

Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
Access to Information, Public Participation
in Decision-making and Access to Justice
in Environmental Matters

Working Group of the Parties

Twenty-fourth meeting

Geneva, 1–3 July 2020

Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties:
future strategic plan**

Self-assessment of Parties regarding implementation of the the strategic plan for 2015-2020¹

Prepared by the secretariat

The current document was prepared pursuant to the proposal on the future Strategic Plan for 2022–2030 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2019/7) that was agreed by the Working Group at its twenty-third meeting (Geneva, 26–28 June 2019).

Responses to the questionnaire were received from the following Parties: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovakia and the European Union. They are included in the table below under respective column.

¹ The purpose of the proposed self-assessment by Parties to the Aarhus Convention was to evaluate to which extent the strategic goals set out in the Strategic Plan 2015-2020 were reached by the way of analysing the progress achieved in accomplishing the objectives. This document was not formally edited.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures, and institutional mechanisms are in place.					
A participatory mechanism, such as a robust consultation in the preparation of the NIR, to monitor progress in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention is operational.					
Good quality and timely submitted NIRs.					
Good practices are reported through NIRs.					

A. Focal area I: Implementation

Strategic goal I

Full implementation of the Convention by each Party

To achieve full implementation of the Convention by each Party, Parties will implement the objectives set out below as far as possible.

Objective I.1: Each Party has a clear, transparent and consistent framework for the implementation of all provisions of the Convention, comprising not only the necessary constitutional, legislative and regulatory provisions, but also the operational procedures and mechanisms required for their practical application both in a national context as well as in transboundary situations, without discrimination as to citizenship, nationality or domicile.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures, and institutional mechanisms are in place.			Azerbaijan Lithuania	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Const. a.32. / Code de l'Environnement (a.D.6 et D10. À D20) / Décret 16 mars 2006 Décret modifiant le Livre Ier du Code de l'Environnement pour ce qui concerne le droit d'accès du public à l'information en matière d'environnement et Décret du 31 mai 2007 relatif à la participation du public en matière d'environnement + Code de la fonction publique Livre I, Titre I Art. 2 + effective public consultation European Union: Following extensive consultation and careful assessment, based on a Commission Report and an accompanying Study, adopted on 10 October 2019, on 11 December 2019, the Commission has announced in its Communication on the European Green Deal, that the Commission 'will consider revising the Aarhus Regulation to improve access to administrative and judicial review at EU level for citizens and NGOs who have concerns about the legality of decisions with effects on the environment. The Commission will also take action to improve

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					<p><i>their access to justice before national courts in all Member States.'</i></p> <p>Georgia: Measures are adequate at the national level, but development of more effective implementation mechanisms is ongoing continuously.</p> <p>Lithuania: In our view, implementation of the Aarhus Convention on a national level is very complex issue and, in some sense, is developing constantly.</p>
A participatory mechanism, such as a robust consultation in the preparation of the NIR, to monitor progress in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention is operational.			Azerbaijan Belgium Bulgaria	Austria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Belgium: Public Consultation for last NIR: 4/10/2016 → 10.11.2016 + Walloon federation of NGOs for environmental protection (Inter-Environnement Wallonie - IEW) opinion 7/11/2016</p> <p>European Union: NIRs are prepared following a 12-week public consultation. In addition, relevant EU institutions and bodies such as relevant Commission DGs, the European Parliament, Council, the European Investment Bank, the Committee of Regions and the Economic and Social Committee are also all involved in the participatory mechanism.</p> <p>Netherlands: The internet consultation on a draft version in Dutch of the NIR resulted in a few comments by citizens and NGOs.</p>

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Good quality and timely submitted NIRs.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Last NIR 22/12/2016 Netherlands: The report about the years 2014 – 2017 was submitted after the deadline. Other reports were on time.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Ex.: NIR 2016: Consultative Councils like Pôle Environnement (ex-CWEDD). Georgia: Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle. Netherlands: The internet consultation was expected to generate more examples of good practices, but this did not work out.

Objective I.2: The Convention's mechanism for compliance review fulfils the role of an effective instrument to address compliance problems that cannot be resolved at the national level. The findings and recommendations of the Compliance Committee are regarded by Parties as an authoritative source of advice on the implementation of the Convention and are used by them to improve their national practices in the best way possible.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Having a system in place for monitoring the implementation of decisions.	Estonia		Azerbaijan Bulgaria	Austria European Union Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Finland: Any compliance issues would be coordinated and monitored by the National Focal Point. However, Finland has so far not had any compliance issues. European Union: Procedures are established to ensure that MOP findings are implemented. The Aarhus focal point in DG Environment takes on a coordinating role, with contact points in each relevant Directorate General within the Commission (e.g. DG ENER, SANTE, and AGRI). Appropriate cooperation is also ensured with other EU institutions and bodies. Georgia: N/A Netherlands: Parliament is informed about the outcomes of ACCC findings regarding the Netherlands and their follow-up.
Decisions of the Meeting of the Parties are implemented effectively and reported through NIRs.	Estonia	Bulgaria	Austria Azerbaijan	Belgium European Union Lithuania Slovakia	European Union: The Commission ensures that reports are submitted as requested by the Secretariat. Finland: Not applicable – Finland has so far not had any compliance issues.

