



# Sustainability Analysis, Environmental Awareness and Public Participation within CAMP Cyprus

## The Public Participation Process in Cyprus

Achilleas Kalopedis and Anna Caramondani, ALA Planning Partnership



Government of Cyprus

**Plan Bleu**  
Regional Activity Centre



Environment Service of the  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Natural Resources  
and Environment

Sophia Antipolis  
February 2007



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction</b> .....  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>2. Benefits of Public Participation in Decision Making</b> .....   | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>3. The Island of Cyprus</b> .....  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>4. The Legal Framework</b> .....   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>5. Public Participation in Cyprus</b> .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| 5.1. General Information .....  | 4         |
| 5.2. The Aarhus Convention .....  | 5         |
| <b>6. Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making</b> .....   | <b>7</b>  |
| 6.1. Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessments .....   | 7         |
| 6.2. Public Participation in Strategic Environmental Assessments .....  | 7         |
| 6.3. The Amending Laws .....  | 8         |
| <b>7. Public Participation during the Planning Process</b> .....  | <b>9</b>  |
| 7.1. Public Participation during the Preparation of Local Plans and Area Schemes .....                              | 9         |
| 7.2. Public Participation during Planning Applications .....  | 10        |
| 7.3. Public Participation during Planning Applications for Planning Permission through Planning<br>Deviations ..... | 10        |
| <b>8. Conclusions</b> .....   | <b>12</b> |

## 1. Introduction

The current activity (Activity 5.1) of *Sustainability Analysis, Environmental Awareness and Public Participation* within the CAMP Cyprus framework, has the following main objectives:

- Review of the existing legal/institutional framework for and practice of public participation in the coastal development process in Cyprus
- Assessment of the level of Public Awareness of the need for sustainable use of coastal resources, and
- Development of sustainability indicators and guidelines for the operation of an effective public participation process within the Cyprus coastal planning and management policy framework.

This report reviews the existing legal/institutional framework for and practice of public participation in the coastal development process in Cyprus. Although the current activity is related to the Cyprus coastal planning and management policy framework, the current report discusses the legal/institutional framework for and practice of public participation in more general terms with respect to planning and environmental decision making.

## 2. Benefits of Public Participation in Decision Making

The method of Participatory Planning which involves the public and all the stakeholders from the very early stages of the planning process is the method considered currently as best practice for planning world wide and at European level. Public participation in planning and environmental decision-making and in particular, in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), is a planning tool necessary to reach development which is both sustainable and accepted by the wider public. It can also contribute to public awareness and increase support for the final decisions taken

As a result of public participation, the process of decision-making, up to and including the final decision, becomes more transparent and legitimate. Public debate on proposed activities among all interested groups at an early stage of decision-making may prevent or mitigate conflicts and adverse environmental and other planning consequences.

## 3. The Island of Cyprus

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia, but the largest island state with an area of 3.572 sq. miles (9.251 sq.kms). It is located at the north eastern corner of the Mediterranean and commands a "cross-roads" position, linking the east with the west, Europe with Africa and the Middle East.

Turkey's military invasion in 1974 had devastating effects on the island's physical structure and socio-economic sectors. It disrupted the settlement and communications systems that developed in Cyprus through the centuries and has enforced duplication of major infrastructure such as airports, ports, power plants, roads etc. with adverse effects on the environment. The dividing line of the island and the occupied part are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Map of Cyprus

On the 1st of May 2004, Cyprus together with another 9 candidate countries joined the European Union. This is expected to have considerable benefits for Cyprus in the social, political and economic areas.

As a current member of the European Union, Cyprus has adopted and enforced all the European directives and regulations (through incorporation and transposition into the national legislation) for environment (i.e. the 'Community acquis').

