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

Working Group of the Parties
Twenty-first meeting
Geneva, 4-6 April 2017

Item 7 of the provisional agenda:
Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums


Note by the secretariat¹

This summary provides complementary information to the presentation of the secretariat of the results of the survey on the promotion of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in the European Environment and Health Process. The survey was carried out as a preparation for the twenty-first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention (Geneva, 4-6 April 2017) during which the promotion of the Convention’s principles in international decision-making on environment and health matter will be considered.

The survey was distributed to all national focal points of the Aarhus Convention. The national focal points were invited to report to the upcoming meeting of the Working Group of the Parties on their progress in promoting the principles of the Aarhus Convention in the European Environment and Health Process under the auspices of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The following 17 countries completed the survey:
Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan.

The following sections provide a summary analysis of the results of the survey.

¹ This document has not been formally edited.
**Question 2:** Has your Government promoted the Convention’s principles in the preparatory processes for the 2015 High-level Mid-term Review Meeting of the European Environment and Health Process (Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015) as well as during the meeting itself?

Answered: 17  Skipped: 0

- **Yes, in the preparatory processes:** 12 responses
- **Yes, during the session:** 7 responses
- **No:** 4 responses

**Question 3:** If it has not promoted them, please briefly describe what has prevented your government from using existing mechanisms or introducing alternatives?

Answered: 4  Skipped: 13

- Promotion mechanisms not yet officially planned and no alternative measures in place that would serve same purpose: 2 responses
- Financial constraints: 1 response
- Lack of relevant or sufficient institutional framework: 0 responses
- Other: 1 response

Switzerland stated that it promotes the Convention’s principles internationally in a more indirect way. The public at large is informed about the mandate, role and endeavour of the Swiss delegation through several media before and during the conferences.

Germany stated that the WHO Regional Office for Europe is in charge of providing documents to all participants of the process including NGOs and other non-governmental stakeholders such as youth organizations. Germany has been financing the participation of NGOs in the process; all participants have full access to all documentation on the WHO
Throughout the procedure, nominated NGOs are full members of the European Environment and Health Process.

**Question 4:** If it has promoted them during the preparatory processes and/or during the session, in relation to which documents?

a) Albania has promoted the principles in relation to the “Strategy of Health Consultation 2017-2020”.

b) Belarus prepared a state report “On the Sanitary-epidemiological Situation in the Republic of Belarus”

c) Bulgaria has undertaken a number of actions with respect to the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health.

d) Georgia promoted the principles by elaborating on both the “National Environmental and Health Action Plan” as well as on the application form for the “EC TAIEX Expert Mission” on the development of an effective environment and health system in Georgia.

e) In Lithuania, the principles were promoted in relation to the “Action Plan of the Center for Health Education and Disease Prevention” and the “Promotion Plan of the Activities of the Center for Health Education and Disease Prevention”.

f) The Netherlands promoted the principles through the Parma Declaration and its Annex and is also promoting them through the Declaration and Annex(s) that are expected to be adopted in Ostrava in 2017. In addition, a National Action Plan was carried out and some elements that needed further work were incorporated in the Health in Environment priority in 2014. This programme is still under implementation.

**Question 5:** If it has promoted them during the preparatory processes and/or during the session, through which mechanisms?

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Six States provided additional information.

a) In Austria, a national “Task Force on the Environment and Health Process (EHP)” as well as on “Transport, Health, Environment Pan-European Program (THE PEP)” have been established.

b) Belarus provided links to a state report “On the Sanitary-Epidemiological Situation in the Republic of Belarus in 2014”\(^3\) and to the website of the “Scientific and Practical Hygienic Center”\(^4\). Belgium added a link to the website compiling information on the “National Environment and Health Action Plan (NEHAP)”\(^5\).

c) Bulgaria has undertaken a number of actions in the field of public health, addressing the Parma Declaration targets with regard to water and sanitation, children’s daily living environment, air quality, chemical safety, asbestos related diseases and child safety.

d) In Lithuania, a survey on school environment was conducted according to WHO methods and its results used in the publications of the Mid-term Review Meeting\(^6\). The Lithuanian national focal point also provided links to the national publications regarding the 2015 High-level Mid-term Review and the Meeting of the European Environment and Health Process in Haifa\(^7\).