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					<p>Georgia: N/A</p> <p>Netherlands: Not applicable yet. So far, the MoP has not adopted any decisions in cases concerning the Netherlands. Consequently, the NIRs do not mention any MoP decisions so far.</p>
Positive feedback from Parties and stakeholders.	Estonia Netherlands	Bulgaria	Azerbaijan	Belgium Slovakia	<p>European Union: N/A</p> <p>Finland: not applicable – Finland has so far not had any compliance issues.</p> <p>Georgia: N/A</p> <p>Netherlands: Not applicable yet.</p> <p>Slovakia: The cases before the Compliance Committee are discussed and communicated to stakeholders. The findings and recommendations are perceived as a source of authoritative guidance to bring the national legal framework in compliance with the Aarhus Convention.</p>

Objective I.3: The reporting mechanism under the Convention fulfils the role of an effective instrument to monitor the Convention's implementation

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Good quality reports have been prepared through wide multi-stakeholder consultations.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Consultations of Walloon federation of NGOs for environmental protection (Inter-Environnement Wallonie - IEW) + Citizen consultation. Netherlands: Internet consultation on a draft of the NIR in Dutch was open for everyone. Only a few comments were received.

Objective I.4: In implementing the Convention, each Party not only complies with its mandatory provisions, but also endeavours to give effect to its provisions whose application is discretionary.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Adequate legislation and regulations are developed and the required measures are taken.		Azerbaijan	Austria Bulgaria Lithuania	Estonia Finland Netherlands Slovakia	Georgia: Adequate legislation and regulations are developed and the required measures are taken, but development of more effective measures is ongoing continuously
Pilot projects are implemented.	Azerbaijan	Bulgaria Lithuania	Estonia	Slovakia	Finland: Unclear what pilot projects are envisioned. Georgia: Different projects are implemented, are ongoing and planned. Slovakia:

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					Participatory approaches are encouraged and applied also in the processes leading to the adoption of state-wide strategies. For instance, the Environmental Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030 was prepared through a participatory process. Adaptation Action Plan to Climate Change is currently being developed through participatory process. The Water Plan, as required by the Water Framework Directive, is prepared in a participatory manner in a close cooperation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Development of Civil Society. Hence, these participatory approaches significantly contribute to the realization of Art. 7 of the Aarhus Convention.
Positive feedback from Parties and stakeholders.			Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia	Belgium Slovakia	Finland: Unclear whether the indicator refers to the pilot projects or implementation of the Convention. Georgia: There are some positive feedbacks from the different stakeholders (in particular, from the local population of the country, school teachers, NGOs, etc.) on the activities of the EIEC.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan Lithuania	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia Finland Georgia Netherlands Slovakia	Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.

Objective I.5: 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>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Adequate educational programmes and curriculum.		Lithuania	Azerbaijan Belgium Bulgaria Finland	Austria Estonia European Union Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Belgium: Walloon Region provides updated educational material such as websites, with vulgarisation and sensibilisation objectives. (ex. www.moinsdedechets.wallonie.be). A complete and annual report of the state of the environment is also available.</p> <p>European Union: Initiatives include training of judges in Member States on Aarhus-related issues; training to relevant staff in EU institutions; financial contributions available to NGOS for operational costs as well for specific projects in the framework of 'LIFE', the EU fund for the environment, nature and climate action and awareness raising.</p> <p>Georgia: Educational programmes and curriculum are developed but further activities in this direction is in progress.</p> <p>Netherlands: The sector develops its own curricula; no direction is given by the government. Schools may address this in lessons on biology, sustainable development and citizenship. There is capacity at RVO to inform schools on education for sustainable development. Revision of the curriculum has been sent to parliament recently; see website curriculum.nu. Participation is promoted with various initiatives e.g. a question hour with the parliament for children, and the foundation of a children's parliament. Aim is to</p>

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					involve the youth in citizenship and participation in politics. Amendment of the Education Act, by which attention to citizenship will be legally anchored. Slovakia: The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic has a coherent strategy focusing on environmental education and awareness until 2025 (https://www.sazp.sk/app/cmsFile.php?disposition=i&ID=59). Adequate conceptual approaches intentionally promoting environmental education at regional level are being applied as well.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.				Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Ex.: NIR 2016: two days of sensibilisation ad information on the Air, Climate, Energy Plan Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.

Objective I.6: Public authorities at all levels and in all 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>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
The required information, training, organizational and budgetary measures are taken.		Azerbaijan	Bulgaria Estonia Finland	Austria Belgium European Union Netherlands	Belgium: By Decret du 31 mai 2007 relatif à la participation du public en matière d'environnement and AGW du 20 december 2007: Arrêté du Gouvernement wallon portant exécution du décret du 31 mai 2007 relatif à

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				Slovakia	<p>la participation du public en matière d'environnement</p> <p>European Union: The Commission has allocated the necessary resources. DG ENV has a coordinating role, with correspondents in each relevant Directorate General. Training programs are made available.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, and it is planned to continue the trainings on the obligations under the Convention, namely, "Environmental Democracy – Human Rights and Responsibilities", organized by the Environmental Information and Education Centre (EIEC, the former Aarhus Centre) in 2019. But for more effective implementation of the principles of the Convention, budgetary measures should be continuously developed.</p> <p>Netherlands: The implementation legislation is available and applicable. Competent authorities take their own measures where necessary.</p>
National focal points have capacity to carry out the required work.			Azerbaijan Finland	Austria Bulgaria Estonia European Union Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Finland: The work would require more resources.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, but with close cooperation and support of EIEC the work is more effective.</p> <p>Netherlands: There is a national focal point at the ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management as contact point for the UNECE Secretariat.</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Resources are allocated as far as possible.			Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia	Austria Belgium European Union Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: The Walloon Region offers the decretal and budgetary possibility to municipalities to acquire the necessary expertise to make the protection of the environment and sustainable development a daily reality at the level closest to the citizens. Finland: Unclear question. Netherlands: We do not monitor the allocation of resources by other authorities.
Convention is translated into national and subnational languages and distributed widely.		Azerbaijan		Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Finland: Finland is considering translating the Convention into the Sámi languages, in accordance with the discretion afforded in the Sámi Language Act. Georgia: The texts of the Convention is placed on the official websites of MEPA and EIEC. Netherlands: Translated Dutch version is available online, <i>Tractatenblad</i> . No plans for a translation into Frisian language. Slovakia: The Convention is translated in Slovak, the official language of the Slovak Republic.
Adequate training is provided regularly to relevant staff in the authorities.		Bulgaria Lithuania	Austria Azerbaijan Estonia Netherlands	European Union Finland Slovakia	Finland: Completed and ongoing. Georgia: Trainings were conducted, but not regularly, and continuation of the trainings is planned (please, see also the answer on the first question above,

