleaning supplies
Communications	Telephones, mobile phones for field staff Fax machine Internet access and website host

4.3. Financial Resources and Requirements

Aarhus Centres will need to develop a system for management of financial resources which would include:

- (a) A detailed operating budget The resource requirements for each Centre should form the basis for this and should be elaborated in the form of a budget based on the planned operational and programme costs over-time.
- (b) Financial policies leading to integrated financial management systems.
- (c) Development of a capital reserve fund.

R.4. Guideline: Developing a Financing Strategy. Aarhus Centres will need to develop a financing strategy that aims to enhance the sustainability of the centres. This strategy should cover various sources of financing approaches. Such a Financing Strategy is instrumental to the continuation of the Centres. It will be aimed at: diversifying sources of income; diversifying methods of generating income; supporting regular financial planning; ensuring financial systems are in place in place; building a good image with stakeholders and enabling financial autonomy.

Notes on the development of a financial management system and a financing strategy can be found below. Further discussion on the elaboration of a financing strategy is given in Annex VI.

The Independent Evaluation referred to the financial sustainability of Aarhus Centres and described: “Regarding the financial sustainability, it should be noted that there are still many Centres that are fully or partly dependent on the OSCE support. These are mainly centres in regions, such as Vlora, Skodra (Albania), Osh (Kyrgyzstan), Gardabani and Marneuli (Georgia), Gazakh and Ganja (Azerbaijan).” It was noted that the project based Centres in Tbilis and Dushanbe also rely heavily on financial support from OSCE. The situation in Armenia where the Centres are largely funded through national or regional administrations budgets was given as good example for cost-sharing and sustainability.

The financial planning of most Aarhus Centres appears to be elementary, usually as they have been mostly set-up through projects funds, thus financial resource planning is often a challenge for such Centres. As the funding for the Centres are either based on core funds from government resources or grant-based funding from OSCE, this funding

regime may hinder the adoption and development of a more corporate financial resource planning and management scheme. However, such a scheme will be required of the Centres as they aim for heightened sustainability.

Owing to this, it is recommended through these Guidelines that:

- Detailed operating and project budgets and the implementation of more pragmatic policies for donor charging and budgeting will need to be developed (In practice, the services rendered by the Centre may not be adequately priced and managers do not have knowledge on budget planning tools)
- Integrated financial policies and systems allowing for better communication and information sharing should be adopted
- A Financing Strategy, or review of financing options should be developed. This might include steps being taken to establish a cash reserve (reserve fund), as Centres do not appear to have their “own” financial resources (such as a reserve fund to assist cash flow management, infrastructure or human resources development or project funding) and are nearly fully dependent on core financial support for employment and operational costs. Additionally Centres should try to develop proposals sourced through other funding mechanisms. It will reinforce the sense of the staff that the future of the Centre is in their hands and not that it is limited to a one-off project.

Thus the crucial step would be the adoption of a realistic finance strategy (and associated policies) aimed to give Aarhus Centres greater autonomy and an opportunity to be more “responsible” for and aware of the benefits of corporate financial resource management (see Annex VI for more information on Sustainability Planning and Financing Strategy).⁷

Also, a detailed operating budget (with main categories: e.g.: employment, direct and outsourcing/subcontract) and project budget breakdowns with overhead costs (infrastructure, administration, technology, etc) should be used systematically. They should be linked to the main Activity Plan and the workings for the other resource plans (see 4.). These practices will lead the Centres towards a cost-recovery form of financing (recovering the full costs of an operation, project or service), rather than a project budget form.

⁷ N.B.: Those Centres that are based within the government framework should have separate budgeting and financial reporting from the rest of the host ministry.

5. Communications: Outreach and Networking

“It’s better to communicate effectively with a limited number of audiences than poorly with too many.” Source: AimHigher Programme, UK Government Programme.

C.1. Guideline: Focussed communications activities. All Aarhus Centres should prepare and implement a communications strategy and action plan. The purpose of this is to enhance awareness on and visibility of Centre initiatives (Road Map B.3). Prioritisation of the target audiences is critical to the effectiveness of this activity. This should incorporate a number of planned and resourced activities that will be targeted towards key stakeholders and encourage networking between the Aarhus Centres. As such the elements of this plan are divided into separate functions for outreach and networking. Where possible the plan should align itself with the Aarhus Convention Communication Strategy.

A standard communications plan is discussed below in the notes section. Suggested content and approaches are given in Annex IV.

Within the Aarhus Centres Road Map, under the operational section (B.), there are several objectives or activities that have been identified as *“key actions to strengthen the performance, efficiency and impact of the Aarhus Centres”* as regards to communications. These can be divided into outreach and networking actions:

Outreach:

- B.1.2 Develop a common understanding on the role of stakeholders.
- B.3. Objective; Enhanced awareness on and visibility of Aarhus Centre initiatives.
- B.3.2. Communicate more effectively with local and national media.
- B.3.3. Put in place mechanisms to ensure enhanced awareness of local stakeholders on the Centres, with special focus on initiatives to enhance interest and participation of women and youth.

Networking:

- B.3.4. Aarhus Centres network function as environmental communication network in EECCA.
- B.3.5. Contribute to the Aarhus Convention Communication Strategy.

This Guideline focuses on the need for all Centres to prepare a communication plan that will incorporate outreach and networking activities. Simply put it is a written document that will describe how an Aarhus Centre will organise its communications. Developing such a written communication plan will take effort. In essence the plan will set out:

- What is to be achieved (communications objectives)
- How those objectives can be accomplished (goals or programme of work)
- Who the communications will be addressed to (target audiences)

- Ways to carry-out these objectives (tools and timing)
- How to measure the results of the communication (evaluation).

As communications cover all written, spoken, and electronic interaction (internal and external) this can necessarily encompass a broad range of formats. Also, as the plan will set-out various activities and will require resources (staff, time, equipment, funds etc), it should be developed alongside the overall activity plan of the Centre, especially as there are communication objective incorporated into the Aarhus Centres Road Map.

Input for the plan should come from a variety of sources. However, the following are recommended for the Aarhus Centres: mission statement (see strategic framework above) and activity plan, staff input, board and possibly a focus group made up of key stakeholders.

A standard process for developing any communication plan has the following elements:

- Communication audit
- Define objectives
- Define target audiences
- Define goals
- Identify tools
- Develop activity plan
- Evaluate the result.

A suggested format for such a communication plan is given in Annex IV, including suggested approaches or content relevant for Aarhus Centres.

5.1 Stakeholders and Stakeholder Relations

C.2. Guideline: Key Stakeholder Relations. Within the communication plan developed, Aarhus Centres will prioritise their key stakeholders and devise the forms of relationship (messages, approaches and methods) that they will have with each. This will represent the core part of the communications activities of the Centre.

The following represents a basic key stakeholder list:

- Central and local government authorities (relates to the Centres' working level)
- National Aarhus Focal Points
- Civil Society Organisations
- Media
- Business investors
- International partners, OSCE & UNECE Aarhus Secretariat
- Key donors.

5.2 Aarhus Centres Network

C.3. Guideline: Aarhus Centres Network. Within the communication plan developed, Centres will contribute to the enhanced networking of the Centres. This has the purposes to: increase their common profile, build capacity, share information and best practices.

Several common network activities will need to be devised, agreed and then worked on by the Centres. A network working group, made up from Centre staff and experts, should be formed. Though the mechanisms can be prepared and proposed by one or more Centre and then shared with the entire network. A phased development of the network activities is recommended. In addition, resources for the network activities should be sought and budgeted, perhaps centrally in the form of a common project.

Core networking activities may include: holding an annual Aarhus Centres meeting; developing a unified public relations image (logo, network materials); joint Centres newsletter or reports, common e-mail discussion list or forum for Centre staff; central Centres website, with links to individual Centres' sites; sharing of project outputs and products; building common databases; development of joint cross-border proposals and/or involving staff from other Centres in project activities; staff exchanges and site visits.

With regard to communications issues the Independent Evaluation report noted some requirements to enhance the work of the Aarhus Centres. These are: to prepare a communications strategy for the Centres and to increase networking between the centres.

During the Aarhus Centres Meeting in January 2009, the initiative to establish a communications strategy for the Aarhus Convention was presented by the UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat. This was still in process and was to be discussed by the Bureau in July 2009. Owing to the sequence of events, it was suggested that the Convention's strategy could benefit from the Centres strategy, plus as it is looking for implementing partners, the Centres may fulfil an important role within it.

