

Public Participation regarding Living Modified Organisms/Genetica lly Modified Organisms

Natasha Dokovska



Background information

The *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity* is an international treaty governing the movements of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology from one country to another.

It was adopted on **29 January 2000** as a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity and entered into force on **11 September 2003**.

In Almaty 2005 was adopted **Amendment on GMO to the Aarhus Convention** which will be enter into force when it has been ratified by at least three fourth of the Parties that were party to the Convention at the time the amendment was adopted.

Obstacles and challenges

Obstacles and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention's, Cartagena Protocol and Almaty Amendment on LMO's/GMOs are:

- Lack of **access to information**
- Lack of **public participation** an decision making process
- Lack of **knowledge** to the topic by publicity
- Lack of **media knowledge** on topic
- Big GMO's **lobby**

From the other site in the context of biosafety, public access to information is key to building public confidence in the biosafety regulatory system. It helps to improve the quality of decisions regarding LMOs/GMOs and the measures designed to identify and address potential environmental and human health risks associated with LMOs/GMOs.

Public authorities should provide opportunities for members of the public concerned to seek and obtain information relevant to the decision-making procedure so that they can participate in an informed manner...

Tools for implementations

- One of the tools for facilitated implementations of Protocol and Amendment for LMO's/GMO's is the GUIDELINES ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE WITH RESPECT TO GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS,

According this GUIDELINE among others is provided

- Promoting and facilitating public awareness, education and participation in decisionmaking on activities involving GMOs.

Case of North Macedonian

Even that N Macedonia is party of Cartagena Protocol, didn't ratify Almaty Amendment, but:

- 1) Almost nobody from the public, nor media knew about Cartagena Protocol
- 2) No public debates were held about GMO's and health risks
- 3) No one from the authorities wants to tell why the only one certified laboratory is not being used
- 4) No one can say if there are any Monsanto products on the Macedonian market?

This is an example how public participation **is excluded!!!**

What next?

- **Mobilize** the public and ensure gender-equality for a wider target audience to participate in the decision-making process
- Define the public through stakeholder analysis and appropriate actions through situation analysis, including **promoting the inclusive stakeholder participation**, with particular attention to women and indigenous peoples and local communities
- Use **effective tools** for public participation targeted in particular to marginalized groups and notify the public of these in a timely manner
- Use **local languages** in public participation processes
- **Facilitate training** on public participation, including women and indigenous peoples, journalists and local communities