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					Objective 1.6). Netherlands: The responsibility for training lies with the competent authorities. Civil servants are trained on the job. Or may take a course when necessary (ad hoc). Slovakia: The provisions of the Aarhus Convention are to a great extent translated in the pertinent EU and national legislation, which the officials are trained to properly apply.
Programmes for capacity-building activities are being implemented.		Lithuania	Austria Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia Netherlands	Georgia Slovakia	Finland: Unclear what capacity-building activities are envisioned, in addition to adequate training. Netherlands: Ongoing. There is no central capacity programme, but specific events are organised. Examples are a national Conference on environmental management and a national Conference on public participation. Every two years there is a EIA day. Slovakia: Participatory approaches in the spirit of the Aarhus Convention are promoted also by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Development of Civil Society, which organizes capacity-building programmes for government officials and provides additional assistance in matters related therewith.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan Bulgaria	Austria Belgium Estonia	Belgium: NIR 2016 p. 23.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
				Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle. Netherlands: The programme “Duurzaam Door” is mentioned (para. 3, NIR).

Objective I.7: The implementation of 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.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Programmes for capacity-building activities are being implemented.			Austria Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia Netherlands	Finland Georgia Netherlands Slovakia	Finland: Adequate training is completed and ongoing, cf. I.6. Netherlands: General programmes for capacity building activities are not foreseen. The ministry of Infrastructure and Water management has a department on participation. The Platform Participation guides public participation procedures on national infrastructural and environmental projects.
The operational procedures and mechanisms are established and implemented.			Austria Azerbaijan Belgium Bulgaria	European Union Finland Georgia	Belgium: For example, new actions have been taken into account in The Second Walloon Strategy for the Sustainable Development, as contribution from the

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			Estonia	Netherlands Slovakia	public consultation. Netherlands: The Convention is implemented in legislation and is applied. Slovakia: Operational procedures and mechanisms to facilitate public participation have been actively applied for instance in the case of environmental strategies (Environmental Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030, Adaptation Action Plan to Climate Change, Water Plan)
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Cf. NIRs 2016 p. 31. European Union: See, e.g. Commission Notice on access to justice in environmental matters (2017/C 275/01). Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any. Netherlands: See para.5, NIR.

Objective I.8: 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>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
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Measures are implemented.		Bulgaria	Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Belgium: Several advisory councils have been established by decret to provide public authorities with their opinion prior to the adoption of legislative and regulatory measures (Environment Pole of the CESEW). The public authority must justify the fact that it departs from the opinions rendered. These bodies are made up of representatives of business federations, trade unions, associations and NGOs.</p> <p>European Union: Financial contributions available to NGOS for operational costs as well for specific projects in the framework of 'LIFE', the EU fund for the environment, nature and climate action and awareness raising.</p> <p>Netherlands: In the Netherlands there is no system of formal recognition of civil society organizations; civil society organisations have legal personality if they register as association or foundation. Civil society organisations are recognised as stakeholders in policy making; generally, they raise their own funding.</p> <p>Slovakia: Mechanisms facilitating participation of civil society organizations are implemented.</p>
Programmes for capacity-building and awareness-raising activities are implemented.		Bulgaria Lithuania	Azerbaijan Estonia Finland	European Union Slovakia	<p>European Union: Civil Society makes extensive use of the LIFE fund referred to above.</p> <p>Georgia: Some relevant programmes are implemented and ongoing.</p> <p>Netherlands: No central capacity-building and awareness raising</p>

					<p>activities.</p> <p>Slovakia: Capacity-building activities for government officials focusing on public participation are designed in a manner sensitizing officials about the importance of civil society in the preparation of public policies. Awareness-raising, capacity-building and educational activities in close cooperation with civil society form part of the strategy focusing on environmental education until 2025 prepared under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic.</p>
Civil society organizations participate effectively in the related activities.			Austria Azerbaijan	Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Belgium: In the context of the designation of Natura 2000 sites (Directives 2009/147 / EC and 92/48 / EEC), the Walloon Region has taken various measures to raise the awareness of stakeholders (owners, farmers, etc.). It has carried out a public inquiry straddling 2012 and 2013 which it has advertised widely (via websites, information sessions supported by a subsidized association (Naturawal) and the municipalities) and individualized (mail to 60,000 recipients with targeted information). This consultation generated more than 18,000 observations that were processed by the administration.</p> <p>Netherlands: Public authorities have public participation as a special point of attention. When public participation processes are designed, civil society organizations may participate in them.</p>
Support for public interest environmental civil society		Bulgaria	Azerbaijan Estonia	Belgium European Union	<p>Belgium: Beside the creation of the advisory councils (cf. page up), the minister responsible for the</p>

<p>Organizations is being provided.</p> <p>b j e c t i v e</p> <p>I . 9 :</p> <p>C i v i l</p>				<p>Finland Georgia Lithuania Slovakia</p>	<p>environment and his administration subsidize a series of NGOs annually through the budget law. Moreover, the administration is linked by framework conventions with other representative bodies from the civil society (UCM, UWE, UVC).</p> <p>Georgia: The role of the general public and civil society organizations during the decision-making process is recognized, distribution of relevant information is provided, public and civil society organizations are involved in the decision-making processes and they have a possibility to submit their written and/or oral comments and opinions during the decision-making process for further consideration. Currently, various activities are being implemented to further improve the access to and dissemination of environmental information.</p> <p>Netherlands: NGOs raise their own funding.</p>
<p>s o c i e t y</p> <p>o r g</p> <p>Good practices are reported through NIRs.</p>		<p>Bulgaria</p>	<p>Azerbaijan</p>	<p>Austria Belgium Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania Slovakia</p>	<p>Belgium: NIR 2016 p.30.</p> <p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, if any.</p> <p>Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.</p>

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.

