



ENVIRONMENTAL
DEMOCRACY:
MYTH OR REALITY
IN BELARUS?

Review of the practice of the Aarhus Convention
implementation in the Republic of Belarus

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BELARUS

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Access to information

- Often requested information is not provided due to its attribution to documentation with the “restricted distribution” status
- It is difficult to find information about the objects under discussion and decisions made, and in most cases it’s complicated for locals to understand it not being specialists.
- The problems, associated with access to information, entail a limitation of opportunities for the public to participate in environmental matters.

Public participation in decision-making

- There is no “early” stage of discussion, when all possible options are open, including the potential abandonment of any activity (construction, etc.)
- Often the public is not considered as a competent subject of decision-making.
- Comments and offers from public in most cases are not accepted due to "lack of reasoning and validity".

Access to justice

- The main problem with access to justice is the lack of an independent system of justice (court) in the country as such, what is expressed in majority of cases in fact that courts simply refuse to consider such cases.
- 9 out of 18 cases were not even accepted for consideration

Other findings

- Over the past years, significant legislative changes have been made in Belarus.
- However, the issue of the necessity of implementing the Aarhus Convention in Belarus is mainly the interest of the Ministry of Natural Resources and not the other public authorities.
- It is also very necessary to change the practice of implementation, including legal awareness of public authorities, and more information, education and involvement activities towards citizens.