



## Green Law Group takes legal steps against the EU

**[Brussels, May 15, 2015]** – Justice & Environment, the leading green law NGO network in the EU takes legal steps against the EU for not adopting a directive on access to environmental justice.

J&E recently took legal steps and initiated a case against the EU for this omission at the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, the UN body residing in Geneva, overseeing the practice of Aarhus Convention Parties, as the EU fails to create a directive on access to environmental justice.

The Aarhus Convention guarantees the access rights to information, participation and justice in environmental matters. The European Union has joined the Aarhus Convention in 2005 and has adopted directives that transpose into European law the right to environmental information and right to participation in environmental decision-making already in 2003.

However, there is no directive on access to environmental justice in force yet, despite the fact that the first efforts of the Commission to draft such a directive have materialized in a legislative proposal already back in 2003. In the years since 2003, EU Member States could always block the adoption of this law in the EU.

Now J&E took legal steps and initiated a case against the EU for this omission. The Compliance Committee has recently found the claim of J&E admissible. That means that J&E's legal arguments on the breach of the disregard of the Convention will be discussed and the counterarguments of the EU will be confronted and decided upon in an open process at the UN.

Siim Vahtrus, Chairman of Justice and Environment, commented the admissibility decision of the Compliance Committee:

“This is an important step in the fight of civil society for a better access to environmental justice. A directive of the EU once properly designed could dramatically enhance the legal status of citizens and NGOs in their efforts for a better environmental status. Now these efforts turned legal, and here we will make legal steps to exercise pressure on the EU to step up.”

### **Notes to editors:**

1. The link to the Aarhus Convention: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/treatytext.html>
2. The link to the case of J&E: <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/public-participation/aarhus-convention/tfwg/envppcc/envpppubcom/acccc2014123-european-union.html>

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. J&E drives for this 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/>

**Contact:**

Csaba Kiss, Coordinator, Justice and Environment, [info@justiceandenvironment.org](mailto:info@justiceandenvironment.org)

Siim Vahtrus, Chairman, Justice and Environment, [chairman@justiceandenvironment.org](mailto:chairman@justiceandenvironment.org)