

Public access to environmental information: European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register. Protocol to the 1998 EEC-UN Convention

2004/0232(CNS) - 02/12/2005 - Final act

PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the Community, the Protocol between the EC and the UN-ECE on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

LEGISLATIVE ACT : Council Decision 2006/61/EC on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Community, of the UN-ECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

CONTENT: the Council adopted a decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Community, of the United Nations-Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) Protocol on pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTR). A PRTR is generally defined as an integrated database or register of pollutants which includes facility-specific data on releases to the environment and transfers of waste. It may also include releases from other relevant sources (diffuse sources).

The most important characteristics of a PRTR include: mandatory and periodical reporting by individual facilities, listing of pollutants, releases to air, water, land and transfers of waste, integrated database at national level, involvement of stakeholders, public accessibility.

In line with this definition, the Protocol contains the following key obligations: establishment and maintenance of (national) PRTR registers covering point sources and diffuse sources; coherent and structured, publicly accessible user-friendly computerized database; reporting requirements at facility level; multimedia pollutant-specific reporting of releases (to air, water and land); reporting of off-site transfers of waste; mandatory reporting on a yearly basis; quality assessment of registered data and voluntary reporting of diffuse sources.

The Protocol covers a total of sixty-four activities and eighty-six substances, subject to possible future amendments.

The UN-ECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Register is an important step towards the full implementation of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.