

## Aarhus Convention – 26th Working Group of the Parties, 22 June 2022

### **Muki Haklay, ECSA, European ECO Forum**

19 October 2021, Agenda item 3a – thematic session on access to information:

The discussion about product information within the context of the convention and public access to environmental information is very welcomed, and I would like to thank the secretariat and the chair of the session for the information that is being shared under item 3(a).

I would like to also add that there is now an important role for the public to create and share information, beyond acting as passive consumers. The public can check the accuracy of claims that producers make about their products and their environmental performance. We can learn from the effort of the US Youth Climate Finance Alliance which bring together youth to analyse financial information from corporations, or the Germany-based CorrelAid which brings many data scientists who want to contribute to good causes, by analysing data and information and turning it into forms that are suitable for a wide audience. We cannot expect that the release of information will be enough for members of the public to understand and use it effectively, without efforts to provide the capabilities within civil society to use the data and make it legible and useful.

Especially when considering product information and sharing it with the public, a specific effort is required to ensure that digital inequalities are addressed - from ownership of devices to the ability to use the data in a meaningful way. There is a need to consider the impacts on justice and enable sense-making of the information - not just to provide it in expert language that interested members of the public cannot make sense of.

Finally, the public also has a role in monitoring and assessing some of the claims that are made by producers. There is a growing effort by food standard agencies to utilise citizen science in sampling products and sharing information. It is worth considering where such an active role in monitoring can fit within product information and support the public to fulfil its ability to act against greenwashing and provide evidence to other members of the public and the authorities.

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Chair