



**16th Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (WGP 16) (Geneva,
19 – 21 June 2013)**

**Note by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information
Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda for WGP 16**

Contribution of the EU and its Member States and Croatia

- (1) The EU and its Member States and Croatia wish to thank the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information for her report on the task force's first meeting and for her work to date. We also welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposed future work of this Task Force, including during the next intersessional period.
- (2) We support the Task Force's commitment to the sharing of good practices, including the building of synergies with other international forums.
- (3) We welcome the commitment of the Task Force, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to oversee preparation and circulation of the questionnaire regarding the implementation of decision II/3 and to report at the second meeting of the Task Force on the results of the survey in relation to the effective use of electronic information tools during this intersessional period. It would be beneficial to all that the questionnaire would mirror similar reporting requirements in the National Implementation Reports, taking account of capacity constraints and the aim of avoiding duplication of work.
- (4) We support the Task Force's focus on improving the use of and access to the Aarhus Clearinghouse mechanism by all Parties, Signatories, NGOs and other stakeholders as a tool to disseminate information generally, including, *inter alia*, in respect of resources, news, capacity-building projects and training materials.
- (5) Noting the proposed substantive issues to be given particular prioritisation for the future work of the Task Force, the EU and its Member States and Croatia recommend the following be considered for prioritisation:

- focus on active distribution and quality and comparability of environmental information through the effective use of electronic information tools and sharing of good practice, and
- focus on helping to further improve the implementation of existing information obligations under the Convention.

It is our view that it is not necessary to prioritise the provision of sufficient environmental information with regard to products during the forthcoming intersessional period.

- (6) We are of the opinion that the obligations under Article 5, paragraphs 6 and 8, of the Aarhus Convention are implemented through established mechanisms in the EU, such as EU product, energy (efficiency) and eco-labelling schemes. Work on a new EU product information scheme is also currently being progressed. We support the Task Force's encouragement that Parties provide detailed information on this issue in connection with their national implementation reports to be prepared for 2014.
- (7) We also suggest that the Task Force should enhance its co-operation with the ECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) and European Environment Agency towards supporting Shared Environment Information System establishment throughout the UNECE according to the decisions adopted at the 7th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Astana in 2011.