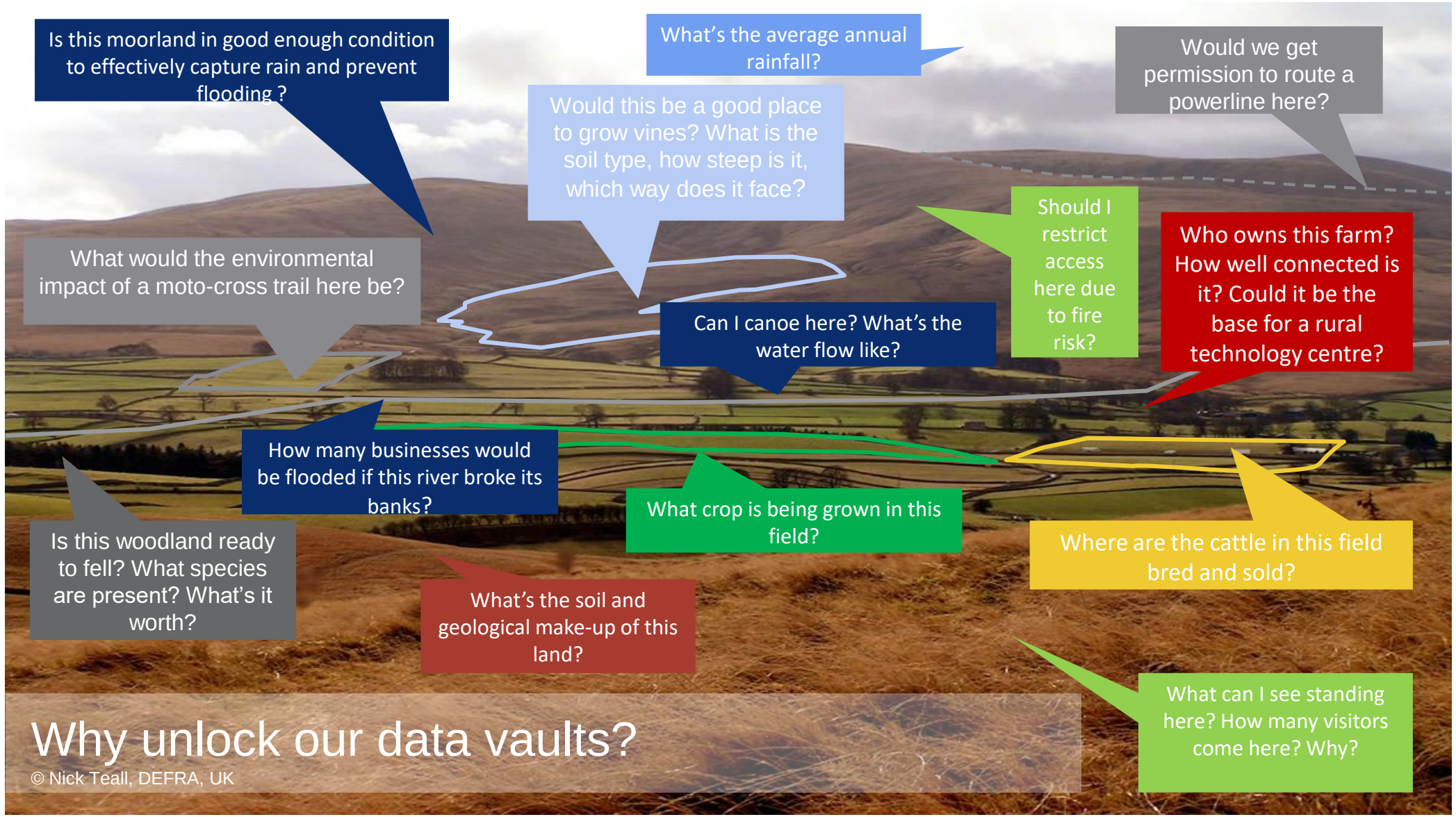
Aarhus Convention: trends in the implementation

