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Press release | 05.10.2021

Greater say for citizens in EU environmental policy

Aarhus Convention

Today, the European Parliament adopted the agreement negotiated in trilogue on the EU revision of the implementing regulation of the Aarhus Convention regarding access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The Aarhus Convention was adopted by the international community in 1998 and deals with the right to information on environmental matters, the right to be involved in environmental decision-making and the right of appeal in environmental matters. The convention had already entered into force in EU countries, but the rules for European institutions were still unclear.

Bas Eickhout MEP, Greens/EFA Vice Chair of the Environment committee, comments:

“In the Greens/EFA Group, we have been working hard for years to ensure compliance with the Aarhus Convention. Although the new legislation is not perfect, it is an important step towards the EU meeting its international obligations under the Convention. This is not only important because the environment concerns us all, but also because it is very important for the trust in the European institutions.

"People cannot currently go to the European institutions to challenge decisions. This new regulation allows this in many more cases, although it is under certain conditions. However, EU state aid decisions are still excluded from the scope of the regulation, despite a statement by the Commission on the subject. The continued reluctance of the Commission and Council to allow NGO and citizen scrutiny of EU state aid decisions is an affront to accountability.”

More:

This vote comes only weeks before the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which will take place in Geneva from 18 to 22 October. The EU has repeatedly been criticized by the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee for shortcomings in access to justice in environmental matters. The revision of the Aarhus Regulation corrects this. However, loopholes remain, such as the provisions on state aid, which have not been taken into account in this revision. While the European Parliament was in favour of a full application of the Aarhus Convention, the Council and the Commission in particular sought to reduce its

scope to the detriment of environmental protection and democracy. The Council is expected to approve the agreement without amendment at first reading in the near future.

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Responsible MEPs

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