Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
Access to Information, Public Participation
in Decision-making and Access to Justice
in Environmental Matters

Task Force on Access to Information

Sixth meeting
Geneva, 3-4 October 2019
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda
Update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools

Information document 3

Update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools

Note by the secretariat[1]

> The present document was prepared pursuant to the mandate by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention set out in decision VI/1 adopted at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11-14 September 2017). Through this decision, the Task Force on Access to Information was requested among other matters to focus on the update of the recommendations on electronic information tools set out in decision II/3. The updated Recommendations are expected to be submitted for the consideration and adoption by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its seventh session in 2021.
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> Participants are invited to consult this document in advance of the meeting in order to gain an overview of the progress of the update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools to for the discussion under agenda item 2 (c).

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[1] This document was not formally edited.

I. Introduction

1.   Through decision VI/1 adopted at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11-14 September 2017), the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention recognized that effective public access to environmental information is critical for the successful implementation of a number of Sustainable Development Goals and for supporting the work on a data revolution, and is specifically targeted by Sustainable Development Goal 16 (target 10).

2.   The Meeting of the Parties requested the Task Force on Access to Information among other matters to focus on the update of the recommendations on electronic information tools set out in decision II/3, taking into account the developments in the Shared Environmental Information System, geospatial information management, Earth observation data, e-government, open government data, reuse of public sector information and other relevant initiatives across the region and recent technical developments.

II. Timeline for the update

3.   The update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools is expected to be carried out in accordance with the indicative timeline prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information (see document AC/TF.AI-6/Inf.2[2]).

4.   The draft of the updated recommendations is expected to be considered by the Working Group of the Parties at its twenty-four and twenty-fifth meetings in 2020 and 2021 respectively with the view to their submission to the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention for consideration at its seventh session in 2021.

III. Consultative process

5.   The update of the Recommendations will be carried out through a participatory process in accordance with the above-mentioned timeline in the course of 2019 - 2021.

6.   On 19 June 2019, the secretariat launched a consultation that aimed to seek views and gather case studies on the developments in the Shared Environmental Information System, geospatial information management, Earth observation data, e-government, open government data, re-use of public sector information and other relevant initiatives and recent technical developments.

7.   Parties to the Convention, interested Member States of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, public, academia and other interested stakeholders were invited to participate in the consultation and submit their case studies and drafting proposals by 10 September 2019.

8.   To date, the secretariat received:

- 4 drafting proposals submitted by Slovakia, the European Environment Agency, the European Environmental Bureau and Greek Helsinki's Monitor;
- 30 case studies submitted by Belgium (14 case studies), Bulgaria (1 case study), France (1 case study), Ireland (1 case study), Kazakhstan (2 case studies), North Macedonia (1 case study), Slovakia (2 case studies) and Spain (7 case studies) and the European Environment Agency (1 case study).

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[2] Available from:
https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/a_to_i/6th_meeting/6TFAI_Timeline_EIT_Recommendations_final.pdf

9.   In addition, case studies submitted to the secretariat in the course of the work of the Task Force will be also taken into account for the preparation of the updated Recommendations as appropriate[3].

10.   Drafting proposals along with references to relevant case studies are presented in an addendum to the present document.

11.   The Task Force is expected to provide possible comments to the addendum to be considered for the preparation of the draft of updated Recommendations on electronic information tools.

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[3] All case studies on electronic information tools are available from:
http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/tfai/case_studies.html