Geneva, Switzerland
8 May 2019


Is this moorland in good enough condition to effectively capture rain and prevent flooding ?
What's the average annual rainfall?
Would we get permission to route a powerline here?
Would this be a good place to grow vines? What is the soil type, how steep is it, which way does it face?
Should I restrict access here due to fire risk?
Who owns this farm? How well connected is it? Could it be the base for a rural technology centre?
What would the environmental impact of a moto-cross trail here be?
Can I canoe here? What's the water flow like?
How many businesses would be flooded if this river broke its banks?
What crop is being grown in this field?
Where are the cattle in this field bred and sold?
Is this woodland ready to fell? What species are present? What's it worth?
What's the soil and geological make-up of this land?
What can I see standing here? How many visitors come here? Why?
Why unlock our data vaults?
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Aarhus Convention: Information Pillar

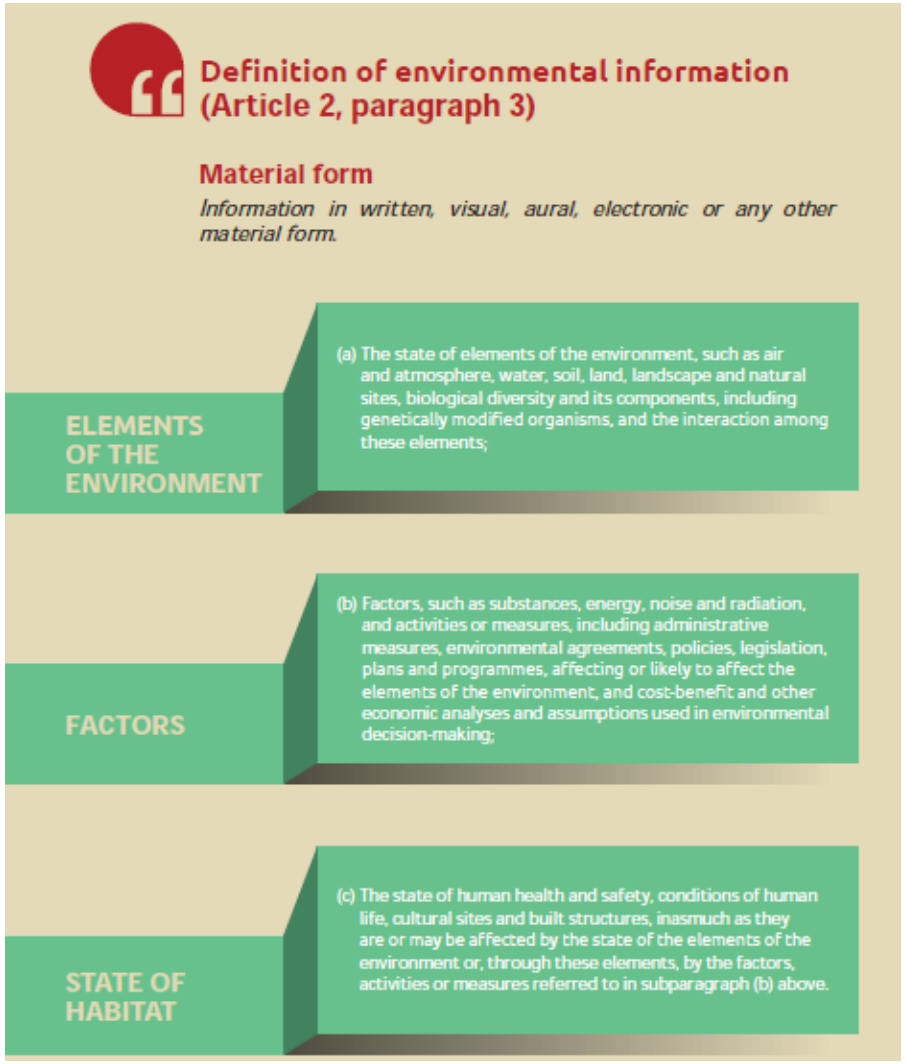
PUBLIC AUTHORITY'S DUTY TO POSSESS, UPDATE AND ENSURE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ACCESS TO RELEVANT INFORMATION (art 5)