In the same meeting, a number of recommendations to the communications, outreach and networking approach of the Aarhus Centres were put forward. Notable among these are:

- Any Centre's communication strategy should follow from the Road Map and support it
- Centres need to identify their particular strengths and niche (what is distinguishing them from others). This can be done by building a brand or a corporate image, thereby linking together what needs to be communicated. Essential elements of this are a common mission statement, vision, logo or mottos
- Identification of key target audiences and groups (key stakeholder): it is not possible to address everyone, therefore Centres should prioritise. This will need an analysis of the demand for services from various stakeholders and the needs of the Centres themselves
- Channels of communication: there is the need to ensure the methods and channels

used match to the target audience. What are the actual and preferred channels of communication? Centres need to be culturally sensitive, use plain language and technologically appropriate to the audience, especially where Centres work with rural communities and the general public

- Centres should develop a working project plan for the communications strategy, including a detailed budget (an example resource allocation was given as 5-15% of overall budgets), and adequate monitoring, evaluation and communication of feedback.
- Initially, Aarhus Centres should identify the issues that they want to network on, including an analysis of purpose, need and mechanisms for networking. Possibly it will require a networking needs assessment and input from other professional networks (such as Green Spider⁸).
- Within the Aarhus Centres network, the sharing between one another of effective work or communication methods is crucial. This is particularly relevant in relation to sharing information on legislation. The building of partnerships outside the Centres could be considered.
- Exchanges and site visits should be incorporated into the networking programme of the Centres. An exchange process could be devised that ensures visits are focussed, valuable and based on sharing best practices. In addition, key stakeholders could be involved.
- A resource, or contact, person (communications officer) should be identified in each Centre. They would be tasked to raise recognition of the Centre and would be aware of the resources and information held by the Centre.

⁸ European Network of Environmental Communicators.

3. Supporting Annexes

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Annex I. Guidelines summary

1. Institutional Issues

#	ISSUE	GUIDELINE
I.1	Common strategic framework	All Aarhus Centres should develop a strategic framework, comprising: vision, mission and values statements, plus an organisational description. Though different in part, owing to differences in institutional set-up, they should be comparatively similar.
I.2	Official recognition of Aarhus Centres is necessary	As a rule, the status of an Aarhus Centre as a specialized institution should be recognized by a national environmental authority and/or local government, relevant environmental NGOs and other stakeholders and international organizations. It can be achieved by means of governmental or ministerial decrees, memoranda of understandings or agreements of parties that follow a consultative process with participation of all key stakeholders on establishment of the Aarhus Centre.
I.3	A separate legal entity is optional	Aarhus Centres may be established without necessarily acquiring the status of a legal entity. Environmental ministries, local governments, existing NGOs and universities can serve as host organizations for them. Under any institutional set-up, efforts should be put forward to guarantee the autonomous status of the Centre, and to ensure that it serves as a link between the government and the host organisation.
I.4	Not-for-profit status.	As a general rule Aarhus Centres should be non-profit organizations.
I.5	Hosting through official agencies.	Generally, environmental ministries or their subordinated organizations serve as host organizations for national Aarhus Centres. In case of regional Aarhus Centres, there might be a variety of host organizations, including regional offices of national environmental ministries, local governments, non-governmental organizations.
I.6	Hosting through NGOs.	The decision to establish an NGO-based regional Aarhus Centre and the selection of the host organization should be made in a manner that would prevent any potential conflict among NGOs. It may require consultations with local civil society organizations prior to making the relevant decisions or development of the Aarhus Centre on the basis of co-operation with generally recognized umbrella associations of NGOs.
I.7	Consistency with the Aarhus Convention.	Operations and services by Aarhus Centres should be consistent with, and complimentary to, the basic principles and requirements of the Aarhus Convention.
I.8	Accessibility.	Aarhus Centres premises need to be easily accessible for visits by NGOs and other representatives of the public within official working hours. Free, but regulated, access to computers and internet services should be provided, where possible.

I.9	Free access to information.	Open supply of environmental information to visitors, through the Internet, copying documents and via regular publications should be guaranteed.
I.10	Participatory approach.	The activities and the processes promoted by Aarhus Centres should be participatory in nature, . They should be in line with the relevant public participation provisions of the Aarhus Convention, the relevant decisions of its Meetings of the Parties and other Convention bodies; as well as the relevant national legislation
I.11	Information accessibility.	Aarhus Centres should ensure that information on their objective, functions, services and activities is accessible to the general public.
I.12	Accountability.	Aarhus Centres should be accountable to the representatives of their key stakeholders, including the NGOs and other representatives of the public.
I.13	Operating and governance provisions to be formalised.	The minimum provisions necessary for the operation and governance of an Aarhus Centre should be included in the organization's governing documents, such as bylaws, rules of procedure etc. Basic provisions on the status, structure and governance of a governmental Aarhus Centre may also be defined by a governmental act on its establishment, e.g. on the goal, status and main functions, subordination and host organization, governance structure, composition of board members.
I.14	Governing bodies to be representative of stakeholders.	Each Aarhus Centre should ideally, have a governing Board (Board of experts, Board of advisors) consisting of representatives of key stakeholders - such as civil society organizations, environmental ministries, parliamentarians, judiciary, local governments - with a clear terms of reference and procedures of work. The Board sets policies and supervises the operations, activities and finances of the organization.
I.15	Inclusion of National Focal Points in national Aarhus Centres.	In case of the national Aarhus Centre, the National Focal Point of the Convention should be involved in the governance and co-ordination of activities of the national Aarhus Centre, e.g., by means of membership or even chairmanship in the Centres' governing Board. The National Focal Points should also be actively engaged in the activities of the regional Aarhus Centres. Such involvement of national Focal Points builds a bridge between activities on implementation of the Convention by Aarhus Centres and governmental bodies.
I.16	Environmental ministries as designated national authorities of the Convention.	Environmental ministries, as the primary national authority responsible for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, can consider establishing and/or supporting the establishment and functioning of Aarhus Centres at national and regional levels.
I.17	Aarhus Centres as a mechanism for integration and co-operation.	Aarhus Centres may provide platforms for the integration and co-ordination of Convention related activities among a set of governmental bodies (not only

		Ministries of Environment, but also other governmental agencies) at the national and regional level. By ensuring for the representation of different governmental bodies in the governing Boards, Aarhus Centres can further enhance the integration process.
I.18	Ensure involvement of local governments as key stakeholders.	The role and influence of local governments in the process of development of Aarhus Centres may significantly vary from country-to-country and it depends, <i>inter alia</i> , on the extent of their authority in environmental decision-making. In most cases, local governments should be involved as stakeholders into the process of development of regional Aarhus Centres, which, in turn, would set up conditions for their funding from local budgets.
I.19	Local governments as hosting body.	In case a local government indicates interest in establishing and maintaining a Centre in its region/province, it can serve as a host organization. In other cases, local governments could also be represented in the governing Boards of regional Aarhus Centres.
I.20	Involvement of NGOs in the governance of Aarhus Centres.	The Aarhus Convention, being the key international legal instrument on public environmental rights, is also unique in terms of involvement of non-governmental organizations in various activities and processes implemented on the international, national and local levels. Ideally, non-governmental organizations should be actively involved in the establishment and management of national and regional Aarhus Centres, through representation in governing Board.
I.21	NGOs as Aarhus Centres host.	Under certain conditions, such as a specific agreement by key stakeholders, the existence of the will and capacity to do it or the prevention of unnecessary competition with other organizations, a non-governmental organization or a coalition of NGOs can be chosen as the host organization for an Aarhus Centre in a certain region or province.
I.22	Recognition of the current role of the OSCE.	Since 2002, the OSCE has been supporting the establishment of Aarhus Centres in several countries, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Some of these Centres are supported through the ENVSEC Initiative. The OSCE also plays a key role in promoting the status of Aarhus Centres, as specialized institutions dealing with implementation of the Convention, through memoranda of understanding signed by environmental ministries and local governments when it is appropriate.
I.23	New perspectives for the OSCE.	As the number of Aarhus Centres is growing it becomes more and more important for the OSCE to facilitate the expansion and improvement of their activities in line with the requirements and strategic objectives of the Convention. The OSCE support should particularly target the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistance with the definition of the overall strategies and operational plans

		<p>of the Aarhus Centres;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating exchange of experience and best practices through regional and sub-regional networking among Aarhus Centres; • capacity building of existing Aarhus Centres through trainings on the implementation of the three pillars of the Convention, general organisational development and strategic planning.
I.24	Recognising the overall role of UNECE.	The Aarhus Convention was negotiated and adopted under the auspices of UN Economic Commission for Europe in 2003 at the Fourth "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in Aarhus, Denmark. Its governing body and its subsidiary bodies are serviced by the UNECE Secretariat. Hence, the Centres need to keep abreast of the current international processes, activities and directions coming from the functions of the UNECE Secretariat.
I.25	Role of the Secretariat of the Convention.	The Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention is a part of the UNECE Secretariat and helps the Parties to monitor the implementation of the Convention. The Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention also maintains the Aarhus Clearinghouse on Environmental Democracy to share good practices in environmental democracy and to promote the Convention's application. The Convention Secretariat has an important role in promoting the Aarhus Centres as partners in the implementation of the Convention; in linking them to the relevant Convention activities; in facilitating networking among Aarhus Centres; and in strengthening their capacities in the three pillars of the Convention.

