



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE



Belarusian Research Center
"Ecology"

**"GET YOUR RIGHT TO A HEALTHY COMMUNITY"
SUBREGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE PROTOCOL ON POLLUTANT RELEASE
AND TRANSFER REGISTERS FOR COUNTRIES IN EASTERN EUROPE,
CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA**

**November 3-4, 2011
Minsk, Belarus**

Organised by

**The secretariat of UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the
Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and
Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)**

in cooperation with

the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Belarus

INFORMATION NOTE

I. Objectives

1. The two-day sub regional Workshop aims to promote the implementation and ratification of the Pollutant Release Transfer Registers (PRTR) Protocol in countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The Workshop is targeted at countries in the EECCA subregion and will bring together representatives from these countries' authorities responsible for PRTRs, chemical and waste management, water, land air and health protection. It will also gather representatives of industry, academia, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations from the EECCA countries and experts working on PRTRs within different countries of the UNECE region and with international governmental organizations.

2. The objectives of the workshop are to:

- i) Improving knowledge of legal, institutional and technical requirements for introducing PRTRs;

- ii) Identifying key players for introducing PRTRs in those countries;
- iii) Identifying technical and capacity building specific needs in order to facilitate the provision of more targeted support and to promote effective networking in the sub region in the future.

Achievement of these objectives is expected to create a favourable political environment to foster the ratification and accession of the EECCA countries to the Protocol.

3. The Workshop will also involve experts from countries of Western Europe and North America and from international organizations, who could offer an advance expertise in this field. The workshop will feature exchange of good practices and practical assignments thereby improving knowledge of and passing experience in implementation of the Protocol. It is expected that relevant authorities with political and technical responsibilities, as well as representatives of civil society and PRTR experts from participating countries would share information, learn from each other and discuss solutions to existing deficiencies in relation to the implementation and use of PRTRs.

II. Background

4. The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) entered into force on 8 October 2009. The Protocol is the first legally binding international instrument on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. Its objective is to enhance public access to information through the establishment of coherent, nationwide PRTRs.

5. A PRTR is a national or regional environmental database or inventory of potentially hazardous chemical substances and/or pollutants released to air, water and soil and transferred off-site for treatment or disposal. PRTRs implementation involves the following:

- The industrial or business facilities quantify and report the amounts of substances released to each environmental medium (air, water, and soil) or transferred off-site for waste management or wastewater treatment.
- An estimation of releases from diffuse sources, such as agriculture and transport and from the end use of products, usually compiled by environmental authorities is also included.

6. Recognizing the importance of implementing PRTRs for a better implementation of the Aarhus Convention obligations the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol called upon Signatories to accede to the Protocol at the earliest opportunity and to apply the provisions of the Protocol in the interim at its first session, Geneva, 20-22 April 2010. The Meeting of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol on the Aarhus Convention Work Programme for 2011-2014¹ foresees the organization of workshops and activities that promote the implementation and ratification of the PRTR Protocol. Furthermore, the Protocol's Work Programme for 2011-2014² foresees technical assistance activities such as annual subregional workshops designed to respond to the needs of the countries concerned as to assist them in the effective implementation of the Protocol.

¹ First session Geneva, 20–22 April 2010 Decision I/6 Procedures for the Preparation, Adoption and Monitoring of Work Programmes and on the Work Programme for 2011–2014, Activity E

² Decision I/6 – Procedures for the Preparation, Adoption and Monitoring of Work Programmes and on the Work Programme for 2011-2014 (ECE/MP.PRTR/2010/2/Add.1).

7. Only five out of thirty eight Signatories are countries in the EECCA subregion and none of them is a Party to the Protocol. During the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, delegates from these countries repeatedly expressed through their statements a strong interest in the Protocol and identified technical and human capacity needs (e.g. expertise and good practices) as the main challenges for acceding to the Protocol. Belarus has played a proactive role in this respect and decided to offer hosting the first sub regional workshop as to promote the Protocol in the country and in the EECCA subregion. The Bureau of the Protocol at its first meeting, Geneva, 14 January 2011, welcomed the proposal of a representative of Belarus for organizing the sub regional workshop in Minsk in 2011. The Workshop will be organized in co-operation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus. In addition to government representatives, representatives of NGOs, industry (local and international), such as The European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC) and international organizations such as the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) are expected to be involved in the event.

III. Provisional programme

8. The Workshop will provide participants with the experience gained implementing PRTRs and will help them to find out how better to deal with the implementation of PRTRs in their own countries. The Workshop will include presentations made by experts, open discussion among participants and the preparation of conclusions and recommendations.

9. The Workshop will consist of the following sessions:

- Session 1: Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers: Requirements and benefits
- Session 2: Setting up an appropriate institutional structure
- Session 3: The regulatory framework for data collection and dissemination and for public participation and access to information and justice
- Session 4: The scope of the Protocol: activities, substances and types of releases covered and off site transfers
- Session 5: Data management
- Session 6: Access to data and its dissemination
- Session 7: Building capacity, Public Awareness and international cooperation

Attendees will also be assigned the task of preparing the conclusions in working groups. A more detailed programme will be provided prior to commencement of the workshop.