#### 4. The Legal Framework

In Cyprus, as in many other countries, there is no Coastal Zone Management Policy as a separate and self-contained document. Policies for the Coastal zone are included in separate policies which apply to different administration areas. The main policies are:

**Land use Policy:** Land use and generally spatial planning policy in Cyprus is the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior, the Planning Board and of the Department of Town Planning and Housing. It is controlled by the Town and Country Planning Law, which came into force on the 1st of December 1990. The Town and Country Planning Law provides for the preparation and enforcement of the Development Plans which comprise of a three-tier hierarchy, namely the Island Plan, the Local Plans and the Area Schemes. Due to the forced division of the island after the Turkish invasion of 1974, the Island Plan has been replaced by a rather general document, the Policy Statement for the Countryside which promotes and regulates development in the rural areas. The development in the main urban areas is controlled by the Local Plans and Area Schemes. The land uses and the development zones are defined through the above types of development plans, which should be revised every 5 years. The revision process is usually longer due to the rather ad-hoc and not organised methods of public participation in the planning process which involve proposals in the plan making and revision stage and objections after the publication of development plans.

**Tourism Policy:** Tourism policy is formulated, promoted and co-ordinated by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO), a semi-Government Organisation under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. CTO has no spatial plan preparation and implementation powers but, through its involvement in the meetings of the Planning Board when discussing

tourism issues, tourism policies are incorporated in the Local Plans and the Policy for the Countryside under the Town and Country Planning Law. Several policies and measures for the regulation of tourism development and tourism establishments are in force on the basis of the CTO legislation. In 2000 a Strategy for Tourism was prepared by the CTO containing the main strategic goals for Cyprus tourism up to the year 2010.

**Environmental Policy:** The Environmental Policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment assisted by an interministerial Environment Committee and a Consultative Environment Council, which includes private sector representatives and NGOs. The Environment Service (ES) of the Ministry co-ordinates programmes for the protection of the environment, advises on environmental policy formulation and its implementation, and is in charge of the environmental impact assessment process. At this moment, environmental policy in Cyprus is focused on the harmonization with the EU Acquis and the incorporation of EU Directives into the legislation of Cyprus. Environmental policy is expressed in separate sectoral policies of various natural resources (water, air, forests etc).

**Foreshore and coastal protection policies:** The District Administrations are responsible for the enforcement of the 'Foreshore Protection Law' which defines the 'foreshore' as all lands within 100 yards (91,44m) of the high water mark. The foreshore is a public property falling under the jurisdiction of this law. The Coastal Unit of the Ministry of Communication and Works is responsible for coastal erosion.

## 5. Public Participation in Cyprus

### 5.1. General Information

Until recently there were no clear procedures for public participation processes in Cyprus. The single exception is the 1972 Town and Country Planning Law which although does not clearly specify procedures for promoting active public participation in the planning process, it does specify how the public may influence the provisions of a Local Plan or Area Scheme. The public participation process with regards to planning is further discussed in section 7 of this report.

Gradually, and particularly since Cyprus has adopted and enforced all the European directives and regulations after joining the European Union in 2004, public participation procedures have become more commonplace.

Cyprus has signed and ratified the Aarhus convention (see section 5.2) which sets out precise provisions on public participation and for access to information on the environment held by public authorities. In relation to the Aarhus convention, Law N.119(I)/2004 concerning the first two pillars of the convention, has been published in order to conform with European Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information. The public participation process with regards to the environment is further discussed in section 6 of this report.

The objective of Law N.119(I)/2004 (and the European Directive 2003/4/EC) is to:

- a) guarantee the right of access to environmental information held by or for public authorities and to set out the basic terms and conditions of, and practical arrangements for, its exercise; and

- b) ensure that, as a matter of course, environmental information is progressively made available and disseminated to the public in order to achieve the widest possible systematic availability and dissemination to the public of environmental information. To this end the use, in particular, of computer telecommunication and/or electronic technology, where available, shall be promoted.

The Law further states that public authorities are required, to make available environmental information held by or for them, to any applicant at his request and without his having to state an interest.