2. Programme and Activity

#	ISSUE	GUIDELINE
P.1	Aarhus Convention is at the heart of the Aarhus Centres' strategy.	<p>The overall strategy is determined by each Aarhus Centre independently. However, due attention should be given to ensure that the Aarhus Centre activities are in compliance with and contribute to the goal, principles and strategic objectives of the Aarhus Convention, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating the effective implementation of the Aarhus Convention • contributing significantly to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being; • promoting good and transparent environmental governance.
P.2	Participatory process throughout the development of the Centres' strategy.	The development of the overall strategy for Aarhus Centres should be based on a participatory approach. Depending on the issues under discussion, the development of the strategy may require the consultation with expert councils and the

		competence of the Boards/Councils, etc. For newly established Centres, it is important to involve all relevant stakeholders starting from the early stages of strategy development.
P.3	Supporting National Implementation Plans.	The Aarhus Centres should be actively involved and/or lead the development and implementation of a national plan for implementing the Aarhus Convention. .
P.4	Supporting access to information.	With regard to the information pillar, the activities of Aarhus Centres should be aimed at both, the improvement of “passive” access to environmental information, based on handling information requests to public authorities, and “active” access provided via its publication in various media sources, through internet, etc.
P.5	Information pillar as starting point for all Aarhus Centres.	Newly established Aarhus Centres are recommended to focus their efforts and activities initially on the access to information pillar which forms the basis for the other two pillars of the Convention.
P.6	Geographical focus of activities on the access to information pillar.	National Aarhus Centres are advised to focus on issues of public access to environmental information held by national public authorities, whereas regional Aarhus Centres are recommended to aim at provision of access to environmental information held by the local authorities and regional departments of central ministries and agencies.
P.7	Complementary character of the Centres’ provision of information.	In the case of providing access to environmental information upon information requests from the public, such services by Aarhus Centres should be complementary to, and should not mitigate the obligations (in accordance with Article 4 of the Aarhus Convention) of relevant public authorities to provide public access to environmental information, and should not depreciate the pre-existing conditions for public access to environmental information.
P.8	Information services should reflect both access and improvement aspects.	Services rendered by Aarhus Centres may include both the provision of public access to certain types of environmental information and certain data, as well as the improvement of certain aspects (features) of public access, such as reduction of periods for processing requests and provision of information in more user-friendly formats.
P.9	Information services provided free of charge.	The Aarhus Centres’ information services should be provided free of charge whenever possible and levy only the costs of CDs or DVDs or of copying of a significant number of pages. Such an approach is, inter alia, supported by the advanced use of electronic tools for dissemination of environmental information.
P.10	Public Participation activities of Aarhus Centres.	The activities of Aarhus Centres on facilitating the implementation of the public participation pillar may relate to the following types of environmental decision-making processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific activities with a potentially significant environmental impact; • plans, programmes and policies relating to the environment;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> preparation of executive regulations and/or generally applicable legally binding normative instruments relating to the environment. <p>The public participation requirements for those decision-making processes are subject of regulation by Articles 6-8 of the Aarhus Convention.</p>
P.11	Facilitation of public participation processes.	Aarhus Centres, particularly regional ones, may render certain services related to public participation in decision-making on planned activities with potential significant environmental impact, including: services on determination of interested public groups, services on notification of the interested public, providing access to environmental impact assessment materials, and providing platforms for public participation; as appropriate. However, such services should be facilitative and they should not substitute the fulfilment of obligations of public authorities in accordance with the Article 6 of the Aarhus Convention.
P.12	Fee-based services should conform with the fundamental values of the Aarhus Centre.	Aarhus Centres may render certain paid services related to ensuring public participation in decision-making on planned activities with potential significant environmental impact. However, such paid services should not contradict the mission and values of the organization, and the fee, conditions and procedures of taking the fee should be regulated by the board or other appropriate Aarhus Centre decision-making body.
P.13	Aarhus Centres as facilitators in the development and drafting of laws.	Aarhus Centres can facilitate the participatory development of draft laws, strategies, programmes and plans stipulating active public participation; for example, the development of local environmental protection plans or documents regulating public participation procedures.
P.14	Aarhus Centres' role in public debates.	Aarhus Centres can be actively involved in the organization of public discussions of plans, programmes and laws related to the environment, which are drafted by national and/or local public authorities. National Centres may provide such services for projects that are developed at the national level, whereas regional Centres can be involved in the organization of public discussions for regional and local level initiatives.
P.15	Aarhus Centres and the promotion of Access to Justice.	Based on the provisions of Article 9 of the Convention, Aarhus Centres should aim at carrying out activities (see Table 10 for examples) to ensure the improvement of access to justice for the public on three types of cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> on access to environmental information in accordance with the provisions of Article 4 of the Convention; on public participation in accordance with the provisions of Article 6 of the Convention; and on challenging acts and omissions by private persons and public authorities which contravene provisions of their national law relating to

		the environment.
P.16	Practical focus of Aarhus Centres on access to justice.	<p>Aarhus Centres' activities on the improvement of the legislative framework for access to justice on environmental issues should, <i>inter alia</i>, be focused on the following important aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for standing of representatives of the public to initiate each of the three cases stipulated by Article 9, paragraphs 1-3, of the Aarhus Convention, namely the cases about the rights on access to environmental information and public participation in decision-making, as well as the right to challenge violation of national relating to the environment; • availability of prompt and inexpensive review procedures, in particular with regard to access to environmental information; • provision of adequate and effective remedies to representatives of the public, including injunctive relief; • mechanisms to removal of potential barriers to access to justice, including financial barriers.
P.17	Informing the public on review procedures.	Aarhus Centres may carry out activities aimed at informing the public on administrative and judicial review procedures to protect environmental rights, including those falling under the three types of Aarhus cases (stipulated by Article 9). For that, different means can be used, including consultations of lawyers, preparation and disposal of special information materials and coverage of appropriate issues in mass media sources.
P.18	Supporting the judiciary.	Ideally, the activities of Aarhus Centres should be aimed at strengthening the capacity of judiciary, prosecutors and other governmental bodies to ensure better access to justice on the three types of Aarhus cases. Thus, Centres can take part in the development and publication of appropriate training materials, organization and carrying out trainings and workshops on access to justice matters.
P.19	Role of Centres in National Reports.	<p>Aarhus Centres should be considered as organizations that can significantly contribute to the process of preparation of national reports and should be invited to take part in the consultations on implementation of the Aarhus Convention at the national and local levels respectively. While ministries of environment are usually responsible for the preparation of national implementation reports, they may organize this work through Centres. Centres' possible contribution into this process can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering information to be included in reports; • Drafting national implementation reports or their certain sections;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing public access to draft national implementation reports for by organizing public/stakeholder consultations.
P.20	Centres as drafters of national implementation reports.	In case an Aarhus Centre is tasked by the relevant government agency to prepare a national implementation report, it is important to follow relevant guidance documents provided by the Convention Secretariat. As a rule, this work should be started with the identification of those issues to be reflected in the report (defining the content), followed by preparation of a first report for public comments, finalizing it by taking into account public/stakeholder comments and then preparing it for submission to the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention.
P.21	Centres as facilitators of preparation of national implementation reports in a participatory manner.	Aarhus Centres should promote public participation throughout the process of the preparations for national implementation reports, such as through the promotion of public access to draft reports and the facilitation of public/stakeholder consultations.
P.22	Participation of Centres in compliance review.	Aarhus Centres can contribute significantly to the Convention Compliance Mechanism in different ways, in particular, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminating information on it; • Informing the public on cases related to their respective countries; • Assisting the respective Parties with the implementation of decisions aimed at bringing them into compliance with the Convention.
P.23	Raising public awareness by Centres on the compliance mechanism.	Aarhus Centres should disseminate information on the Convention's compliance mechanism. This can include: distribution of information at the national and regional levels on specific cases reviewed by the Compliance Committee through thematic presentations at training seminars, workshops and other meetings on the Convention, and through guidance on its procedures and by putting such information on their web sites.
P.24	Assistance by Centres with the implementation of decisions of the Compliance Committee.	Assistance of Aarhus Centres to the governments with implementation of measures addressed to specific cases of non-compliance with the Convention may include, <i>inter alia</i> services on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating dialogue with the public and various stakeholders on implementation of measures; • Providing information and guidance on certain issues; • Capacity building of public authorities.
P.25	Implementation of decisions of the Compliance Committee in a participatory manner.	Aarhus Centres should promote the overall implementation of measures addressed to Parties concerned to solve those problems of non-compliance in a transparent and participatory manner. It may involve, <i>inter alia</i> , the organization of public/stakeholder consultations on planning measures, and the preparation of

