

UNECE Aarhus Convention, Decision VI/8b concerning Austria, follow-up from the open session at the Compliance Committee's 66th meeting (11 March 2020)

As referred to during the open session, Austria has had elections for the national Parliament (National Council) in 2019 and no new legislative measures were initiated by the interim government in office until the end of 2019.

Since the beginning of this year Austria has a new government at federal level and the Ministry for the Environment has been re-structured in the *Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology* lead by Federal Minister Ms. Leonore Gewessler from the Green Party.

With regard to civil society the Austrian Government Programme 2020-2024 stresses the importance of civil society engagement and of civil society organisations. The government also remains committed to promote an active dialogue with those organisations. It is envisaged to put in place a central digital platform for the publications of approval decisions related to the environment with a view to easier access to information.

On the recognition environmental organisations a regular review of already recognised environmental organisations has been laid down with the latest amendment to the EIA Act (Article 19 (9)). With this amendment it is intended to ensure ongoing transparency by reviewing the criteria laid down in Article 19 (6) such as the proof of activities aiming at environmental protection.

In addition, the latest amendment also introduced a minimum number of members as new criterion for the recognition of environmental organisations. Of the currently 62 recognised environmental organisations, 51 environmental organisations who had been recognised for more than 3 years had to submit documents for review by 1 December 1 2019.

38 of these environmental organisations were successfully reviewed and the recognition was confirmed. The review of 4 environmental organisations has not yet been completed because individual documents are still missing.

Despite several requests by the Ministry 9 environmental organisations have not submitted any documents in order to renew the recognition. For these environmental organisations the withdrawals of their recognition are currently being prepared.

The Ministry keeps and updates via its website the information on the status of the recognition of environmental organisations ("*Liste anerkannter Umweltorganisationen*").

https://www.bmlrt.gv.at/umwelt/betriebl_umweltschutz_uvp/uvp/anerkennung_uo.html