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Measures for raising public awareness are being implemented.		Belgium Bulgaria	Azerbaijan Estonia	Austria European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Slovakia	Belgium: Even the information is available, more awareness could be raised. European Union: See, e.g. Commission Notice on access to justice in environmental matters (2017/C 275/01). Netherlands: There is a central webpage on public participation (www.rijksoverheid.nl). The implementation legislation is accessible for everyone online.
Support for public interest environmental civil society organizations is being provided.		Bulgaria	Azerbaijan Belgium Estonia	European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Slovakia	Belgium: Beside the creation of the advisory councils (cf. up), the minister responsible for the environment and his administration subsidize a series of NGOs annually through the budget law. Moreover, the administration is linked by framework conventions with other representative bodies from the civil society (UCM, UWE, UVC). European Union: Financial contributions available to NGOS for operational costs as well for specific projects in the framework of 'LIFE', the EU fund for the environment, nature and climate action and awareness raising. Georgia: Different trainings, informational meetings and other measures are conducted and planned. E.g. trainings on environmental democracy (please, see above, Objective 1.6) were conducted through Georgia for all stakeholders and there is a plan to continue these trainings with the aim to raise awareness of all Georgian citizens, including general public, on their

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					<p>environmental rights. Relevant activities in this direction are on-going.</p> <p>Netherlands: NGOs generally raise their own funds.</p> <p>Slovakia: Civil society organizations are eligible to apply for funding provided by the Green Education Fund and the Environmental Fund. Environmental civil society organizations are exempted from the payment of court fees under the Act No. 71/1992 on Court Fees, which significantly contributes to their ability to realize their access to justice rights.</p>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.		Bulgaria	Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania Slovakia	<p>Belgium: NIR 2016 p. 7.</p> <p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, if any.</p> <p>Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.</p>

Access to information

Objective I.10: Public authorities at all levels and in all relevant sectors of government have well-established information policies and mechanisms, under which environmental information of a high quality is routinely provided and proactively disseminated to the public in a user-friendly manner, making full use of electronic tools where available.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Environmental information of a high quality is routinely provided and proactively			Azerbaijan Estonia Finland	Austria Belgium Bulgaria	Belgium: The Walloon Region yearly report on the Environment State (Rapport Etat Environnement) +

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
disseminated to the public in a user-friendly manner.			Georgia	European Union Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>different networks provide information on their topics such the geoportail of Wallonia, or other examples as networks on bathing water quality, surface waters, groundwaters, dioxine, soils state, REGINE/ CELINE</p> <p>European Union: See, for example, the European Environment Agency's (EEA) 'State of the Environment' reports. See also the Commission's action plan to improve environmental reporting (Commission Report (COM(2017) 312).</p> <p>Georgia: In some cases yes, but further and intensive work is ongoing for the improvement of the quality of environmental information and its proactive dissemination.</p> <p>Netherlands: For many projects that may have a significant impact on the environment, an environmental impact assessment is made, that is published. The challenge remains how to present the information in a user-friendly manner.</p> <p>Slovakia: Prominent example represents the Information Portal of the Ministry of Environment (Enviroportál, https://www.enviroportal.sk/).</p>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia Finland Georgia	<p>Belgium: Cf. p. 16 NIR 2016</p> <p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia:</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
				Lithuania Slovakia	Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.
Review mechanism on access to information.	Finland Lithuania		Azerbaijan Estonia	Austria Belgium Bulgaria European Union Georgia Slovakia	Belgium: Access to administrative AND judicial procedures is granted. See for example for b) Loi du 12 JANVIER 1993 concernant un droit d'action en matière de protection de l'environnement European Union: A system of internal review has been put in place and available for access to documents requests within the Commission as well as in other EU institutions. Georgia: Annual reports on the requests of public information, including environmental information, from government organizations and responses to them that are registered and published through the website of the Legislative Herald of Georgia can be considered as one of the review mechanisms on access to information. Netherlands: There is no such review mechanism. However, environmental legislation is evaluated from time to time. The right of access to information can be invoked in court.

Public participation

Objective I.11: Public participation procedures are regarded by public authorities and all other actors concerned as an integral part of the preparation of policies, plans, programmes, projects, legal instruments and executive regulations that may have a significant effect on the 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>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Measures have been taken to ensure that effective public participation procedures are in place.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Livre VIII CoDT + Livre 1er Code Environnement. European Union: See, among others, Directive 2003/35/EC on public participation as well as the Aarhus Regulation. Netherlands: Public participation is a major point of attention for the public authorities. In some cases, formal participation procedures are required by law, in many cases policymakers will also design a process (where applicable in addition to the legally required procedures) to engage with stakeholders in the policymaking process.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Several advisory councils have been established by decret to provide public authorities with their opinion prior to the adoption of legislative and regulatory measures (Environnement Pole of the CESEW). The public authority must justify the fact that it departs from the opinions rendered. Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					<p>Georgia: Yes, if any.</p> <p>Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.</p> <p>Netherlands: The implementation system is explained.</p>
Public authorities demonstrably take account of public input.			Azerbaijan	<p>Austria</p> <p>Belgium</p> <p>Bulgaria</p> <p>Estonia</p> <p>European Union</p> <p>Finland</p> <p>Georgia</p> <p>Lithuania</p> <p>Netherlands</p> <p>Slovakia</p>	<p>Belgium: Directive 2001/42/CE— Directive relative à l'évaluation stratégique environnementale.</p> <p>Georgia: Public authorities take account reasonable and justified comments and opinions from the public.</p> <p>Netherlands: Public participation is a major point of attention for the public authorities, and forms a part of the decision-making process. Public authorities are to take into account the input received.</p>

