



Are you a student or young professional with ideas about environmental democracy and social media? And do you want to have the opportunity to speak in front of high level UN officials and environmental ministers from all across the world?

Then sign up for the Aarhus 2.0 Elevator Pitch Contest!

Tell us your ideas in a 2 minute video, post it on YouTube by June 23rd and you may be one of the 20 lucky students who will be invited to deliver their pitch in the finals on July 1st. The two winners will get to present their speech live to the UN discussion panel on July 2nd.

Why?

The Official International Meeting of Parties Aarhus Convention, where the future of environmental democracy, access to environmental information and public participation in decision making will be discussed, is looking for next generation participation.

When, where and how?

Submission deadline: 23 June 2014 at 24:00 hours

Preselection: 25 June 2014 at 12:00 hours

Semi Finals: 1 July 2014

UN Panel Pitch: 2 July 2014

Where: The MECC in Maastricht

Questions or delivering your pitch by mail: aarhusmaastricht@gmail.com



AARHUS CONVENTION
for our environment

The fifth Meeting of the Parties to the UN Aarhus Convention on various environmental subjects takes place in Maastricht 29 June – 4 July 2014.

This year, The Netherlands will host the Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Aarhus Convention and its Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Protocol (also known as MoP5-Aarhus and PRTR respectively).

What is the Aarhus Convention?

The Aarhus Convention, named after the Danish city where the convention was adopted in 1998, is a United Nations environmental convention to which over 55 states in the Pan-European region are party. The Convention covers citizens' access to information, participation in policymaking and access to justice with regard to environmental matters. Since 2011, the Dutch Professor Dr. Jit Peters has been the chairman of the policy committee. The secretariat of the Convention (and also the Protocol) is based in Geneva.

What is the Protocol Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR)?

The purpose of the PRTR Protocol is to strengthen access to information by maintaining coherent national registers of the release of pollutants. The PRTR covers both industrial pollution and pollution from other sources.

1st July: Side event for students and young professionals /Finals Aarhus 2.0 Pitch contest

The Aarhus conference presents an opportunity to discuss the issues from a fresh perspective, taking into account the current trends in our society. The new age of digitalization is an important example, as it brings environmental information closer to individual citizens. Citizens can even play a role in monitoring the environment, for example by using applications on smart phones allowing them to measure the air quality. Social media has also allowed our society to become more connected on grass root level. This development has implications for the respective roles and responsibilities of the government, the private sector and individual citizens.

Therefore, the organizers are aiming at students and young professionals as a target group for the conference participants. Firstly, to familiarize students with the Convention in an interactive manner. Secondly, to allow students to give their fresh and out-of-the-box view on current Aarhus matters. Thirdly to hear students' visions on the future of the Convention and last but most importantly, to generate interesting viewpoints and questions as starting point for the panel discussions during the High level meeting (Wednesday July 2nd). For these reasons, we organize an elevator pitch contest. The 2 winners will be pitching their ideas live at the start of the panel discussion on July 2nd.

The topics of the panel discussions will be:

1. Right to information and Environmental democracy
2. Right to information and Social media

Assignment for the Pitch Contest: Two Questions

The Aarhus convention is a foundation of environmental democracy. However, the Convention could use a little update. Since the founding of the Convention society has become more digital, there is more data available, and citizens care about their living environment. For example, the smart phone can be used for measuring air quality, noise levels nearby airports, or monitoring the movements of birds. Collection of data by 'the crowd' could be used in the decision making process.

At the same time, the role and responsibility of governments and private actors has changed. For instance, in major infrastructure and water management projects, the private actors execute the public participation required in the process and not the governments. This results in a reallocation of the public participation responsibility from public towards private actors. In the context of the Aarhus Convention, these changes have resulted in some interesting questions:

1. In the context of the Aarhus 2.0 era, when and how should citizens participate in decision making and implementation processes?
2. How could the wisdom of the crowd be used in environmental issues? How does this wisdom compete, intervene or complement with wisdom of the experts?

Students are asked to present an elevator pitch that answers one question. If a student wishes, he/she may present two pitches, answering both questions separately.

Practical information

Students may deliver an elevator pitch of no more than 2 minutes.

You can publish this video clip on YouTube, and send us a link. Alternately, you may set the settings to private initially. The deadline for submission is on 23 June 2014 at 24:00 hours. The preselection will take place on 25 June 2014 and students will be notified of their admission to the final round by 25 June 2014 at 12:00 hours. Jurors will be presented at halfway of June.

A maximum of 20 students will be selected (10 per question/panel discussion topic). They will present their pitch in the public final contest. This will take place on Tuesday 1 July 2014 in the midday/early evening at the MECC in Maastricht where the Aarhus Meeting of the Parties is held. The formal chairman (Jit Peters) will open the contest with a short introduction. The jurors will be made up of the chairmen present at the conference. The contest will be concluded with a few drinks and the opportunity for an informal Meet & Greet with the attendees (delegates, focal points, chairmen and others).

The two winners will present their pitch live on Wednesday at the start of both panel discussions.

What else will happen during the Conference?

On Sunday and Monday, the preparatory Working Group of the Parties and Compliance Committee meetings will take place. Monday (June 30th) and Tuesday (July 1st) will be marked by the formal meeting of the Aarhus Convention. On Tuesday, the preparations for the PRTR Compliance Committee meeting, which will be held on Thursday (July 3rd) and Friday (July 4th), will start. Side-events will take place during all of these days. The side events are organized by different kinds of stakeholders like international NGO's, universities and country representatives.

The highlight of the conference is Wednesday (July 2nd) when the ministers of the member states will be present. Other high level officials, like EU Commissioner Potočník, will also be present.

During the conference there will be live-streaming. The conference is public and accessible to all. More information can be found on the following sites: <http://www.aarhusmaastricht.org/> and <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhusmop5&prtrmopp2/main.html>

High Level Segment MoP5/MoPP2 – Wednesday July 2

Panel Discussions

During the morning session of the HLS on Wednesday July 2nd two panel discussions will take place. The moderator is Mr. Hans Alders.

The two panel discussions will regard the following themes:

1. Right to information and environmental democracy
2. Right to information and social media

Participants in the panels are for example the Georgian Minister Khatuna Gogaladze, Mr. Jeremy Wates, director of the European Environmental Bureau, and Maria Westerbos, Director of the Plastic Soup foundation.

Maastricht Declaration

The afternoon session (15 – 17 hrs) will be comprised of a formal adoption and approval of the draft decisions prepared by Chair Prof. Jit Peters. Additionally, member states and organizations will have the opportunity to make statements.

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