

The EU and the Aarhus Convention – Taking Stock of the Union’s Progress Towards Environmental Democracy

Wednesday 24th September 2025

Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels

(Lisbon & Rome meeting room, Floor -1, Pleinlaan 5, 1050 Ixelles)

The Aarhus Convention continues to be widely celebrated as a beacon of environmental democracy and has played a considerable role in advancing the notion of procedural environmental rights in the European Union and beyond. Amidst mounting environmental crises and with the 2025 Meeting of the Parties around the corner, this workshop will be an opportunity to reflect on the major issues facing the Convention today and the European Union’s position within it.

Has the EU done enough to ensure sufficient avenues to challenge environmental law violations? How can planning of the ecological transition be accelerated, while ensuring public participation in and acceptability of new projects? Is the European Commission living up to the transparency requirements and aspirations of the Convention? How can the Convention surmount challenges arising from the high workload of its Compliance Committee and the slow implementation of the Committee’s findings? What have been the achievements and challenges of the recently established Rapid Response Mechanism for environmental defenders?

In this workshop, we will bring together academics, policymakers and stakeholders to explore these important questions concerning the ongoing trajectory of the Convention under its three pillars of access to information, public participation and access to justice.’

Please register [here](#) by 22nd September 2025.

Partners





Programme

09:30 – 10:00 | Registration & Coffee

10:00 – 10:30 | Opening & Keynote Speech

Keynote delivered by Professor Áine Ryall, University College Cork and Chair of the UN ECE Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee

10:30 – 11:45 | **Session 1: Access to Justice**

Chair: Prof. Annalisa Savaresi, University of Eastern Finland

- Prof. Mariolina Eliantonio, University of Maastricht
- Sebastian Bechtel, ClientEarth
- Pielpa Ollikainen & Sofia Heikkonen, University of Helsinki

11:45 – 13:00 | **Session 2: Public Participation**

Chair: Nicola Sharman, University of Eastern Finland

- Prof. Chiara Armeni, Université Libre de Bruxelles
- Frederik Hafen, European Environmental Bureau
- Rosita Hickey, European Ombudsman

13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch

14:00 – 15:15 | **Session 3: Access to Information**

Chair: Onno Brouwer, Partner, Freshfields

- Prof. Päivi Leino-Sandberg, University of Helsinki
- Fred Logue, FP Logue LLP, Ireland
- Staffan Dahllöf, Freelance Journalist, Denmark

15:15 – 15:45 | Coffee Break

15:45 – 17:00 | **Session 4: Outlook**

Chair: Anne Friel, ClientEarth

- Emily Barritt, Dauphine Université Paris, PSL
- Claudia Fusco, Director, DG ENV.E, European Commission
- Yves Lador, Earthjustice Representation to the UN in Geneva

17:00 – 17:30 | Closing Remarks

- Prof. Päivi Leino-Sandberg, University of Helsinki
- Anne Friel, ClientEarth