		progress and final reports on the measures taken by the Party concerned.
P.26	Aarhus Centres give information support to the Clearing House Mechanism national nodes.	Aarhus Centres may assist the respective governments by providing information on national and international information to national nodes of the Aarhus Convention clearinghouse mechanism.
P.27	Centres as designated national nodes.	A national Aarhus Centre may be requested, by the appropriate environmental ministry, to maintain a web site with information related to the nationwide implementation of the Convention and to serve as the national node of the clearinghouse mechanism.
P.28	Promoting the ratification of the PRTR Protocol.	Aarhus Centres should play an active role in enhancing public access to information on environmental pollution, and promote the ratification of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR Protocol) to the Aarhus Convention. The Aarhus Centres could particularly target the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity-building for governmental bodies, enterprises and civil society on PRTR; • Support government in developing effective PRTR reporting tools and mechanisms; • Raise awareness on PRTR of all relevant stakeholders; • Sharing relevant information on international practice.
P.29	Facilitation of design and set-up of the PRTR in a participatory manner.	Aarhus Centres, in particular national ones, may assist governments in the design and set-up of national PRTRs and with increased public involvement in accordance with the Protocol's provisions on public participation. After the establishment of a national PRTR, Aarhus Centres should provide information and guidance to the public on how to get access to its data.
P.30	Promotion of the application of the Almaty Guidelines.	At their respective levels, national and regional Aarhus Centres should promote the application of the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums. It may include activities on raising awareness of public authorities, non-governmental organizations and international organizations, providing information and guidance on practical application of the Almaty Guidelines.
P.31	Review of progress with the Almaty Guidelines at the national level.	National Aarhus Centres could review the progress of application of the Almaty Guidelines in their respective countries. Additionally, they can share information on good practices and submit comments relating to their experience with practical application to the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention.
P.32	Specific services relating to public environmental rights for other MEAs.	Aarhus Centres, particularly national ones, will co-operate with designated national authorities and focal points of various multilateral environmental agreements that contain provisions on public awareness and public environmental rights.

P.33	Road Map provides guidance for further development of Aarhus Centres.	The Road Map provides for a practical tool for new and existing Aarhus Centres and is designed to improve the development of their strategies and action plans, in particular to define their activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting achievement of the Aarhus Convention strategic objectives; • Strengthening their performance, efficiency and impact. Planned activities should be provided with indication of time-frames, possible partners, needed resources and performance indicators.
P.34	Road Map used as tool to plan Aarhus Centre activities.	The Centres can utilise the Road Map as a basis of their activities. As such, Aarhus Centres may focus on all or a part of suggested types of activities; though specified according to the local needs and capacities and on the support of those relevant components of the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan found within the Road Map.
P.35	Road Map utilized as a tool to strengthen performance, efficiency and impact of Centres.	While developing the various activity or action plans, Aarhus Centres should additionally consider the Road Map as a basis for reporting their performance; this should be done by setting indicators of achievement (see Section 3., Measurement of Impact below).

3. Measurement of Impact: Monitoring and Evaluation

#	ISSUE	GUIDELINE
M.1	Common Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework.	All Aarhus Centres will need to follow a similar framework for the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of their activities and accomplishments. This framework will enable progress to be measured across the Aarhus Centre Network and to enhance visibility of the Centres' activities and results achieved. In addition, the impact of the Centres work should be reported to their Boards, the Centre Network, OSCE and other relevant stakeholders.
M.2	Continuous monitoring of activities and development.	Aarhus Centres are required to monitor their activities and development on a continuous basis. At the minimum this monitoring system should be structured to annually measure the Centres activities within the frame of the Aarhus Centres Road Map and the objectives expressed therein.
M.3	Evaluation systems.	All Aarhus Centres should put in place a system to evaluate the impact of their activities and their progress towards achieving their aims. This evaluation should be viewed primarily as a learning exercise.
M.4	Reporting processes set-up.	Aarhus Centres are expected to report the results of their evaluations to relevant stakeholders. Evaluation reports should be made publicly available. An annual Aarhus Centres Network meeting would be the principal place for reporting and discussion of performance. A suggested structure for the Centres evaluation report is given in Annex III. In addition the results of the evaluation should be spread to

		Aarhus Centre boards, stakeholders and constituents through appropriate mechanisms.
M.5	Basic Impact Indicators.	Aarhus Centres should, as a minimum, use the five proposed indicators for measurement of their impact.

4. Resource and Development Requirements

#	ISSUE	GUIDELINE
R.1	Human resources planning.	Aarhus Centres will need to make an assessment of their staff requirements against their role and function, defined via their planned activities. Within the activity plan the staff requirement is defined for each activity. When added together the human resource requirements (internal and external) can be determined. This is a part of the Resources Assessment and Plan. Each position thus defined should have a 'job description' that follows a standard basic structure. From these the key competencies for the various positions can be set out.
R.2	Capacity building needs assessment and planning.	Aarhus Centres should undertake a regular assessment of their capacity building requirements (as opposed to capacity building they do within the thematic objectives) and formulate a plan for sourcing and carrying-out its findings. It is a component of the Resource Assessment and Plan, but is also an element of the organisational objectives of the Road Map and that of the overall Activity Plan.
R.3	Infrastructure inventory and planning.	All Aarhus centres should identify their office and equipment requirements and a plan for procurement; this is a part of the Resource Assessment described above. It would comprise a description of what is available, where it is required and a plan together with budgetary requirements.
R.4	Developing a Financing Strategy.	Aarhus Centres will need to develop a financing strategy that aims to enhance the sustainability of the centres. This strategy should cover various sources of financing approaches. Such a Financing Strategy is instrumental to the continuation of the Centres. It will be aimed at: diversifying sources of income; diversifying methods of generating income; supporting regular financial planning; ensuring financial systems are in place in place; building a good image with stakeholders and enabling financial autonomy.

5. Communications: Outreach and Networking

#	ISSUE	GUIDELINE
C.1	Focussed communications activities.	All Aarhus Centres should prepare and implement a communications strategy and action plan. The purpose of this is to enhance awareness on and visibility of Centre initiatives (Road Map B.3). Prioritisation of the target audiences is critical to the

		effectiveness of this activity. This should incorporate a number of planned and resourced activities that will be targeted towards key stakeholders and encourage networking between the Aarhus Centres. As such the elements of this plan are divided into separate functions for outreach and networking. Where possible the plan should align itself with the Aarhus Convention Communication Strategy.
C.2	Key Stakeholder Relations.	Within the communication plan developed, Aarhus Centres will prioritise their key stakeholders and devise the forms of relationship (messages, approaches and methods) that they will have with each. This will represent the core part of the communications activities of the Centre.
C.3	Aarhus Centres Network.	Within the communication plan developed, Centres will contribute to the enhanced networking of the Centres. This has the purposes to: increase their common profile, build capacity, share information and best practices.

Annex II. The Aarhus Centres Road Map

ROAD MAP FOR AARHUS CENTRES

- A. Thematic Road Map: This is an attempt to identify entry points and activities by the Aarhus Centres to support the relevant components of the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan (2009-2014) that was adopted by the Third Meeting of Parties in Riga on 11-13 June 2008.**

No	Objective (as contained in the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan)	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
A.1.	Environmental education is widely available and promotes active and responsible behaviour among the public as regards the environment, including the exercise of the rights guaranteed by the Convention (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective 1.4</i>).	1.1. Aarhus Centres organize trainings and awareness-raising activities for environmental decision-makers, NGOs, professionals and other stakeholders.		
A.2.	Public authorities at all levels and in relevant sectors of government are aware of the obligations under the Convention and allocate as far as possible the resources needed to comply with them (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective 1.5</i>).	2.1. Aarhus Centres conduct information and awareness-raising activities targeting public officials. These initiatives should target not only the ministries of environment but also other line ministries and governmental bodies (such as energy, transport, industry and justice). 2.2. Aarhus Centres specifically focus on public authorities at provincial and local levels.		