IV. Background documentation and workshop outputs

10. Participants are asked to please familiarize themselves with the following background materials on the UNECE website:

PRTR Protocol data

<http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.htm>

Guidance on Implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

<http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.guidancedev.htm>

Additional background material for the workshop will be made available on the UNECE website at: <http://live.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.cb.html> Participants are welcome to make available additional relevant material for the workshop and should email such material to the host country (Belarus), e-mail: vershitskaya@gmail.com

11. The participants will learn how PRTRs are implemented in other countries, what challenges are ahead and will discuss and reflect about their own challenges and needs so that they can get support from experts and colleagues in finding possible ways to deal with implementing PRTRs in their countries. They will prepare a set of conclusions and will be encouraged to continue networking and acquiring profit from available resources in order to implement PRTRs and ratify or accede to the Protocol.

12. The main outputs of the Workshop will include background materials and presentations, the report, containing conclusions, and a questionnaire evaluating the workshop. The outcomes of the workshop will provide a ground for identifying priority needs for future work in the countries concerned.

V. Practical information

1. Working hours, languages of the meeting

13. The Workshop will start at 9.30 a.m. on 3rd of November 2011 and end at 6.00 pm on 4th of November 2011. The Workshop will be conducted in English and Russian.

14. Lunches and refreshments during short breaks at the morning and afternoon sessions will be provided free of charge for participants on 3 – 4 November 2011. A reception dinner will also be organized for all participants on 3rd of November 2011.

2. Meeting venue

15. The workshop will take place in Minsk, Belarus, at the following location 11, Gazeta Pravda ave, 220116 Minsk, Belarus. Phone: +375 17 270-59-59, +375 17 270-39-94.

3. Registration

16. Each participant **should complete a registration form** (see annex) **and send it to the RUE “Bel SRC “ECOLOGY”** (partner in Belarus, E-mail: vershitskaya@gmail.com) with a copy to the UNECE Secretariat at public.participation@unece.org as soon as possible, but not later than **01.10.2011**. **Please note that registration forms of representatives of governments and non governmental organisations should be accompanied by an official letter of his/her nomination by a head of the respective authority.**

4. Financial assistance

17. Limited funds are available to assist participants from countries in EECCA, whose work has a direct relevance to the activity. Priority will be given to: (a) PRTR policy making experts and PRTR technical experts from the countries' authorities and (b) NGOs involved in the work related to PRTRs.

18. Organisers will cover costs for accommodation of eligible participants from EECCA countries (by direct payment to the hotel), and local transportation and meals during the event for all participants. You are encouraged to cover your transportation costs to/from Minsk. For those delegates from EECCA countries who cannot afford this, limited funds are available to provide financial support to cover these transportation costs. Details for this arrangement will be communicated to participants directly.

19. Requests for financial support should be indicated clearly in the registration form and be accompanied by a short description of the applicant's background stating the relevance of their experience or future activities to the development of PRTRs. Please make sure that the registration form and the accompanying information is sent to E-mail: vershitskaya@gmail.com with a copy to the UNECE Secretariat at public.participation@unece.org as soon as possible, but not later than 01.10.2011. Relevant procedures of financial support will be communicated directly to the eligible participants.

5. Travel arrangements

20. We expect participants whose travel is funded by UNECE to travel to Minsk as follows:

- a. Participants from Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine by train or car.
- b. Participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan by plane.

21. The host country is planning to provide a shuttle service for participants from airports/train stations to hotels and from hotels to the workshop venue. More detailed information regarding the shuttle service will be provided to participants at a later stage.

6. Accommodation

22. The organizers will make a block booking for the hotel and will make the hotel payment for eligible participants. In this regard, further detailed information will be sent to participants at a later stage. Please note that the organisers will cover up to 3 nights stay in the hotel between 2-5 November 2011 depending on the proximity of the participants' location. Those participants who are not eligible to receive financial support for accommodation may ask the organisers for assistance in reserving hotels.

23. All participants should pay for any additional charges (laundry, room service, bar bills, telephone calls etc.) directly to the management of the hotel

7. Visas

24. A visa is not required for entry into Belarus for citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Only nationals from Turkmenistan and experts from Western Europe and North America will need a visa. Please indicate clearly in the registration form if you require a letter of invitation for visa purpose.

8. Currency and money

25. The currency in Belarus is the Belarusian Ruble. The currency code for Rubles is BYR. Up-to-date exchange rates are available at http://coinmill.com/BYR_MKD.html. If needed you can buy local currency at exchange desks in the airport. Currency exchange is also available at currency exchange offices at the hotel and around the city.)

9. Insurance

26. Please make sure that you have adequate individual health, accident and travel risk insurance cover, as these will not be provided by the organisers.

10. Further information and contacts

27. Should you have any queries regarding practical arrangements, hotel booking, transportation or visa, please do not hesitate to contact Ivan Narkevitch, phone: +375 17 2476543, e-mail: ivan.narkevitch@mail.ru, Olga Vershitskaya, phone: +375 17 2492682, e-mail: vershitskaya@gmail.com For questions regarding the programme of the workshop, please contact Mr. Mark Keenan: mark.keenan@unece.org

28. Up-to-date information, the registration form and relevant material will be made available on the following website in due course at the following URL: <http://live.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.cb.html>