ELECTRONIC INFORMATION TOOLS

Upon request (art. 4)	Through Dissemination (Art.5)	Within the public participation procedure (Art. 5 (7), Art. 6 (2) & (6), 7, 8)	Relevant to access to justice (art. 9)
• No interest to be stated • As a general rule, in the form requested, including copies of the actual documentation • Within one month • Free of charge or at reasonable charges • Public interest in disclosure to be taken into account for sensitive information • Restrictive interpretation of exceptions	• Identify points of contacts, basic terms and conditions, access process and ways to support public • Make progressively available in the electronic form through the Internet (portals, databases, lists, registers, files, SoE reports, etc.) • Disseminate immediate and without delay dissemination in case of threat to human health or the environment	Provide access to all relevant information (notifications, drafts, comments and final documents) • Timely • Effective • As soon as information becomes available • Free of charge	Provide access to • Information on access to administrative and judicial review procedures • Decisions of courts and other review bodies • Information on compliance with environmental law

REVIEW PROCEDURES (art. 4 (7) and 9)

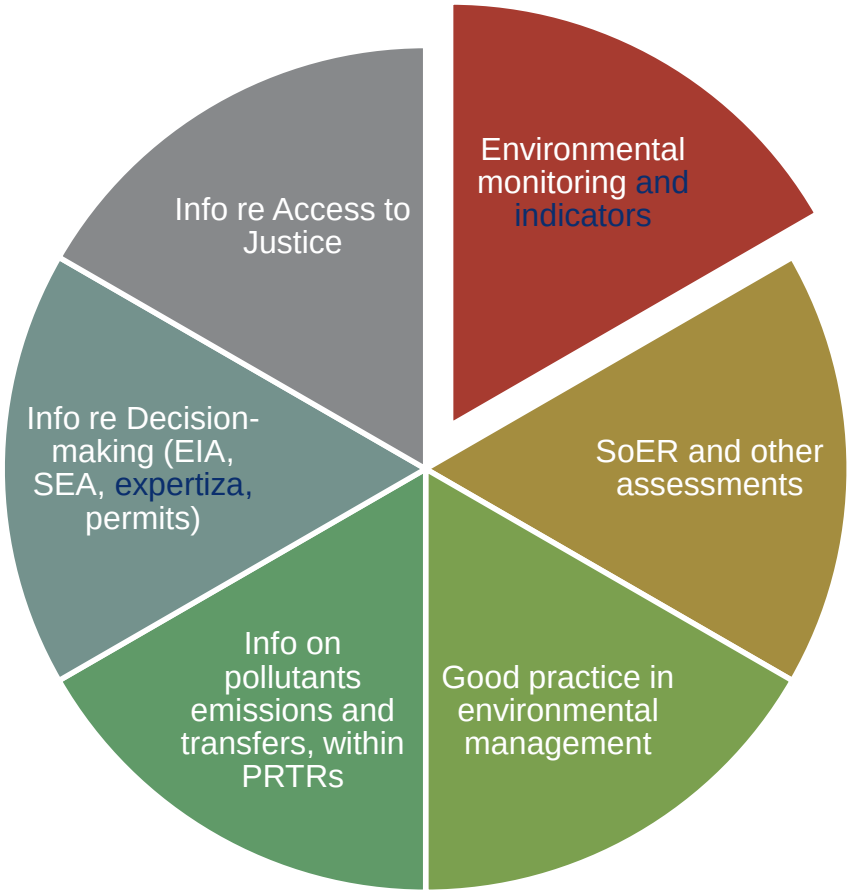
Aarhus Convention: scope and types of environmental information