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Short-term : 2009
Medium-term : 2010-2011
Long-term : 2012-2014

A.3.	The Convention leads to the development of an open administrative culture which supports public participation and transparency in environmental matters and values them as positive contributions to democratic, effective and good governance. Public officials concerned have and apply the knowledge and skills to provide assistance and guidance to the public to facilitate the exercise of its rights (Strategic Plan, Objective 1.6).	3.1. Aarhus Centres advocate for good environmental governance and pioneer for demonstrating its practical implementation. 3.2. Aarhus Centres disseminate good practices on good governance.		
No	Objective (as contained in the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan)	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
A.4.	Public authorities at all levels and in all relevant sectors of government have well-established information policies and mechanisms, under which environmental information of high quality is routinely provided and proactively disseminated to the public in a user-friendly manner, making full use of electronic tools where available (Strategic Plan, Objective 1.7).	4.1. Aarhus Centres facilitate access to available environmental information through various tools (web-site, newsletters, information boards, etc.) 4.2. Aarhus Centres serve as community access points and repositories of national and local environmental information. 4.3. Aarhus Centres take an active role in providing information to national nodes of the Aarhus Clearinghouse Mechanism. 4.4. Where appropriate and so designated by the national authority, Aarhus Centres serve as national nodes of the Clearinghouse mechanisms		
A.5.	Public participation procedures are regarded by public authorities and all other actors concerned as an integral part of the preparation of policies, plans, programmes and projects which may have a significant effect on the	5.1. Aarhus Centres bring all relevant stakeholders together and provide a platform for participation through consultation (e.g. public hearings) and for interactive		

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Short-term : 2009
Medium-term : 2010-2011
Long-term : 2012-2014

	environment, and are implemented in their full scope. Prospective applicants are, where appropriate, encouraged to undertake proactive efforts to identify and inform the public concerned and enter into discussions with them at an early stage of planning, allowing for the effective participation of all interested members of the public (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective 1.9</i>).	participation (workshops, negotiation, mediation, etc.). 5.2. Aarhus Centres serve as public consultation facilitators. 5.3. Aarhus Centres strengthen the capacities of stakeholders on public participation techniques and procedures. Organize trainings on facilitation skills and dialogue planning for government institutions, local administrations, NGOs and business community and investors.		
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No	Objective (as contained in the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan)	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
A.6.	Judges, public prosecutors and other legal professionals are familiar with the provisions of the Convention and are ready to exercise their respective responsibilities to uphold them (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective 1.11</i>).	6.1. Aarhus Centres facilitate/organize training activities for legal professionals on relevant multilateral environmental agreements and specifically on the Aarhus Convention and update judiciary regularly on new environmental legislation		
A.7.	Each Party provides for appropriate recognition of and support to civil society organizations promoting environmental protection as important actors in advancing democratic debate on environmental policies, raising public awareness, and mobilizing and assisting citizens in exercising their rights under the Convention and contributing to its implementation (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective 1.12</i>).	7.1. Aarhus Centres advocate for increased civil society involvement in environmental management and decision-making processes and offer means and mechanisms for effective co-operation between government agencies and civil society organizations. 7.2. Aarhus Centres disseminate information on good practices on government-civil society partnerships.		

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Short-term : 2009
Medium-term : 2010-2011
Long-term : 2012-2014

		7.3. Aarhus Centres are actively involved in the preparation of the National Implementation Reports, its hollow-up and dissemination.		
A.8.	Civil society organizations and the general public are aware of their rights under the Convention and assert them to effectively engage in addressing environmental and sustainable development issues and to advance both environmental protection and good governance, thus contributing to sustainable development (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective 1.13</i>).	8.1. Aarhus Centres organize public awareness campaigns on environmental issues and specifically on the Convention. 8.2. Aarhus Centres lead/facilitate initiatives to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations in areas such as techniques for community involvement, participatory planning and programming, and project formulation, management and monitoring & evaluation.		

No	Objective (as contained in the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan)	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
A.9.	The impact of civil society's contribution to environmental management and sustainable development is better understood, documented and evaluated (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective 1.15</i>).	9.1. Developing results oriented work-plans and performance indicators for Aarhus Centres for periodic review and evaluation. 9.2. Aarhus Centres disseminate good practices on civil society's contribution to environmental management and sustainable development. 9.3. Aarhus Centres advocate for and facilitate partnerships and networking among civil society organizations at the local and national levels.		
A.10.	The range of environmental information that is made available to the public is gradually widened, inter alia, by	10.1. Aarhus Centres lead/facilitate training and awareness - raising activities on		

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Short-term : 2009
Medium-term : 2010-2011
Long-term : 2012-2014

	developing and implementing mechanisms enabling more informed consumer choices as regards products, thereby contributing to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Through exchange of information and good practice, consideration is given on how to promote increasing accessibility of environmental information held by the private sector, taking into account relevant issues of confidentiality of commercial and industrial information and protection of intellectual property rights in line with the current approach under the Convention (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective III.2</i>).	sustainable production and consumption patterns and on PRTR for citizens and enterprises. 10.2. Aarhus Centres enter into and/or facilitate partnerships with the private sector in areas related to the implementation of the Convention.		
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No	Objective (as contained in the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan)	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
A.11	The provisions of the Convention relating to public participation in the preparation of plans, programmes and policies relating to the environment, as well as executive regulations and other generally applicable legally binding normative instruments that may have a significant effect on the environment, are applied, kept under review and further developed, as appropriate, to enhance public participation from an early stage in strategic decision-making processes. This should be done with appropriate public involvement and taking fully into account the specific nature and constraints of such processes and related obligations under other multilateral environmental agreements such as in particular the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and by involving its bodies in such processes (<i>Strategic Plan,</i>	11.1. Aarhus Centres review and analyze the implementation of the public participation pillar of the Convention and identify the barriers to participation (financial, legal, cultural, language, literacy, etc) 11.2. Aarhus Centres facilitate the EIA process by offering the services for information dissemination and platforms for public participation, where appropriate. 11.3. Aarhus Centres take an active role in the EIA follow-up by monitoring the actual project/plan implementation and informing the stakeholders on the results of the EIA follow-up, where possible. 11.4. Aarhus Centres advocate for the SEA and disseminate good practices on its implementation.		

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Short-term : 2009
Medium-term : 2010-2011
Long-term : 2012-2014

	<i>Objective III.4).</i>	11.5. Aarhus Centres provide a platform for participatory local environmental and sustainable development action planning and implementation.		
A.12.	To enhance the effectiveness of public participation, the development and application of innovative forms and tools of public participation beyond traditional consultation procedures are encouraged, the development of non-governmental organizations' capacity is supported and civil society is strengthened (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective III.5</i>).	12.1. Aarhus Centres disseminate good practices on innovative forms and tools of public participation. 12.2. Aarhus Centres co-ordinate/facilitate formulation, implementation and management of small-scale NGO projects.		

No	Objective (as contained in the Aarhus Convention Strategic Plan)	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
A.13.	Work on promoting effective access to justice continues, in particular by way of further information exchange, capacity-building and exchange of good practice, inter alia, on the issue of criteria for standing, taking fully into account the Convention's objective of guaranteeing access to justice. The extension of the range of members of the public having access to administrative and judicial procedures is explored, with particular focus on access by non-governmental organizations. Steps are taken to remove or reduce financial and other barriers and to establish assistance mechanisms where appropriate (Strategic Plan, Objective III.6).	<p>13.1. Aarhus Centres facilitate/co-ordinate legal consultations to civil society organizations and individuals on environmental rights and responsibilities.</p> <p>13.2. Aarhus Centres provide information and guidance to public on court procedures, administrative review procedures and judicial appeal possibilities.</p> <p>13.3. Aarhus Centres provide assistance mechanisms such as promoting public interest lawyers, providing list of lawyers, and acting as law clinics.</p> <p>13.4. Aarhus Centres establish and provide a database on court decisions in environmental issues.</p> <p>13.4. Regarding the Convention's compliance mechanism, Aarhus Centres assist in understanding the template, in monitoring jurisprudence and disseminating results, and in informing the public on cases related to their respective countries.</p>		
A.14.	The Parties explore possibilities for the development of measures under the Convention to ensure greater opportunities for public participation in policy formulation and implementation contributing to sustainable development, recalling the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the related Plan of Implementation. Furthermore, the Parties share	<p>14.1. Aarhus Centres establish partnerships with other local and national level initiatives/programmes in the field of environment and sustainable development.</p>		

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Short-term : 2009**Medium-term : 2010-2011****Long-term : 2012-2014**

	their experiences in implementing the Convention with other forums interested in using them as a basis or a source of inspiration for further strengthening participatory democracy in their respective fields (<i>Strategic Plan, Objective III.7</i>).			
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B. Operational Road Map: This is an attempt to identify the key actions needed to strengthen the performance, efficiency and impact of Aarhus Centres