Access to justice

Objective I.12:

(a) Each Party ensures access to administrative or judicial review procedures that can provide timely and effective remedies for members of the public who consider that their rights under the Convention have not been respected;

(b) Each Party empowers members of the public, where they meet the criteria, if any, laid down in national law, to challenge acts and omissions that contravene provisions of national environmental law. Any such criteria should be established taking fully into account the Convention's objective of guaranteeing access to justice;

(c) Each Party undertakes genuine efforts to reduce and eliminate financial and other barriers that may prevent access to such review procedures and establishes, where appropriate, assistance mechanisms to that end.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Effective access to administrative or judicial review procedures is ensured through: (a) providing timely and effective remedies to members of the public; (b) empowering members of the public to obtain access to justice; and (c) reducing and eliminating financial and other barriers that may prevent access to review procedures and through establishing assistance mechanisms.			Austria Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia	Belgium European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Belgium: Access to administrative AND judicial procedures is granted. See for example for b) Loi du 12 JANVIER 1993 concernant un droit d'action en matière de protection de l'environnement.</p> <p>European Union: Following extensive consultation and careful assessment, based on a Commission Report and an accompanying Study, adopted on 10 October 2019, on 11 December 2019, the Commission has announced in its Communication on the European Green Deal, that the Commission ‘<i>will consider revising the Aarhus Regulation to improve access to administrative and judicial review at EU level for citizens and NGOs who have concerns about the legality of decisions with effects on the environment. The Commission will also take action to improve their access to justice before national courts in all Member States.</i>’</p> <p>Georgia: Access to administrative review procedures is guaranteed by the legislation, according to the General Administrative Code of Georgia, any person has the right to request a public information and to apply to the court to cancel or reverse a decision if he/she was refused to issue public information or other requirements related to the issuance of public information have been infringed. In addition, any interested party is allowed to lodge an administrative complaint within one month after publication or becoming officially familiar with the administrative act. The authorized administrative body is obliged to review and issue a decision upon the complaint</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					<p>within one month. After the administrative review, an interested party can lodge a complaint before the court in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Code of Georgia. In addition to that, disabled persons, public organisations for disabled persons, their institutions, training and industrial organisations and unions and persons registered in the unified database of socially vulnerable families shall be released from the payment of state duty for cases to be reviewed by common courts according to the law on State Duty of Georgia. According to the Environmental Assessment Code of Georgia, any member of the public may, under a procedure established by the legislation of Georgia, appeal a decision made by the administrative body in accordance with this Code, if he/she considers that the administrative body failed to ensure his/her rights on access to information and/or participation in the decision-making process provided for by this Code or otherwise violated the requirements established by the legislation of Georgia.</p> <p>Netherlands: The Act on legal assistance contains a system for subsidies for the less wealthy. This system also concerns environmental matters and is valid for small environmental and nature groups with little capital. There is a subsidy scheme for the own contribution.</p> <p>Slovakia: The relatively new Administrative Court Procedure Act (Správny súdny poriadok) represents a major contribution to the realization of access to justice rights under the Convention. § 42 thereof specifically addresses the access to justice of interested public in environmental matters. Environmental civil society</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					organizations are exempted from the payment of court fees under the Act No. 71/1992 on Court Fees, which significantly contributes to their ability to realize their access to justice rights.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: NIR 2016 p. 33 Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle. Netherlands: See above.

Objective I.13: 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>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Adequate curricula/training programmes.			Austria Azerbaijan Bulgaria Georgia	Estonia European Union Finland	European Union: In 2008, the Commission launched a programme for training of judges in the field of environmental law. By means of training modules available online, national judges and training institutes can obtain up-to-date and accurate knowledge on different topics of EU environmental law, such as access to justice, environmental liability, water and waste.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					<p>Finland: Completed and ongoing.</p> <p>Georgia: Different trainings have been conducted, and trainings for judges, public prosecutors and other legal professionals are planned to be conducted in 2020.</p> <p>Slovakia: Judicial academy provides the following courses in its curricula: 2016 - Crimes against the environment 2017-The impact of EU law on environment (Aarhus Convention) 2017 – Crimes against the environment 2017 - Forensic environmental research 2018 - Forensic environmental research 2020 – Protection of environment and application practice of courts.</p>
Measures are being implemented.			Azerbaijan Bulgaria Georgia	Estonia European Union Lithuania Slovakia	<p>European Union: The Commission maintains a publicly available register for internal reviews; judgments of the Court of Justice are also publicly available and accessible on-line.</p> <p>Finland: Unclear what measures are envisioned.</p> <p>Georgia: Several activities are planned on this direction.</p> <p>Slovakia: In the period 2016–2020, judicial academy organized seminars and training activities for 94 participants (judges, prosecutor and other legal professionals, as follows: 2016–2018 – 5 seminars</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					2020–May – 1 seminar.
Decisions of courts, and whenever possible of other judicial bodies, are publicly accessible.		Belgium	Azerbaijan	Austria Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Belgium: https://www.tribunaux-rechtbanken.be/fr/je-recherche/jurisprudence</p> <p>Georgia: According to the organic law of Georgia on General Courts, a court decision made at an open session as a result of hearing a case on the merits shall be fully published on the website of the court, and if a court decision is made at a closed session as a result of hearing a case on the merits, only the resolution part of the decision shall be published on the website of the court. The issue of disclosing personal data of a person that are included in the court decisions shall be resolved in accordance with law. There is an electronic system in operation for case-flow management for all courts of Georgia where the decisions are accessible in addition with the search systems available on the website of a particular Court. It should be noted that it is possible to search for the decisions in accordance with the body of law concerned (civil, administrative or criminal law cases).</p> <p>Slovakia: Decisions of courts are publicly accessible at the Slov-Lex portal (https://www.slov-lex.sk/domov).</p>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan Slovakia	Austria Bulgaria Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania	<p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, if any.</p> <p>Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					any) during the next reporting cycle.