- **Broad definition providing indicative and non-exhaustive list of examples (see also decision VI/1 of the Meeting of the Parties, para. 6)**
- **Cross-sectoral nature of environmental information and its linkages with geospatial, statistical, hydrometeorological, health, Earth observation and other relevant information possessed by various public authorities**
- **Need to address potential gaps in access (decision VI/1 of the Meeting of the Parties (para. 4); UNECE CEP/WGEMA mid-term review of establishing SEIS in the pan-European Region)**
- **Public accessibility of real-time, as appropriate, up-to-date, accurate and functional environmental information in forms and formats meeting the needs of different users (decision VI/1 of the Meeting of the Parties (para. 5))**
- **Support monitoring and review of SDGs, in particular SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 11 (see 11.6.1), SDG 12 (see 12.4.1, 12.4.2 and 12.5.1), SDG 13, 14, 15 and SDG 16 (see 16.10.2)**

Recommendations on EIT / Priority Categories of Information for disclosure through the Internet

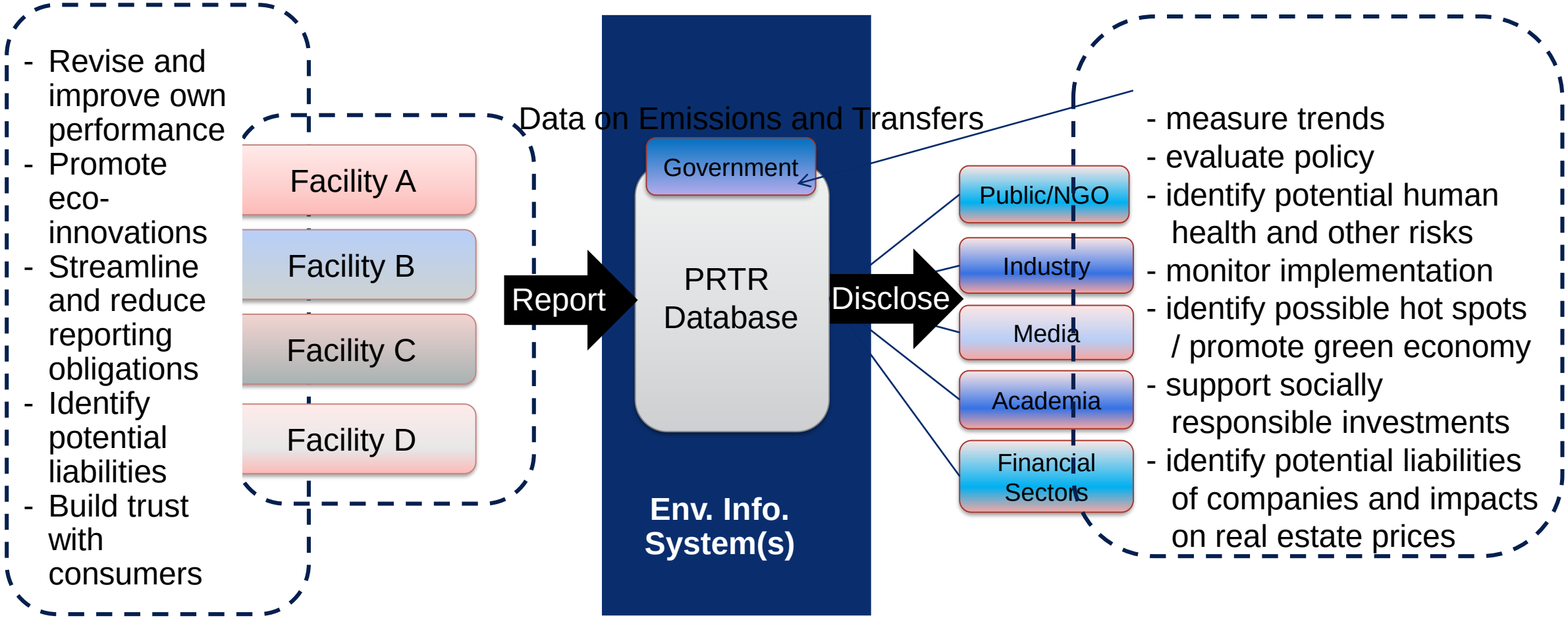
- Statistical
- Geospatial
- Health
- Earth Observation
- Hydrometeorology