No	Objective	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
B.1.	Aarhus Centres' vision and activities are streamlined in order to better respond to national and regional challenges and enhance their effectiveness and efficiency in contributing to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention	<p>1.1. Develop a common understanding on the role and functions of the Aarhus Centres.</p> <p>1.2. Develop a common understanding on the role of stakeholders (Ministry of Environment, National Focal Point, Aarhus Centre Manager, OSCE, host-NGO, etc.)</p> <p>1.3. Formulate a monitoring and evaluation strategy for Aarhus Centres with measurable performance indicators.</p> <p>1.4. Conduct self-evaluation of AC performance/activities annually.</p>		
B.2.	Capacities of Aarhus Centres strengthened in order to better respond to the challenges in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention.	2.1. Identify capacity-building needs of the Aarhus Centres' staff and conduct trainings at the national and regional levels.		
B.3.	Enhanced awareness on and visibility of Aarhus Centre initiatives.	<p>3.1. Formulate a communication strategy and action plan for Aarhus Centres.</p> <p>3.2. Communicate more actively with local and national media</p>		

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Short-term : 2009
Medium-term : 2010-2011
Long-term : 2012-2014

		<p>3.3. Put in place mechanisms to ensure enhanced awareness of local stakeholders on the Aarhus Centres, with special focus on initiatives to enhance interest and participation of women and youth.</p> <p>3.4. Aarhus Centres network function as Environmental communication network in EECCA.</p> <p>3.5. Contribute to the Aarhus Convention Communication Strategy</p>		
B.4.	Mechanisms are in place for information and experience sharing among the Aarhus Centres at the country and regional levels.	4.1. Identify and put in place mechanisms for networking and information sharing among Aarhus Centres.		

No	Objective	Suggestions for indicative types of activities for Aarhus Centres	Possible partners	Time-frame*
B.5.	Efforts are advanced for ensuring sustainability of Aarhus Centres.	<p>5.1. Identify measures to strengthen the ownership and support of Governments towards long-term sustainability of Aarhus Centres.</p> <p>5.2. Ensure more active involvement of Aarhus Convention Focal Points in Aarhus Centre initiatives.</p> <p>5.3. Establish closer co-operation and partnerships with CSO/NGO networks at local and national levels.</p> <p>5.4. Establish closer co-operation and partnership with public authorities at provincial and local levels.</p> <p>5.5. Identify options for legal status of Aarhus Centres.</p>		

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Short-term : 2009
Medium-term : 2010-2011
Long-term : 2012-2014

B.6.	Synergies established with other relevant initiatives at the national and regional levels.	6.1. Co-operate and partner with other local, national and regional initiatives and programmes in support of environment, sustainable development and good governance (such as other ENVSEC projects, GEF projects/programmes, EC supported projects/programmes, etc.)		
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Annex III Measurement of Impact: Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting Mechanism

Annex III.1 Aarhus Centre Action Plan Summary

Objective	AC Activity	Action Plan (including method, timing, resource requirements)	Output and/or expected results	Indicators (Outputs, Outcomes, Impact)	Information gathering (type, method, period, source)	Responsible person
A.2	A.2.1				Quantitative: Qualitative:	
					Quantitative: Qualitative:	
Objective	AC Activity	Action Plan (including method, timing, resource requirements)	Output and/or expected results	Indicators (Outputs, Outcomes, Impact)	Information gathering (type, method, period, source)	Responsible person
B.3	B.3.1				Quantitative: Qualitative:	
					Quantitative: Qualitative:	

ANNEX III.2 - Suggested evaluation report content⁹.

SECTION	COVERING
Title page	Name, evaluation period, state of report, author, date
Executive summary	
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background for evaluation • Brief description of activities • Evaluation methodology used • Structure of report
AC programme/organisational development activities carried-out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context and rationale for the activities • Changes in context during implementation • Relevance of activities to the national/local priorities • Relevance in relation to donor priorities
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress compared to plans • Cost and use of resources compared to planned budget • Achievements • Results in relation to resource utilisation
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives when activities were designed • Actual achievement of objectives • Factors affecting the achievement of objectives
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified priorities, needs and demands • Foreseen and unforeseen effects on target group and others (stakeholders) • Impact on the institutional level (AC) • Factors explaining impact of the activities
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the activities will be/enhance sustainability • Factors affecting sustainability
Lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational lesson learned (related to the activities themselves) • Development lessons (related to the broader context)
Conclusion & recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions (facts) • Recommendations (future)

⁹ R. Bako. (2002) Developing Skills of NGOs; Evaluation and Monitoring. REC, Szentendre, Hungary. 32 pages.

Annex IV: Communications: Outreach and Networking Plan

Aarhus Centre Communications Strategy

	SECTION	APPROACH/POSSIBLE CONTENT
1.	Introduction	<p><u>Approach:</u> Utilise the reasons for developing the communication plan and the overall strategic framework of the AC and the AC network.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Description of the Aarhus Centre, utilising elements from the Strategic Framework (developed in 2.3.3) ➤ Describe the context towards the Aarhus Convention and the Aarhus Centres Road Map. ➤ Summary of way communications: outreach and networking are important to the aims of the ACs.
2.	Where are we now?	<p><u>Approach:</u> This can be devised via a communication audit of the AC and its wider environment. This can be done by finding out what every staff member is doing in the way of communication, what each communication activity is designed to achieve, and how effective each activity is. This will show your internal baseline. In addition it will be important to understand the information situation externally, including possible opportunities and deficits.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Summary of all the forms of communication currently being carried out by the AC. Current communications role, with reference to stakeholder relations and networking. Explore what deficits are seen, in stakeholder coverage, message and tools. ➤ Data on current availability and use of information publically. Analysis of the prime sources of environmental information and the deficits. For example: <i>“Research results¹⁰ show that the main source of environmental information is the media followed by the NGOs and the state institutions. The most efficient tools – in descending order – are the TV spots/ programmes, the Internet, brochures/posters/fact sheets, radio, newspapers. The list follows the average picture of the Central European countries but it is important to remark that the internet penetration – based on the Internet World Stats¹¹ – in the Rest of Europe categories is very low: 18% only in these countries.”</i> ➤ Conclusion to these findings and how that will influence the communication plan.
3.	Communication objectives	<u>Approach:</u>

¹⁰ REC (2003): Environmental Communication Tools, November 2003

¹¹ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats4.htm#e>, [May 15, 2006]

	<p>Where do we want to be in 2014?</p>	<p>Armed with the information from the communication audit, here define the overall communication objectives-the results you want to achieve. These might include: centralisation communication efforts, improved product delivery, enhanced visibility for the Aarhus Centres and the network, and influence on government, media, donors, and other audiences. When considering the communication objectives, they should complement the communication and related objectives in the Road Map. Perhaps using the 2014 time period of the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 is a useful reference period.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overall aim of the communication activities in relation to the success of the ACs purpose and programme. ➤ How outreach and networking in particular are foreseen to support this. ➤ Context within the AC Road Map and the Strategic Plan 2009-2014.
4.	<p>Target audience</p>	<p><u>Approach:</u> The following step is to identify who the ACs communications activities are targeted at. There are several different target audiences that you want to reach. Making a list of all the audiences that the AC intends to contact, attempt to influence, or serve is the first step.</p> <p>However, it is important to be realistic as to how many target audiences can be effectively and efficiently served. Being specific and splitting types, can help when deciding later which communication tools will be most suitable. Also the larger part of the budget and resources should be concentrated on the key stakeholders. This can be done by characterising the audiences in primary, secondary or even tertiary levels.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> An initial list of possible target audiences for ACs is given. This is not exhaustive and various factors, from local conditions, the level that the AC works at and the priorities of its work programme, should amend this:</p> <p>Primary audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AC Board members (advisory boards and focal groups) - National Aarhus Focal points. - Civil Society Organisations/NGOs. - Government authorities (central, regional, local). - Aarhus Centres (nationally, internationally). <p>Secondary audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media: journalists and editors (print, radio, TV, web). - Donors. - Businesses, chambers of commerce. - Lawyers/judges. - Community groups. - International partners (OSCE & UNECE Aarhus Secretariat UNDP, UNEP, RECs etc) <p>Tertiary audience:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General public (nation-wide, local). - Education (universities, colleges, schools, teachers). - Internal audiences (AC staff) <p>Recall the quote at the beginning of section 2.7 that “<i>it’s better to communicate effectively with a limited number of audiences than poorly with too many.</i>”</p>
5.	Communication goals	<p><u>Approach:</u> Within the communication objectives, yet considering those human and financial resources available, the communication goals should be devised. This means a programme of work for each communication objective set.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> Such goals would include general programmes, products, or services that will be used to achieve the communication objectives.</p>
6.	Communication message(s)	<p><u>Approach:</u> With the target audiences identified the messages to be communicated need development. These messages will help in being clear about what each target audience should understand from the communications activities. There may be some common message but some messages will usually be different for each of target audience groups. Use the communications principles to check the drafting of these statements. For example it is important to avoid overly complex messages, they won’t come across well.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> For the ACs these communications messages will vary widely for the different stakeholder audiences. Common ones will refer to the role and purpose of the AC in making the Aarhus Convention a reality and that it can work. Look to the vision statement (2.3.1.) in part as an inspiration for the general messages. More specific messages for individual target audiences will depend on the relations foreseen.</p>
7.	Communication principles	<p><u>Approach:</u> Certain principles on how the communications efforts will be done will help in defining the correct message: tone, style and approach. The Values Statement will also be important in ensuring that the communication principles follow an AC’s ethics.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> The principles can be presented in the form of bullets. As an example the following are given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information spread should be credible, impartial and non-partisan in its provision and content, and should be of the highest possible quality and reliability. ➤ The corporate style should be followed throughout. ➤ The communication style should be simple, relevant and friendly to all stakeholders. ➤ Jargon should be avoided in those publications which will be developed for larger target groups. Messages should be understandable for all stakeholders. ➤ The communication should be memorable and consistency

