

Environment: public participation in plans and programmes

2000/0331(COD) - 18/01/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to encourage public participation in environmental decision-making. **CONTENT** : the importance of fostering increased public participation in environmental decision-making was recognised at the international level in the UN/ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters ("the Aarhus Convention") which the Community signed on 25 June 1998 and which has also been signed by all the Member States. The Community intends to ratify the Convention. Before it does so, in accordance with its usual practice, relevant provisions of Community law should be properly aligned with the provisions of the Convention. This proposal for a single directive amending or modifying a number of existing Directives will assist that process. The provision proposed requires Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that the public are given early and effective opportunities to participate in the preparation (and review) of the plans or programmes and that relevant information about such proposals is made available to the public. To this end, Member States are required to ensure that: - the public are informed (by public notices or other appropriate means) about any proposals for such plans or programmes and that relevant information about such proposals is made available to the public; - the public are entitled to express comments and opinions before decisions on the plans and programmes are made; - in making those decisions, due account is required to be taken of the results of the public participation. The detailed arrangements for such participation including identification of the public who may participate are left to be determined by the Member States taking into account the aims of the Proposal, namely to ensure a wide participation by the public, including NGOs promoting environmental protection.