2020 SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS
Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs

Watch Movie
Through years, the Convention and its Protocol proved to be instrumental in addressing the current challenges and conflicting priorities facing in the world, including addressing hot spot environmental issues, energy system transformation, transition towards green economy and infrastructure, promoting innovation and fighting the corruption.
Welcoming new Parties

- Albania joins the Aarhus Convention’s amendment on genetically modified organisms

- Kazakhstan accesses to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

- Italy ratifies the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers by Italy
Overnight, we have seen the closure of borders, the cancellation of meetings and gatherings, the shutting down of public spaces and public institutions and the transferal online of services. Consequently, there has been an impact on procedural rights of public access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice, including in environmental matters.

In such a situation, the two global treaties hosted by UNECE – the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention, 1998) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs, 2003) – aid authorities in ensuring the implementation of the above-mentioned rights to common standards.
Upholding Aarhus rights in a changing world

Twenty-fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention 1 - 4 July 2020 (virtual) and 28-29 October (hybrid)
Promoting transparency and digital transformation to support a green and circular economy, biosafety and community resilience

Seventh meeting of the Task Force on Access to Information under the Aarhus Convention (Virtual meeting) 16 - 17 November 2020
UNECE Protocol on PRTRs promotes coordination and cooperation in environmental reporting supporting a green and circular economy

Eighth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs and 18 December 2020 (hybrid)
Compliance Committees to the Aarhus Convention and to its Protocol on PRTRs

The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee supports Convention’s Parties to improve their legislation and practice with regard to access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. This assistance covered a broad range of topics, including environmental impact assessments, nuclear activities, energy plans, spatial planning, waste, water, nature and noise exemption permitting, legal aid, the costs for bringing court challenges in environmental cases and protection of environmental defenders.

The Protocol on PRTRs Compliance Committee worked to assist Protocol’s Parties to improve their legislative frameworks.
Annual meeting of the Aarhus Centres

Through a long-standing partnership, OSCE and the Aarhus Convention secretariat, continued supporting Aarhus Centres. The 2020 Aarhus Centres Annual Meeting (10 - 11 November 2020), focused on their role in ensuring environmental democracy in times of disaster and post-disaster recovery; gender mainstreaming, and contributing to sustainable development. Aarhus Centres are unique neutral entities that can assist authorities to promote public participation in times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic and during the post-pandemic recovery.

Learn more: https://www.osce.org/secretariat/469941
Environmental Information System in the Eastern Partnership countries

Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) project

European neighbourhood instrument (ENI) SEIS II project component “Access to environmental information” implemented by EEA in close cooperation with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Aarhus secretariat resulted in the assessment of the status of e-government and open data readiness in environmental domain and the country roadmaps to advance digitalization of environmental information systems.
Aarhus Convention and the Escazú Agreement

- First e-learning introductory course on SDG 16 and Access Rights, the Aarhus Convention, and the Escazu Agreement was jointly prepared by UNEP, UNECE and ECLAC with the support of the European Union through the InforMEA project.

- Aarhus Convention secretariat provides an ongoing advisory support to ECLAC on the Escazú Agreement

Second Meeting of the Signatory Countries to the Escazú Agreement
National Implementation Reports 2021

- Launch of Aarhus Convention National Implementation Reporting for 2021
- Launch of the Protocol on PRTRs National Implementation Reporting for 2021
Thank you for all your efforts that helped to promote transparency, better decision-making and the rule of law for the benefit of people and nature!

Visit: https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation
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