		<p>will support this criterion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Networking activities are approached on the basis of co-operation and collegiate solidarity ➤ Recognise the work of others in implementing the Aarhus Convention. <p>However, these will need adaptation according to the individual AC.</p>
8.	<p>Communication tools and activities</p>	<p><u>Approach:</u> The various tools to accomplish the communication goals are developed here. Tools can be from simple to complex (or a one-page brochure to an interactive searchable database). The communications tool and activities chosen should fit the overall objectives, target stakeholder audiences and messages. Timing, budget and resources are equally important. Draw up a budget estimate and remember not everything can be done at the same time.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> There are a variety of specific communications activities, tools and techniques. Using this list as a basis ACs can make a matrix of tools/activities versus target audiences. They include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • periodic print publications (newsletters; project reports); • online communications (websites, forums, databases); • seminars, meeting and conferences (material and information packs); • training workshops; • media events and public relations materials (press releases); • marketing and sales tools (flyers, brochures, advertising); • legal and legislative documents; • multi-media (videos,DVD, CD-Roms); • incoming communications, including reception procedures and voice mail content; • committee and board communiqués; • corporate identity materials, including letterhead, logo, and envelopes (direct mail); • surveys; • certificates and awards; • annual reports; • signage (leaflets, stickers and posters); • exhibitions; • speeches (plus one-to-one briefings); and • invoices. <p>A <u>basic</u> suggestion is given below as an example:</p> <p>Each year a communication action plan should be designed which will outline the key tasks for that year. The action plan should be reviewed in each year on the basis of internal and external monitoring and evaluation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme logo <p>An easily identifiable logo strongly supports the awareness raising and differentiation of the AC activities.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme leaflets and posters (in local languages) <p>Various materials should be developed for supporting events, meetings and information dissemination. A flexible system has to be developed to support quality printing of leaflets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated website <p>A dedicated website would assure the prompt dissemination of all available information for all the target groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic newsletter <p>A regular electronic newsletter to all key partners and important opinion leaders will contribute to results of the project. A mailing list will be assembled and a registration possibility will be offered on the AC homepage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases <p>Press releases and announcements would support the communication, through the media representatives, with the relevant target groups. Press materials should provide newsworthy information for journalists and editors in order to secure their publications in the mass media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press briefings <p>Representatives of the mass media should be invited and informed at key steps or results. It would also provide a platform for ACs to introduce their achievements as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements for information releases and training opportunities <p>Announcements should be known by relevant target groups to increase the credibility, the transparency of the AC. Announcement will be sent to all known potential beneficiaries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly organised events in each country (Aarhus Convention Ratification Day?) <p>This initiative would serve an integrated effort for all involved ACs to build their awareness and position in a harmonised way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange visits <p>Based on programme activities and priorities opportunities for exchange visits or study tours with other ACs would be investigated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key international events and conferences <p>The project and its results should be presented at key international events and conferences like the Meetings of Parties or the Environment for Europe Ministerial conference. These activities would secure the awareness raising of the international community about the ACs work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications series <p>The ACs would develop a series of publications focusing on the outcomes of their most successful activities. Dissemination of the publication should be carefully planned and secured.</p>
9.	Activity Plan	<p><u>Approach:</u> Once the communication objectives, goals, target audiences, and tools have been defined a timeline should be prepared. It will be as detailed as is required (monthly, weekly, etc.). Some special dates or events that may have an impact on this timing.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> The use of a standard Gantt chart is perhaps the most effective way to plan and represent this plan.</p>

10.	Monitoring and evaluation	<p><u>Approach:</u> See 2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation for approaches in this area.</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> Build into the communication plan (as with the overall activity plan for the AC) a method for measuring results. The practical monitoring might take the form of a monthly report on work in progress, reports for presentation at board meetings, and an annual summary for the annual report.</p>
11.	Roles and responsibilities	<p><u>Approach:</u> All activities require the person(s) to be defined according to their roles and responsibilities within the activities planned</p> <p><u>Possible Content:</u> It is suggested that each AC assigns one staff member that is responsible for outreach and networking activities.</p>

Annex V: Resource and Development Requirements Materials

Annex V.1 - Example Key Competences Framework:

This example is based on the competency dictionary developed by the British Council. All positions have certain of these behavioural competencies allocated to them, plus a corresponding level for that position. The matrix below gives a summary of the behavioural competencies and then the levels for each.

Competency	Levels				
	1	2	3	4	5
Achievement	Wants to do a good job and doesn't give up	Works to goals and manages obstacles	Drives for improvement despite frequent obstacles	Sets and meets challenging goals and seeks long-term improvement	Assess and takes risks to make significant gains
Analytical Thinking	Breaks down issues	Sees key issues	Tests all angles	Does complex analyses	---
Customer Service Orientation	Delivers a service	Adds value	Addresses underlying needs	Serves long-term interests	---
Entrepreneurship	Improves and acts now	Adapts existing approach. Acts and looks ahead	Anticipates the future. Develops new products and services	Creates opportunities and acts for the long-term	---
Flexibility	Accepts need for flexibility	Applies procedures flexibly	Adapts tactics/ approach	Makes organizational change	---
Holding People Accountable	Provides direction	Demands high standards	Holds people accountable for performance	Addresses longer term issues	---
Intercultural Competence	Open to new ideas and ways of understanding	Takes the initiative and has an interest in different experiences and backgrounds	Draws and accumulates lessons from different cultures, experiences and challenges	Strategic decision making reflects a broad understanding of cultural issues and perspectives	---
Leading and Developing Others	Gives direction and instruction	Supports team development	Is a role model for effective leadership	Gains commitment and inspires others to achieve	---
Professional Confidence	Confident in own role	Acts independently	Presents confidently	Prepared to challenge and take risks	---
Relationship Building for Influence	Persuades	Builds rapport and takes several steps to persuade	Maintains networks and plans impact	Extends networks and uses indirect influence	---
Self Awareness	Knows own limitations	Recognises emotions	Understands impact on others	Manages emotions	---
Team Working	Works co-operatively	Involves others	Builds the team	Creates team working	---

Working Strategically	Understands current situation and fits in	Links current action to strategy	Focuses on the longer term	Promotes a longer term strategy	---
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Annex V.2 - Capacity Building Needs Assessment Framework:

Based on the following statements, assess your Centre's capacity building approach. Note all that apply and based on it write-up your preferred approach:

- Invests funds into staff training on a regular basis.
- Staff attends only trainings that are free of charge.
- Centre follows a staff development plan when it comes to training.
- Staff attends trainings that are relevant to the Centre's development needs.
- Centre encourages its staff to attend as many trainings as possible.
- The Centre allows the staff to attend any training they consider appropriate.
- Our Centre doesn't think that training is important.
- Undefined approach.

