

L'Esprit d'Aarhus

Informal network on access to information
and citizen participation in public decision-making

The National Commission for Public Debate (CNDP) is an independent administrative authority created in 2002 in France to meet the first two objectives of the Aarhus Convention: ensuring access to information and citizen participation in decision-making processes that involve environmental matters.

In June 2014, the CNDP organized an international symposium titled Citizens and Decision Making: issues of legitimacy and effectiveness. Its objective was to engage senior political and economic leaders, associations and academics in a dialogue with citizens. Several foreign officials (of the Aarhus Convention, the European Commission, the United States, Canada, Denmark, Italy, and South Korea) spoke at the event.

In 2015, as part of the preparation of COP21, the CNDP, along with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Danish Board of Technology (Denmark) and Missions Publiques (France), organized the world's largest citizen consultation ever: the World Wide Views on Climate and Energy. This debate allowed the 10,000 citizens who, on June 6 2015, participated in 97 debates in 76 countries, to speak up. The results of the consultation show the lucidity, the vision and the ambition of the citizens.

Building on this experience, the CNDP decided to create an informal network on access to information and citizen participation in public decision-making, L'Esprit d'Aarhus.

The main purpose of L'Esprit d'Aarhus is to allow the institutions and/or organizations in each international organization, country, region and major city that organize and promote access to information and citizen participation in public decision-making, to be permanently and continuously in touch.

This permanent relationship will allow the members to keep up with the achievements or experiments carried out in the various countries and to learn from their successes and failures. Citizen participation projects within the least advanced countries will also be developed. Communication between the different members of the network would be mainly carried out online and a meeting could be held in a different country each year.

The Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) of Québec and the Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal (OCPM) have already expressed their keen interest in the network.



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