Ladies, gentleman,

The European Investment Bank (EIB) very much welcomes the opportunity to provide the Parties to the Aarhus Convention with a number of concrete examples reflecting how it is promoting the principles under the Convention, especially transparency and public participation in its policies.

Why are transparency and public participation so crucial to the work of an international financial institution like the EIB? These two themes determine how the EIB interacts with the public and more precisely, with specific stakeholders, and most importantly with people who may be directly affected by projects the EIB finances.

Transparency and public participation cannot be approached as something that has to be done simply because it is required by law. It is not only a matter of compliance.

The amount of information accessible to us all has never been vaster. The thirst for information by everyone has never been greater. Moreover, citizens are more empowered and more aware of their rights than they used to be.

They not only want to be informed but also expect to be taken seriously, and to see that their views are taken on board. Rightly so.

This context cannot be ignored.

Here are some examples of what the EIB has been doing to promote the Convention’s principles and to address this challenging context.
On transparency, firstly, all EIB documents are in principle available upon request, to everyone who asks. This is a far reaching concept that is enshrined in the EIB’s Transparency Policy.

Secondly, the EIB pro-actively publishes information about the projects it appraises on its website – ahead of their approval by the Bank’s Board of Directors. On average, for all projects that were approved by the EIB Board in 2016, project-related information was made available 81 days before approval.

Thirdly, the EIB maintains a Public Register of documents since 2014. The EIB Public Register of documents contains environmental documents in accordance with Regulation (EC) N°1367/2006. This Public Register is the main tool for the publication of environmental information held by the EIB, and the public is now able to access documentation that contains EIB assessments regarding the operation’s environmental and social aspects and other environmental documents (Non-Technical Summaries, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, etc.).

On public participation, the EIB follows a three level approach.

At an institutional level, the EIB Board of Directors meets with civil society every year, during a one-day seminar. This is an opportunity for civil society to exchange with EIB decision-makers regarding EIB policies and practices.

At policy level, the EIB regularly organizes public consultations on those Bank policies, and furthermore invite stakeholders to workshops and information events. For example, the EIB is currently running a public consultation on the EIB Complaints Mechanism Policy.
At project level, the EIB requires that project promoters listen to affected communities, and implement open and transparent engagement approaches. The EIB can also help to facilitate this process.

These examples help do illustrate what the EIB is concretely doing to translate the Convention’s principles into practice.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the EIB sees proactive transparency and public participation as an opportunity. The EIB’s experience is that being transparent and engaging helps building trust in public institutions.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Speech delivered by:

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