

# Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Lithuania

## Working Group for the Preparation of the first Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention 28-30 November, Geneva

### Ratification

Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania ratified the Aarhus Convention on 10 July 2001.

### National Legislation, Guide Lines and Policy Documents

#### **Public Access to Information**

##### National scale

*Access to any kind of information*

- Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Art. 25, 1992
- Law No VIII-1905 On Amendment of the Law on Provision of Information to the Public, adopted on 29 August 2001
- Law No VIII-1524 On Right to Receive Information from State and Municipal Institutions, adopted on 11 January 2000
- Government Resolution No 654 On Approval of the Standard Order on Service for Citizens and Other Persons in the Institutions of Public Administration, adopted on 6 June 2000

*Access to information on environment*

- Law No I-2223 On Environmental Protection, adopted on 21 January 1992 (*draft amendments to this law have been prepared and should be adopted by the end of 2001*)
- Government Resolution No 1175 On Approval of the Order on Public Access to Environmental Information in the Republic of Lithuania, adopted on 22 October 1999
- Guidance Notes for the Implementation of the Order on Public Access to Environmental Information in the Republic of Lithuania, 1999
- The General Reference Book on Public Authorities Possessing Environmental Information, 2000 (*should be renewed by the middle of 2002*)
- Order of the Minister of Environment No 455 On the Set up of the Commission on Education and Information for Sustainable Development, adopted on 14 September 2001

##### Institutional scale

- Order of the Minister of Environment No 273 On the Regulation on Possession of Documentation, Provision of Information Under the Public Requests and Visitor Service in the Ministry of Environment, adopted on 04 July 2000
- Public Authorities Regulations on Access to Information, adopted in the middle of 2000
  - possession of documentation
  - preparation and provision of information under the public requests
  - person(s) responsible for the provision of information
  - reference list of environmental information possessed by public authority

## **Public Participation in Decision-Making**

### *Public Participation in Decisions on Specific Activities*

- Law No I- 1120 On Territorial Planning, adopted on 12 December 1995
- Government Resolution No 1079 On the Approval of Regulations Regarding Public Hearings on Territorial Planning Documentation Projects, adopted on 18 September 1996
- Law No VIII-1636 On Amendment of Law No I-1495 On Environmental Impact Assessment, adopted on 18 April 2000
- Government Resolution No 277 On the Approval of the Order on Public Information and Participation in the Process of Environmental Impact Assessment, adopted on 10 July 2000
- Law No VIII-1948 On Amendment of Law No I-1240 On Construction, adopted on 19 September 2000; Art. 30
- Law No IX-375 On Genetically Modified Organisms, adopted on 12 June 2001
- Order of the Minister of Environment No 132 On Regulation on IPPC Permitting, adopted on 02 March 2001

### *Public Participation Concerning Plans, Programs and During the Preparation of Laws*

- Law No I-872 On the Order for the Preparation of Laws and Other Legally Binding Normative Regulations, adopted on 2 May 1995; Art. 4
- Law No VIII-1234 On Public Administration, adopted on 17 June 1999; Art. 7
- Law No VIII-1313 On Petitions, adopted on 7 July 1999
- Law No VIII-1003 On the Initiative of Citizens to Prepare Laws, adopted on 22 December 1998
- Law No VIII-1889 On Regional Development, adopted on 20 July 2000
- Law No I-119 On the Order for the Announcement and Entry into Force of Laws and Other Legally Binding Regulations, adopted on 6 April 1993; Art. 16
- Government Resolution No 118 On Publishing of Draft Laws and Other Normative Legislative Regulations in the Internet Network, adopted on 4 February 1999
- Government Resolution No 888 On the Set up of the National Commission for Sustainable Development and Approval of its Regulations, adopted on 28 July 2000
- Order of the Minister of Environment No 454 On the Set up of the Advisory Council of the Ministry of Environment, adopted on 12 September 2001