- Metadata
  Spatial attributes
- Aggregation / Disaggregation
- Machine readable format
- Interoperability / APIs
- Quality and Comparability
- User engagement and Discoverability
- Re-use
- Copyright license

E-Government / Open Data framework

Protocol on PRTRs: win-win tool for industries, government and the public



65 activities / 86 substances, categories

Role of Protocol on PRTRs in implementing SDGs

Monitoring pollutant releases to water, air and land over time

Providing electronic tool with information that decision-makers need to identify and scale up possible actions in their field of authority

Making information on pollution releases and waste transfers public has lead to companies reducing their pollution and identifying smarter production methods

Making PRTR data more useful through combination with other types of information (e.g. health, infrastructure, demographic and economic data)

EU shows diffuse pollutant emissions to water through electronic maps as part of their E-PRTR

Israel used PRTR air emission data to account for health risks at the planning stage of an industrial zone

Sweden makes available emission data on air quality for easy use by pupils

Norway added energy consumption, production volumes and data on emissions from consumer products to their PRTR

Serbia made reporting data to the government more easy and better quality by using its PRTR as a modular device for reporting on different international reporting obligations

Aarhus Convention and Protocol on PRTRs: improving data sharing, dissemination and re-use

- Interoperability and data sharing were mainly supported through **e-Government**, **Open Government Data**, INSPIRE and SEIS initiatives
- Experience in:
  - Integrating environmental information in the Open (Government) Data portals and establishing domestic interoperability framework - EU as well as Austria, France, Greece, Spain, UK…
  - Integrating information on a centralized specialized web portal with specific operational applications based on a geographic information system (GIS) – France, Serbia, Slovakia…
  - Establishing geospatial portals containing environmental information – EU, its Member States, Switzerland
  - Developing portals/ web-application / registries providing information on environmental decision-making (EIA, SEA) – Czechia, France, Slovakia, Ukraine…
  - Using portals of environmental public authorities – Ireland, Sweden
  - Establishing citizens information websites – Ireland (www.citizeninformation.ie), United Kingdom (WDTK)
- Success lays in establishing comprehensive legal framework, common infrastructure and services (ensuring automated harvesting of data) and cooperation of public authorities – Austria, France, Spain…
- Interoperability influenced by changes in technology (e.g., cloud computing, browser systems, and etc.), information policy, language issues and multi-stakeholder involvement
- Updating public data policies (e.g. open by default for non-sensitive data, open to one - open to all) and copyright licenses to facilitate re-use (e.g. creative commons)
- Public participation and feedback in design, testing, maintenance and update
- Increasing number of open research data and citizen science and citizen engagement initiatives
- Use of new technologies (remote sensing, blockchain, artificial intelligence)

Modernizing Environmental Information System(s): keys to success

- **Strategy** scoping environmental information system(s) and linking it with e-Government, Open Government Data, SEIS, geospatial (INSPIRE) and SDGs monitoring initiatives
- **Legislation** update based on the adopted strategy, review of exceptions
- **Institutional cooperation** and review of copyright licenses
- **Redistribution of available resources**
- **Infrastructure** update harvesting benefits of new technologies (cloud computing, internet of things, blockchain, artificial intelligence)
- **Data** readiness
- **User (public) participation** and feedback in portals design, testing, maintenance and improvement

Widening public access to environmental information contributes to implementing Sustainable Development Goals, their monitoring (indicators) and review

Thank you!

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