B. Focal area II: Expansion

Strategic goal II

Increase the impact of the Convention in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and beyond

To increase the impact of the Convention in the ECE region and beyond, Parties will implement the following objectives as far as possible:

Objective II.1: The number of Parties to the Convention within the ECE region continues to increase steadily throughout the plan period.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Completed ratification procedures.		Austria Azerbaijan Slovakia		Belgium Estonia European Union Finland Georgia Netherlands	<p>Bulgaria: Not applicable</p> <p>European Union: All Member States as well as the EU ratified the Convention.</p> <p>Netherlands: Public Information Act; environmental information is defined in chapter 19 of the Environmental Management Act.</p> <p>Slovakia: Slovakia ratified the Convention and its Protocols and supports the accession of the countries to the Convention. Slovakia supports cooperation and development activities in its broader neighbourhood. For instance, in the Eastern Partnership region it has been active within the scope of the ENI SEIS II East Project.</p>

Objective II.2: The amendment to the Convention on public participation in decisions on the deliberate release into the environment and the placing on the market of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is approved by a sufficient number of Parties to enter into force by 2015 and is progressively implemented.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Completed ratification procedures.	Azerbaijan	Austria Slovakia		Belgium Estonia Finland Georgia Netherlands	Belgium: Cf. NIR 2016 p.2 et p.19 Bulgaria: Not applicable.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.	Azerbaijan Slovakia			Estonia Finland Georgia	Bulgaria: Not applicable. Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any.

Objective II.3: States in other regions of the world effectively exercise their right to accede to the Convention. Parties actively encourage accession to the Convention by States of other regions of the world.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Completed ratification procedures.		Estonia Slovakia	Austria Azerbaijan	Belgium	Belgium: Cf. NIR p.2 et p.19 Bulgaria: Not applicable. European Union: The Aarhus Convention features in exchanges and negotiations related to accession to the European Union.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					Finland: Unclear question. Georgia: N/A
Good practices are reported through NIRs.	Slovakia	Estonia			Bulgaria: Not applicable Georgia: If any.

Objective II.4: The Convention sets an internationally recognized standard for access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, and inspires the development of similar instruments in other regions of the world thereby putting Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration into practice.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Convention promoted effectively within interministerial processes and through Parties' positions in major international forums, as well as among countries in other regions.			Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia Netherlands Slovakia	Austria Belgium European Union Finland Netherlands	Belgium: Cf. point at the agenda of the Environment Council of the European Union of 19th of December 2019. European Union: The EU takes account of the Convention where appropriate (see e.g. CETA, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement is a free-trade agreement between Canada, the European Union and its Member States). Finland: Ongoing. Georgia: The principles of the Aarhus Convention is promoted by the representatives of Georgia in the relevant international fora, if appropriate. Netherlands:

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					<p>Developing: The Netherlands is promoting the Aarhus principles in processes in international fora.</p> <p>Completed: The Aarhus principles are fully implemented in national law.</p> <p>Slovakia: One of the priorities of the Slovak OSCE chairmanship is the promotion of SDG 16 (promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies). In a broader context, it involves promotion of rule of law and priorities enshrined in the Aarhus Convention (access to information, public participation, access to justice).</p>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.	Slovakia	Bulgaria		Estonia Finland	<p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, if any.</p>

Objective II.5: The Parties to the Convention actively promote the application of its principles in international environmental decision-making processes and within the framework of international organizations relating to the environment, and endeavour to influence the practices of international forums in matters relating to the environment, in particular the development and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Increased number of international forums that apply the Almaty Guidelines in their procedures.		Azerbaijan Slovakia	Austria Bulgaria Estonia Netherlands		<p>Finland: Information not available.</p> <p>Georgia: N/A</p> <p>Netherlands: NL is promoting /has promoted the Aarhus principles in international decision-making processes such as</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					SAICM and the relevant UNEP chemicals and waste conventions (BRS and Minamata).* (E.g. recently under COP3 Minamata November 2019 the issue of transparency and involvement of stakeholders was flagged by NL).
National coordination mechanisms are in place and are working effectively.	Finland Georgia	Slovakia	Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia	Austria Belgium	Belgium: Cf. NIR 2016 pp.2-3. Finland: No formal coordination mechanism.
Good practices are reported through NIRs.	Slovakia		Bulgaria	Belgium Estonia	Belgium: Cf. NIR 2016 pp.2-3. Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any.

Objective II.6: The Parties to the Convention, both in their participation in international policymaking and in their national implementation activities, achieve synergies between the Convention and other international environmental and human rights agreements.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Synergies between the implementation of the Convention and other international environmental and human rights agreements are ensured.			Austria Azerbaijan Bulgaria Estonia Georgia Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium European Union	Belgium: Cf. point at the agenda of the Environment Council of the European Union of 19th of December 2019. European Union: The EU takes account of the Convention where appropriate. Finland: Unclear how Parties can ensure mentioned synergies.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					Netherlands: Three strategic partnerships with environmental NGOs to support among others nature protectors and environmental activists. The Dutch human rights fund is also used to support land right defenders and environmental activists. Furthermore, in international dialogue on the position of human rights defenders the Netherlands pays attention to the risks for environmental activists and land governance organisations (including indigenous people).
Good practices are reported through NIRs.		Bulgaria	Estonia Slovakia	Georgia	Georgia: Yes, if any.

