



MEDIA INFO

Green group uncovers major gap in knowing our rights

[Brussels, December 20th 2013] – Enforcing rights cannot work without those having the rights being aware of them. This is the major conclusion of a brief popular survey made by Justice and Environment (J&E) with major national environmental NGOs in a number of EU Member States and accession countries.

The major findings of the survey are that most of the respondents know the Aarhus Convention (that guarantees access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters) and know what it regulates, however, most of them do not use it and even if they do, they do it outside judicial procedures, in interactions with public authorities. The outcomes of referring to the Aarhus Convention are questionable, the Convention not producing the desired effects. The general public has a lower level of knowledge than NGOs and while only a few of them has heard about the Convention not even they know in detail what it is about.

Another group of findings uncover that most of the respondents know some pieces of EU environmental law but not in detail, and they do not follow the legal developments; they do know what the EU law is about, and sometimes also how it develops, in addition to some basic legal concepts but the general public has a lower level of knowledge, few of them knowing in detail what EU environmental law is about, but at least having heard of it in general.

All these show a major gap in which legal aid organizations have to operate, i.e. while they make efforts to protect the rights of the public, the latter has little knowledge about the very same rights. J&E believes that only major public awareness raising campaigns can help solve this situation and therefore urge the EU to start such initiatives in the near future.

Notes to editors

Justice and Environment (J&E) is an association of public interest environmental law organizations. The objective of J&E is to contribute to a better status of environment and human health in Europe where J&E is active through the use of law (European and national environmental laws) and the improvement of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters by legal means. To learn more visit <http://justiceandenvironment.org/>

Contacts:

Pauline Constant, Communications Consultant, Justice and Environment
communications@justiceandenvironment.org

Csaba Kiss, Coordinator, Justice and Environment
info@justiceandenvironment.org