



Are you a student 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 23<sup>rd</sup> and you may be one of the lucky 20 students who will be invited to deliver their pitch in the finals on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The two winners will get to present their speech live to the UN discussion panel on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**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

Finals: 1 July 2014

UN Panel Pitch: 2 July 2014

Where: The MECC in Maastricht

Questions and YouTube links go to:

**[aarhusmaastricht@gmail.com](mailto: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. The Dutch Professor Dr. Jit Peters has been the chairman of the policy committee since 2011. 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.

**Tuesday July 1<sup>st</sup> : Side-event for students – 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 that allow them to measure the air quality. Social media has also allowed our society to become more connected at grassroots level. This development has implications for the respective roles and responsibilities of the government, the private sector and individual citizens.

As organizers of this event, we have chosen students as our participants target group for the conference. Why? First of all, we want to familiarize students with the Convention in an interactive manner. Secondly, we would like to allow students to give their fresh and out-of-the-box views on current Aarhus matters. Thirdly, we are eager to hear the visions of present students on the future of the Convention. And lastly, but most importantly, we want students to generate interesting perspectives and questions we can use as a starting point for the panel discussions during the High-Level meeting on Wednesday July 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is why we are organizing an elevator-pitch contest. The two winners of this contest will pitch their ideas live at the start of each panel discussion.

The topics of the panel discussions are:

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 updating. 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 or intervene 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. This video clip should be published on YouTube, with a link sent to [aarhusmaastricht@gmail.com](mailto:aarhusmaastricht@gmail.com). Alternately, settings may be set to private if the student wishes. The deadline for submission is on 23 June 2014 at 24:00 hours. 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.

Twenty students will be selected to continue to the finals (ten students per question/panel discussion topic). They will present their pitch in the public final contest on Tuesday July 1<sup>st</sup> (midday/early evening) at the MECC in Maastricht where the Aarhus Meeting of the Parties Conference is held. The formal chairman (Professor Dr. 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 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 30<sup>th</sup>) and Tuesday (July 1<sup>st</sup>) 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 3<sup>rd</sup>) and Friday (July 4<sup>th</sup>), will start. Side-events will take place during all of these days. The side-events are organized by various stakeholders such as international NGO's, universities and country representatives.

The highlight of the conference is Wednesday (July 2<sup>nd</sup>) 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 websites: <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 High-Level Session on Wednesday July 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

The participants in panel 1 are State Secretary Wilma Mansveld, EU Commissary Janez Potocnik, Georgian Minister Khatuna Gogaladze and Mr. Jeremy Wates, director of the European Environmental Bureau.

The participants in panel 2 have not been confirmed yet, but possibilities are: Ministers from Italy (EU Chair), Kazakhstan, Moldavia, Norway, Albania or Serbia, business CEOs, social media and NGOs (i.e. Ms. 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 Professor Dr. Jit Peters. Additionally, member states and organizations will have the opportunity to make statements.

**For any questions or delivering your pitch by mail: [aarhusmaastricht@gmail.com](mailto:aarhusmaastricht@gmail.com)**



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