## **Public Access to Justice**

### *Administrative Procedure*

- Law No VIII-1234 On Public Administration, adopted on 17 June 1999
- Government Resolution No 681 On Investigation of Public Requests, Applications, Suggestions and Complaints in the Institutions, Which Are Not Subjects of Public Administration, adopted on 12 June 2000

### *Sub-judicial Procedure*

- Law No VIII-1031 On Administrative Disputes Commissions, adopted on 14 January 1999

- Law No I-363 On Seimas Ombudsmen, adopted on 11 January 1994

#### *Judicial Procedure*

- Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Art. 30, 1992
- Law No VIII-1029 On Legal Procedure of Administrative Cases, adopted on 14 January 1999
- Code of Violations of Administrative Law No X-4449, adopted on 13 December 1984; Art. 51<sup>8</sup>, 291-301

### **On-going Activities under the Convention**

The main requirements of the Aarhus Convention - to guarantee the rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters in accordance with the provisions of this Convention are under implementation in Lithuania.

The most important on-going activities related to the implementation of the requirements of the Convention are the following:

- The Ministry of Environment has started preparation of the Draft Strategy on Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Lithuania.
- The Commission on Education and Information for Sustainable Development was established for the co-ordination of issues, such as, the development and implementation of the Draft Strategy on Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Lithuania, currently drafting the Agenda 21 for Education in the Baltic Sea Region, *the Lithuanian Public Environmental Education (awareness, education and training) Strategy and Action Programme till 2002 (1998), etc.*
- National and international projects on the improvement of information management at the Ministry of Environment, databases' inventory, enhancement of webpages on Internet, as well as, on the organization of training courses on public access to information and participation in environmental decision-making for different target groups in accordance with the Aarhus Convention and related EU Directives currently are being developed and implemented, e.g. projects: "Assistance in the Implementation of the Aarhus Convention Requirements in Lithuania" (in co-operation with Danish EPA), "Long Term Assistance on Information and Reporting – Information Management Programme" (in co-operation with Danish EPA), "Training Seminar on Public Information with Focus on Mass-Media Relations" (in co-operation with Swedish EPA), etc.
- The Lithuanian NGO's take an active part in the implementation of Aarhus Convention as well. They develop and implement projects, issue publications, organise meetings, etc. The Lithuanian office of REC has implemented the following projects: "Early Implementation of Aarhus Convention in Lithuania", "School Agenda 21", has provided small grants to regional NGO's for their projects on implementation of Aarhus Convention with the assistance of Danish EPA. The Lithuanian Green Movement has organised a seminar "Information on Environment under Auspices of the Aarhus Convention" and has carried out other activities. ECAT-Lithuania carries out activities, such as assistance in development and implementation of local agenda 21 in municipalities. Vilnius Nature Protection Society deals with projects on rising public awareness related to genetically modified organisms.
- With the aim to encourage the public to more actively take part in the environmental decision-making, implementation of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention, the Advisory Council consisting of 18 NGO's representatives was established under the Ministry of Environment.
- The specialists of the Ministry of Environment and its subordinated institutions participate and organise meetings, seminars and workshops to discuss the specific issues related to the implementation of the requirements of the Convention and the relevant EU Directives, e.g. a round-table discussion on implementation of the Aarhus Convention with the representatives of NGOs organised by the Committee on Environmental Protection of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, etc.

- The Ministry of Environment publishes quarterly and annual reports on the state of the environment, other publications.
- The Ministry of Environment issues quarterly Newsletter, leaflets “Ministry of Environment to the Public” with comprehensive explanation of the main adopted laws.
- Information on activities of the Ministry of Environment, adopted laws and laws under preparation, signed agreements, programs and projects under the implementation, the work of the Ministerial Collegium and the Advisory Council, on-going meetings as well as issued publications, etc. is presented in the Ministry’s website (<http://www.gamta.lt>).
- The Ministry of Environment constantly disseminates information on their activities to the public authorities, municipalities, mass-media, NGO’s.
- Other.

Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania

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