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4 Available from https://www.rspch.by/node/263.
e) In Kazakhstan important documents such as the meeting report are uploaded on the website of the Aarhus Centre. In addition, information on upcoming international forums is disseminated at seminars and also posted on the Centre’s website along with any other relevant information in relation to international forums.

**Question 6:** Is your Government promoting the Convention’s principles in the preparatory processes for the 6th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13-15 June 2017)?

![Pie chart](chart1.png)

**Question 7:** If it has not promoted them, please briefly describe what has prevented your government from using existing mechanisms or introducing alternatives.

![Bar chart](chart2.png)

In Lithuania a “Draft Action Plan of the Centre for Health Education and Disease Prevention” will be approved in the upcoming weeks and further action be taken based on this plan.

Switzerland reiterated that it promotes the Convention’s principles internationally in a more indirect way.
The Netherlands reported that on a regional level, meetings are organized to obtain input with regard to Environment and Health, such as through the Platform Healthy Design, the Atlas Living Environment. The Atlas provides a lot of information to the public, but also functions as a digital working space for authorities with closed platforms.

Question 8: If it has promoted them, in relation to which documents?

In Albania, the principles are promoted in relation to the “Policy and Operational Plan for Mental Health Services” by the National Steering Committee for Mental Health. Belgium referred to the WHO draft documents and Bulgaria once more to the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health. Czechia provided a link to the website of the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. In France, the principles are promoted in relation to the draft ministerial Declaration and the implementation plan. Georgia promotes the principles through the “National Environment and Health Action Plan”, the “Twining GE22 Institutional Strengthening of Environmental Health System of Georgia” and a document on “Integration and Sustainability Issues for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)”. Finally, Kazakhstan referred to press releases and the Netherlands to all documents of the European Environment and Health Task Force.

Question 9: If it has promoted them, through which mechanisms?

The Netherlands hosted an international “Cities Consultation” in December 2016 together with the WHO Environment and Health Process. The meeting aimed at gathering input for the Ostrava conference. Knowledge institutes, cities, provincial authorities, political officers

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as well as NGOs attended the meeting. Furthermore, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment negotiated a contract with the National Youth Council in 2016 to actively participate in the preparation process towards the Ministerial Conference in Ostrava. Through this contract, the participation of youth stakeholders was secured. The Netherlands facilitated similar preparation in the run-up to the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Parma in 2010. Currently, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment is consulting the NGO WECF regarding the organisation of a side event in Ostrava.

**Question 10:** Does your Government intend to take any future actions to increase transparency and promote effective public participation in the Environment and Health process, including in all relevant meetings, in line with the Almaty Guidelines?

**Question 11:** If it does not intend to do so, please briefly describe what has prevented your government from using existing mechanisms or introducing alternatives?

**Question 12:** If it does intend to do so, in relation to which documents?
With respect to future actions

a) Albania also wants to promote the Convention’s principles in relation to the “Policy and Operational Plan for Mental Health Services Development in Albania”\(^{11}\).

b) Austria provided a link to a website about the country’s health goals\(^{12}\).

c) Belarus plans to provide state bodies with information on the necessity of using the Almaty Guidelines when participating in relevant meetings.

d) Czechia referred again to the website of the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health\(^{13}\).

e) Georgia will take future actions in relation to “Integration and Sustainability Issues for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)”

f) Kazakhstan will continue to include environmental information in all official documents developed and published in international forums.

g) In Lithuania, future action will be taken with regard to the “2017-2019 Strategic Plan” of the Ministry of Health\(^{14}\).

h) Netherlands will take action in relation to all relevant WHO European Environment and Health Task Force documents. Currently, a guidance document for participation for Environment and Health is being developed with input from the National Health Council.

**Question 13:** If it does intend to do so, through which mechanisms?

| Alternative measures are in place that your government considers serve the same purpose | 2 responses | 1 response | 2 responses |
| National coordination mechanisms are currently being planned and will be used later in the year | 1 response | 1 response | 1 response |
| National coordination mechanisms are already in use | 3 responses | 4 responses | 4 responses |

*at subnational level* | *at inter-ministerial level* | *at intra-ministerial level*

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\(^{11}\) See footnote 7

\(^{12}\) Available from http://www.gesundheitsziele-oesterreich.at/.

\(^{13}\) See footnote 8

\(^{14}\) Available from http://sam.lrv.lt/lt/administracine-informacija/planavimo-dokumentai/strateginiai-veiklos-planai