

The information on the awareness of civil society and NGOs in the frames of provisions of Espoo convention, Republic of Armenia

The public awareness in environmental matters is important issue in general environmental activities of Armenia, and is regulated by Armenian legislation.

Measures are undertaken to improve national legislation and implement its approximation to the provisions of Espoo Convention. As positive example could be mentioned the process on the improvement the Law of RA “On Expertise of Environmental Impact”. The process was initiated by the Ministry of Nature Protection in collaboration with the Secretariat of Espoo Convention. The international expert nominated by the Secretariat jointly with Armenian specialists worked on the improvement of national legislation relating the environmental impact assessment and provisions of Espoo convention, including the public participation issues. The recommendations of the expert including comments of the Armenian specialists have been submitted to the Secretariat of Espoo Convention.

Public authorities take measures to provide **public participation in Environmental decision-making**.

- In the web-page of the Government of RA there is a special part concerning Government meetings, where among other issues, the planned activities are discussing, and every Monday information on upcoming meeting agenda (usually it takes place on Thursdays) is placed. Every person has the right to get acquainted with these acts and introduce his opinion and suggestions.
- According to the assignment of Prime Minister of RA the drafts of legal acts elaborated by Ministries and adjunct bodies of Government are placed on their web-pages for minimum time limit of 15 days before adoption and these drafts are widely available to the public. This method of organization of Government activities gives opportunity to the public and NGOs to receive information in “passive” way, admit proposals and remarks.

Public participation in discussion and evaluation of proposed activities is envisaged by acting Law on Environmental Expertise (1995), and special attention to this matter is given within the process of improvement of relative national legislation (see above).

Regarding the awareness of public on their rights under Espoo convention it worthy to mention a number of seminars, where this issue was elucidated.

- In 2007 in Yerevan in collaboration with the Espoo Secretariat the regional workshop on Convention implementation was organized, where the representatives of civil society and NGOs took active part.
- The national workshop on SEA was organized in collaboration with UNDP (Bratislava), where the issues on EIA and SEA were discussed. The representatives of public and NGO sector took active part in this meeting.
- In collaboration with Armenian office of OSCE a series of workshops on the role of public under Espoo was organized in the regions of Armenia. In the frames of this activity the Guidance on Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context was translated into Armenian and disseminated among public. The copies of this book are available also in Aarhus Centers.
- In Armenia are functioning 14 Environmental information centers (Aarhus centers), which play significant role in public awareness.
- The information on Espoo convention, its role, and, in particular, on public participation significance, is given during the seminars, organized within other environmental issues in Armenia.

In addition, during the next meeting of EIA WG in May 2010 the 4-hours the workshop on the activities carrying out in Armenia for the improvement of relative national legislation will be organized. During this workshop the information on the activities implemented by the international expert jointly with Armenian specialists will be submitted and discussed. Prior to the WG meeting in Geneva the national seminar with participation of public and NGOs will be organized in Armenia, where the results of the above mentioned activities will be presented.

The national authority responsible for procedure on EIA is the “Environmental Expertise” unite of the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia. The expertise is implemented in accordance of national legislation, including public hearings.

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