C. Focal area III: Development

Strategic goal III

Further development of the provisions and principles of the Convention where necessary to ensure that it continues to achieve its objectives

To achieve the further development of the provisions and principles of the Convention where necessary to ensure that it continues to achieve its objectives, Parties will endeavour to implement the following objectives:

Objective III.1: The provisions of the Convention are interpreted in a dynamic way, enabling practice to adapt to experience acquired in the course of implementation, new developments in society, technological innovation and new environmental challenges.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Adequate legislative, regulatory and policy measures, and institutional frameworks are in place.		Azerbaijan	Austria Bulgaria Lithuania	Estonia European Union Finland	European Union: See, in particular, the INSPIRE Directive, which aims to create a European Union spatial data infrastructure for the purposes of EU environmental policies and

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
				Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>policies or activities which may have an impact on the environment. See also the Commission's action plan to improve environmental reporting (Commission Report (COM(2017) 312).</p> <p>Georgia: Legislative, regulatory and policy measures are in place, and further activities in this direction is ongoing and should be planned as well.</p> <p>Lithuania: In our view, implementation of the Aarhus Convention on a national level is very complex issue and, in some sense, is developing constantly.</p> <p>Slovakia: Information systems of the Ministry of Environment reflect the developments in the fields of technology to enable access to information. The activities within the scope of the Open Government Initiative promote and foster improved access to information and dynamic approach to public participation procedures.</p>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.		Bulgaria	Azerbaijan Slovakia	Austria Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania	<p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, if any.</p> <p>Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.</p>

Objective III.2: The Parties explore possibilities for the development of measures under the Convention to ensure greater opportunities for public participation in policy formulation and implementation concerning each of the three pillars of the Convention, so as to contribute to sustainable development, recalling the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the related Plan of Implementation and the Rio+20 Declaration. Furthermore, the Parties share 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>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Provisions for effective public participation are implemented.		Bulgaria	Azerbaijan	Austria Estonia European Union Finland Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Georgia: Yes and are further developing. In case of expression of interest from other forums and their needs to use the Convention as a basis or a source of inspiration for further strengthening participatory democracy in their respective fields, Georgia is ready to share its experience.</p> <p>Netherlands: Public participation is a major point of attention for the public authorities. In some cases, formal participation procedures are required by law, in many cases policymakers will also design a process (where applicable in addition to the legally required procedures) to engage with stakeholders in the policymaking process.</p> <p>Slovakia: Public participation activities in collaboration with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of Government for the Development of Civil Society are being promoted and implemented in the preparation of the Water Plan under the Water Framework Directive.</p>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.		Bulgaria Slovakia	Azerbaijan	Austria Estonia Finland Georgia	<p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia:</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
				Lithuania	Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.

Access to information

Objective III.3: The range of environmental information that is made available to the public is gradually widened, inter alia, by 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 as to how to promote the 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>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Environmental information, including related to products is made available effectively.		Azerbaijan	Bulgaria Estonia	Austria Belgium European Union Finland Lithuania Slovakia	Belgium: The Walloon Region supports a non-profit association of consumer and environmental protection associations to set up an "eco-consumption network" ("Ecoconso"). This association, based on a computer database, publications, an information center and a hotline, aims to raise awareness, inform and help consumers make more respectful choices. environment and health (limitation of pollution, preservation of natural resources, reduction of waste production). European Union: See, e.g. Ecolabel: Established in 1992 and recognised across Europe and worldwide, the EU Ecolabel is a label of environmental excellence that is awarded to products and services meeting high environmental standards throughout their life-cycle. See also other product legislation, for example, with regard to the energy rating of products. Georgia:

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					<p>Environmental information (ingredients) majority of products is ensured by the labelling system. But products (e.g. some jewellery, toys, etc.) without such information still exist.</p> <p>Netherlands: The legal framework is available. The application is the responsibility of the different competent authorities.</p> <p>Slovakia: Slovakia implements the EC Ecolabel scheme, which enables producers to acquire certifications for their products. Ministry of Environment and the Slovak Environment Agency inform the public on their website about conditions to acquire such certifications for respective categories of products.</p>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.		Azerbaijan	Bulgaria	Austria Belgium Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania Slovakia	<p>Belgium: Cf. NIR 2016 p. 18.</p> <p>Finland: Good practices are reported when identified.</p> <p>Georgia: Yes, if any.</p> <p>Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.</p>

Public participation

Objective III.4: The provisions on public participation in decisions having a significant impact on the environment, encompassing, inter alia, product-related decision-making, are assessed, further reflected on and, where appropriate, elaborated upon.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Measures are taken.			Azerbaijan	Austria Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Netherlands Slovakia	<p>European Union: Legislative proposals, including those related to products are adopted following public consultation: https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations_en</p> <p>Finland: No regular/formal review mechanism, case by case consideration.</p> <p>Georgia: Public participation was ensured in the development of respective legislation.</p> <p>Netherlands: Measures taken for effective participation in procedures for plan and project decision making processes.</p> <p>Slovakia: According to the Act No. 469/2002 on Environmental Certification, the Ministry of Environment enables the members of the interested public to participate in the process on determination of a group of products and conditions for acquiring environmental certification. The Ministry of Environment further enables the public to comment on a proposal of a group of products and specific conditions on acquiring environmental certification.</p>
Provisions for effective public participation are implemented.			Azerbaijan	Austria Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Georgia: Public participation was ensured in the development of respective legislation.</p> <p>Netherlands: Implemented in legislation for all decisions that have a significant impact on the environment.</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Capacity-building activities are implemented.		Azerbaijan Netherlands	Bulgaria	Estonia Slovakia	Finland: Unclear what is meant by capacity building in this context. Georgia: Trainings on environmental democracy, mentioned above in Objective I.6, include the product-related information part. Netherlands: Capacity building for participation under the Environmental Management and Planning Act (Dutch: <i>Omgevingswet</i> , expected to enter into force in 2021).
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan Bulgaria	Austria Estonia Finland Georgia Netherlands Slovakia	Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any. Netherlands: For the new Environmental Management and Planning Act (<i>Omgevingswet</i>) see Compendium of best practices on: https://aandeslagmetdeomgevingswet.nl/participatieomgevingswet/