Review these suggested training areas by considering the most essential needs of your Centre's staff (where very useful list staff names):

Type	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very Useful	Relevant Staff
Organisational Strategy:				
Strategic planning of activities				
Fundraising strategies				
Human resource strategies				
Communication and/or PR strategies				
Business planning				
Organisational Processes:				
Financial management				
Human resource management				
Operational and administrative processes				
Project management systems				
Knowledge, Activity or Skills:				
Advisory services				
Awareness raising actions				
Community organizing and planning				
Database design and maintenance				
Desktop publishing				
Environmental education				
Environmental impact assessment				
Environmental legislation				

Environmental policy-making				
Hardware/software installation and management				
Legal advocacy				
Management of volunteers				
Negotiation/facilitation				
Presentation skills				
Proposal writing				
Public meetings				
Public participation				
Team building				
Training/capacity building				
Webpage management				

List possible trainings:

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List of priority trainings that the Centre's staff will follow (devise the schedule and cost them where appropriate):

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Annex V.3 - Equipment Check list:

Type	Notes	Number	Budget
Computer Supplies			
• Computer Hardware			
• Software			
• Computer Media Supplies			
• Computer Accessories			
Office Machines			
• Office Machines (fax, telephones, photocopier etc)			
• Office Machine Supplies			
• Toners & Cartridges			
• Printer/WP Supplies			
Presentation			
• Equipment (projector, flipcharts)			
• Supplies			
• Wall/Notice Boards			
Management of facilities			
• Office Furniture			
• Janitorial & Catering			
• Safety & Security			
Office Stationery			
• Adhesives & Tapes			
• Arts &			

Graphics Supplies			
• Books & Pads			
• Desktop Accessories			
• Envelopes			
• Files, Pockets & Binders			
• Labels			
• Legal & Personnel			
• Office Planning			
• Paper			
• Personal Planning			
• Writing Supplies			
TOTAL COST			

Annex VI. Sustainability Plan: Financial Strategy and Financial Management

Understanding Sustainability

There are many different ways to understand what sustainability means, however in relation to Aarhus Centres two useful concepts can be identified¹²:

- **Organisational Sustainability:** This means that the organisation is able to continue to do its work. It has a vision and a financial and organisational infrastructure to support the achievement of its vision.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Financial sustainability is part of organisational sustainability. It has to do with the ongoing ability of the organisation to generate enough resources to work towards its vision.

Another variant of this is organisational viability. In general, viability means ‘capacity for survival’ and is more specifically used to mean a capacity for living, developing, or germinating under favourable conditions. In this sense viability refers to an organisation that has the ability to continue to deliver its projects and services and to reach those outcomes that are intended by its mission.¹³

In order to be sustainable or viable an organisation must:

- Have a clear strategic direction – See Role and Function of Aarhus Centres
- Be able to understand and react to its external working environment or context.
- Be able to attract, manage and retain competent staff – See Resources
- Have appropriate administrative and financial infrastructure – See Resources
- Demonstrate its effectiveness and impact (to secure further resources) – See Measurement of Impact.
- Get stakeholder support for, and involvement in its work – See Communications: Outreach & Networking.

All of these are elements of a sustainability plan and are covered in various sections of these Guidelines. However, the following points focus on the financial aspects and the financial sustainability.

For an Aarhus Centre to be considered financially sustainable there are several issues it needs to consider and guarantee:

- more than one source of income (diversity of origin);
- more than one method of generating this income (diversity of type);
- strategic, action and financial planning carried-out on a regular basis;
- appropriate financial systems in place;

¹² CIVICUS on-line toolkits (2003), Developing a Financing Strategy.

¹³ Craciun, Lardinois & Atkinson (2008). *Organisational Viability Toolkit: A Practical Approach towards Organisational Development for Environmental Civil Society Organisations*. REC, Szentendre, Hungary.

- good image with stakeholders and clear values;
- financial autonomy¹⁴.

Put simply it is recommended that an AC has a strategy for achieving financial sustainability.

Financing Strategy

In order to ensure financial sustainability it is crucial that financial and funding issues are thought through in a systematic and multi-faceted way.

Aarhus Centres will need to understand the funding context that they are working in. In some ways this is more difficult for those organisations that have been set-up under the auspices of a project and that are now trying to work financially independent. Also, the financial strategy needs to be a multi-sided plan for generating funds for activities and development, so to avoid dependence on single financial sources.

Elements of a Financing Strategy

There are several pre-requisites that an organisation needs when developing a financing strategy. Many of these have been set as Guidelines for the Aarhus Centres, these are:

- Organisational Strategy (Strategic Framework, see 2.3) & Activity Plan (see 2.4 and 2.5).
- Organisational Budget (See 2.7).
- Financial Systems (See 2.7).
- Communication Plan (See 2.6).
- Value clarity (See 2.3).

There are a variety of financing options open to any organisation which can be considered for investigation by Aarhus Centres:

- Donor funding
 - Domestic;
 - Foreign;
 - Public;
 - Private¹⁵.
- Earned income:
 - Fees,
 - Sales,
 - Tenders.
- Membership fees.
- Public donations.

¹⁴ An organisation has financial autonomy when: it is not entirely dependent on one source for its financing; it is able to make its own decisions about how it generates and spends its own funds; it is able to reject funds coming with conditions that undermine its values; and it is able to make its own decisions on how much to pay its staff.

¹⁵ In Albania there is an idea to develop a 'Compliance Fund' where large – mostly foreign – companies will be approached to donate money (circa 15,000 - 25,000 Euros) to a fund that will be used by ACs to develop their programme. A committee will be set-up to manage the fund and keep decisions separate from commercial influence.

- Investments.
- Careful spending.

Each of these strategic options for raising funds should be reviewed in the light of the following criteria:

- Where it is appropriate
- Practicality to implement.
- Versus organisational values.

Whatever is decided, the Aarhus Centre will have to develop its options into an actual Financing Strategy Document which would need to be approved by the Management Board. A suitable structure might be the following:

SECTION	CONTENT
Preamble/Introduction	An explanation why the Aarhus Centre has developed this strategy, as well as its aims.
Principles	A statement of the values and principles on which the strategy is based upon (driving principles/values as well as restrictions).
Strategic Overview	This would describe the basic setup of the Centre's budget, how much is being used for what, and summarize the financing strategies that are in place.
Financing Strategies	For each strategy there will need to be an explanation of how it will be implemented, and who would be hold responsible.
Conclusion	A conclusion should show the method for monitoring and evaluation of the success of the strategy

Financial Mechanisms

Budgeting:

As a key tool for the measuring of necessary resources, it is crucial to set up a detailed operating budget which sets out how specific activities (according to the Activity Plan) will be financed. This will also help to define the overall financial resources that will need to be raised.

The budget will come directly from those activities that you have presented in your Activity Plan, infrastructure and investments (training) - expenditure. Therefore this will help to define what financial resource the organisation will have to raise - income. Simple put a budget translates plans into money terms.

The nature of the budget will ultimately be also national legal requirements (accounting norms, legal options of book-keeping, taxation and reporting issues).

There are four main stages for developing a budget:

STAGE	APPROACH
1). Define the Main Headings	<p>Use the Activity Plan, infrastructure and investment plans to plan the main budget headings.</p> <p>Items that are typical for an organisational budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and contracted personnel (salaries and benefits). • Institutional costs: amenities, insurance, communications, security, rent. • Infrastructure costs: equipment. • Development costs: training, systems. • Programme costs for doing work: travels, printing, materials, sub-grants. <p>In addition to the headings, their sources of financing should be elaborated upon, e.g. international donors, fees, etc. Projections for expenditure or income over a calendar year should also be estimated (cash flow implications should be reviewed).</p>
2). Calculate line item costs	For each line item the cost will have to be calculated. This should be based on experience, quotes and/or estimates.
3). Checking	The budget will need to be checked for accuracy and the incorporation of all costs/income.
4). Approval	The budget will most likely have to be approved, in particular in those cases that are presenting higher financial risks.

Financial systems

Aarhus Centres will need to have financial systems in place that are commensurate to their way of operating. As the Aarhus Centres will ultimately become financially sustainable, their financial systems should reflect an increased complexity of financing.

Basically, financial systems should measure and record income and expenditure. They should allow the Aarhus Centres to monitor both. The basis is a good book-keeping system and financial policies to guide financial transactions.

The book-keeping system will help ensure financial control and accountability. It will give warning of overspending, that income levels are too low, that cash-flow may be a problem and indicate whether there is any misuse or abuse of money. Any organisation will also need financial policies, which are usually agreed by the board. Policies would deal with e.g the following aspects:

- Opening and operating bank accounts.
- Budgeting.
- Non-budgeted expenditure.
- Petty cash.
- Receipts and deposits.
- Acquisition and disposal of fixed assets.
- Payments and cheque requisitions.
- Staff loans.
- Use of private motor vehicles.
- Car hire.
- Long-distance travel.
- Travel allowances.

Annex VII

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Centres	OSCE Aarhus Centres
Convention	UNECE Aarhus Convention
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ENVSEC	Environment and Security Initiative
Guidelines	OSCE Aarhus Centre Guidelines
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Association
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OCEEA	Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PEIC	Public Environmental Information Centre
PRTR	Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers
REC	Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme