

European Investment Bank (EIB)

Statement for the fifth session of the meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Agenda item 6. Promotion of the Convention and relevant developments and interlinkages: (b) Promotion of the Convention's principles in international forums

Maastricht, 1st July 2014

The European Investment Bank (EIB) welcomes the opportunity to provide the Parties to the Aarhus Convention with an up-date on a number of concrete activities it is carrying out to promote the principles under each of the Convention's three pillars.

As the Bank of the European Union (EU), the EIB is bound to comply with EU Regulations, including the Regulation on the application of the Aarhus Convention to EU institutions and bodies (EC 1367/2006). In addition, as a EU body and an International Financial Institution (IFI), the EIB is the only IFI which is legally bound to comply with the Aarhus Convention.

In the spirit of the Convention's aim to promote the accessibility and dissemination of environmental information and with a view to increasing the amount of environmental information that it systematically publishes on its website, the EIB has put in place its Public Register providing for active dissemination of the environmental and social, information related to the projects we finance.

For each of our new operations, around 350 each year, the public is now able to access documentation that contains our assessment regarding the operation's environmental and social aspect and other environmental documents (Non-Technical Summaries, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, etc.). The Register includes all documents related to projects financed from 2013 onwards and will be progressively developed over the next years. And we can already see from the number of visitors on our website that the register is well received by external stakeholders.

The EIB's revised Environmental and Social Handbook came into effect in January 2014. The Handbook represents an operational translation of the policies and principles contained in the 2009 EIB Statement of Environmental and Social Principles and Standards. The revised handbook was adopted following an inclusive 12-month consultation process to which numerous internal and external stakeholders participated. This enabled the Bank to clarify the Handbook's structure and to take into account current changes in practices and realities that influence environmental sustainability and human well-being.

In addition, the EIB is currently in the middle of a review of its Transparency Policy which sets out the EIB's approach to transparency and stakeholder engagement. The current EIB Transparency Policy was approved in 2010 and reflects the key principles of the Convention being also based on relevant EU legislation. As you can imagine, providing access to environmental information is a crucial element for an institution that is financing projects in sectors such as energy, transport or water infrastructure.

The EIB has just launched a public consultation as part of this review and a kick-off meeting, open to all interested stakeholders and offering a first opportunity to exchange views about the review, is planned to take place in Brussels in July 2014. Additional information is available on the Bank's website. The Bank would be glad to receive valuable input from a wide array of stakeholders that can bring their insights and expertise to the review.

Finally, since its establishment, the EIB Complaints Mechanism (EIB-CM) contributes to support the implementation of the Convention and its principles of environmental democracy, (i) by referring to the Convention and the ACCC case law when performing compliance review as part of its investigations and mediation initiatives, (ii) by assisting the European Commission in Communications submitted against the European Union for actions of the European Investment Bank as well as (iii) by participating to the task force on access to justice. A recent example of this commitment is the EIB-CM's liaison with the Aarhus national focal point, as part of an initial assessment mission for a complaint concerning a project in the Balkans, and the crucial assistance provided by the Convention's Secretariat in order to establish such partnership.

Thank you very much for your attention.