Objective III.5: 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, as appropriate, further developed 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 MEAs, in particular the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention), and by involving its bodies in such processes.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Measures are implemented.			Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	<p>Belgium: Decree of 31 May 2007 and 27.10.2011 amending various decrees concerning the competences of Wallonia classify all plans, programs and projects, subject to public inquiry under other legislation, into five procedural categories, each category corresponding to a very specific harmonized procedure for information, publicity and public inquiry. Cf. NIR 2016 pp.22-23</p> <p>Georgia: Implemented, except of the obligations under the Espoo Convention.</p> <p>Netherlands: In some cases formal participation procedures are required by law, in many cases policymakers will also design a process (where applicable in addition to the legally required procedures) to engage with stakeholders in the policymaking process. Measures taken for effective participation in procedures for plan and project decision making processes. This includes participation at the start of a SEA procedure.</p>
Provisions for effective public participation are implemented.		Netherlands	Azerbaijan	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Estonia European Union Finland Lithuania	<p>Belgium: Ex.: The decree of 11 March 1999 on the environmental permit provides that the results of the public participation procedure must be duly taken into consideration. NIR 2016 p. 25.</p> <p>Georgia: Implemented, except of the obligations under the</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
				Slovakia	Espoo Convention. Netherlands: See above. Implemented in legislation for all decisions with a significant impact on the environment.
Capacity-building activities are implemented.		Azerbaijan		Belgium Bulgaria Estonia Finland Georgia Netherlands Slovakia	Georgia: Implemented under the trainings on environmental democracy, mentioned above in Objective I.6. Netherlands: No additional measures foreseen. Capacity building for participation under the Environmental Management and Planning Act (Dutch: <i>Omgevingswet</i>).
Good practices are reported through NIRs.			Azerbaijan Bulgaria	Austria Belgium Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania Netherlands Slovakia	Belgium: Ex.: In the context of the designation of Natura 2000 sites (Directives 2009/147 / EC and 92/48 / EEC), the Walloon Region has taken various measures to raise the awareness of stakeholders (owners, farmers, etc.). Georgia: Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle. Netherlands: For the new Environmental Management and Planning Act (Omgevingswet) see Compendium of best practices on: https://aandeslagmetdeomgevingswet.nl/participatie/omgevingswet/

Objective III.6: 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 the capacity of civil society organizations is supported and civil society is strengthened.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Innovative and effective forms and tools of public participation are in place.		Azerbaijan	Bulgaria Estonia Finland	Austria European Union Lithuania Slovakia	<p>European Union: The Commission is promoting the wider use of citizen science to complement environmental reporting. See Item 8 on the Commission's action plan to improve environmental reporting (Commission Report (COM(2017) 312).</p> <p>Georgia: Effective forms and tools of public participation are in place, but innovative – not.</p> <p>Netherlands: Public authorities work continuously with and experiment with forms of participation. Think of E-participation, roundtables or co-creation. The coming Environmental and Spatial Act leaves room for innovative approaches. Stories about this are shared on different fora, for instance on the website https://aandeslagmetdeomgevingswet.nl/participatieomgevingswet.</p> <p>Slovakia: As mentioned above, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of Government for the Development of Civil Society in collaboration with central bodies of state administration promotes innovative practices fostering meaningful public participation.</p>
Capacity of civil society organizations and civil society is strengthened.		Bulgaria	Azerbaijan Estonia	Finland Lithuania Slovakia	<p>Georgia: Through different trainings and meetings, that is continuous process.</p> <p>Netherlands: Generally, NGOs raise their own funds.</p>

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Good practices are reported through NIRs.		Azerbaijan Slovakia	Bulgaria	Austria Estonia Finland Georgia Lithuania	Finland: Good practices are reported when identified. Georgia: Yes, if any. Lithuania: Good practices were reported and will be reported (if any) during the next reporting cycle.

Access to justice

Objective III.7: 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 adequate and effective remedies, taking fully into account the Convention's objective of, inter alia, 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 environmental civil society organizations. Further steps are taken to remove or reduce financial and other barriers and to establish assistance mechanisms where appropriate.

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
Adequate measures are implemented.		Azerbaijan Bulgaria	Estonia Netherlands	European Union Finland Lithuania Slovakia	European Union: See, e.g. Commission Notice on access to justice in environmental matters (2017/C 275/01). Georgia: Please, see the comments under the item Access to Justice above. Netherlands: The EU works on the improvement of access to justice for NGOs in decisions by the European institutions relating to the environment, following the findings in ACCC/2008/C/32. Slovakia: The relatively new Administrative Court Procedure

<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>Brief description supporting the assessment</i>
					Act (Správny súdny poriadok) represents a major contribution to the realization of access to justice obligations under the Convention. § 42 thereof specifically addresses the access to justice of interested public in environmental matters. As mentioned above, environmental civil society organizations are exempted from payment of court fees as well.