Current environmental legislation in Cyprus, such as the law on Environmental Impact Assessments and Strategic Environmental Assessments now ensures the participation of the public and non-governmental organisations. In addition, amending laws have been prepared for a number of environmental laws in order to include the provisions set out in the Aarhus Convention. These Amending Laws are discussed in section 6.3 below.

The legislation for public hearings has also changed since the ratification of the Aarhus convention. The only public hearing procedure that existed prior to the ratification was the procedure when applying for Planning Permission through Departure. The procedure allows for public hearings for cases of proposed large scale developments as outlined in Annex 3 of the Regulations. This process is described in section 7.3.

Public hearings procedures are now in place for a number of environmental procedures (including Environmental Impact Assessments, Strategic Environmental Assessments and are encompassed in other environmental laws stated in section 5.2) whereby, a public hearing could take place for important plans and/or programmes. This is decided by the Council of Ministers after a recommendation by the Environment Service, after consultation with the Environmental Board.

Public Hearings are now compulsory for plans or programmes related to the Law on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPCC). Public Hearings for plans or programmes associated with other Environmental Laws are **not** compulsory. The Environmental Service, however, recommends that public hearings for such plans or programmes, still take place.

## 5.2. The Aarhus Convention

The Aarhus Convention is an environmental agreement, adopted on 25th June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus at the Fourth Ministerial Conference in the “Environment for Europe” process that stresses the need for citizen's participation in environmental issues and for access to information on the environment held by public authorities. By virtue of the Aarhus Convention, private individuals are now also involved in the process of preparing, monitoring and penalising infringements of environmental rules. Citizens have a right to information, a right to participate in the preparation of certain acts, and a right of access to justice in environmental matters.

The Convention entered into force on 30 October 2001 and after a first and second meeting of the Parties, in 2003 and 2005 respectively, an amendment to the Convention was adopted setting out more precise provisions on public participation in decision-making on some issues.

The Aarhus Convention establishes a number of rights (three pillars) of the public (individuals and their associations) with regard to the environment. The Convention provides for:

- the right of everyone to receive environmental information that is held by public authorities ("**access to environmental information**"). This can include information on the state of the environment, but also on policies or measures taken, or on the state of human health and safety where this can be affected by the state of the environment. Applicants are entitled to obtain this information within one month of the request and without having to say why they require it. In addition, public authorities are obliged, under the Convention, to actively disseminate environmental information in their possession;
- the right to participate in environmental decision-making. Arrangements are to be made by public authorities to enable the public affected and environmental non-governmental organisations to comment on, for example, proposals for projects affecting the environment, or plans and programmes relating to the environment, these comments to be taken into due account in decision-making, and information to be provided on the final decisions and the reasons for it ("**public participation in environmental decision-making**");
- the right to review procedures to challenge public decisions that have been made without respecting the two aforementioned rights or environmental law in general ("**access to justice**").

In 2003 two Directives concerning the first and second "pillars" of the Aarhus Convention were adopted; they were to be implemented in the national law of the EU Member States by 14 February and 25 June 2005 respectively:

- Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information, and
- Directive 2003/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 providing for public participation in respect of the drawing up of certain plans and programmes relating to the environment and amending with regard to public participation and access to justice Council Directives 85/337/EEC and 96/61/EC

Both Directives 2003/4/EC and 2003/35/EC contain provisions on access to justice.

Furthermore, on 24 October 2003 the Commission presented a Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council in order to transpose the third pillar on **access to justice in environmental matters**. This was adopted on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2006: Regulation (EC) N° 1367/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the application of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters to Community institutions and bodies entered into force on 28 September 2006. The Cyprus Government will have until 28 June 2007 to adapt its internal procedures and practice to the provisions of the "Aarhus" Regulation.

Cyprus ratified the Aarhus Convention on access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice for environmental matters on 19th September 2003.

The agreement states that authorities must make "appropriate provisions" for public participation in the preparation of plans and programmes "related to the environment". This phrase covers plans or programmes prepared by ministries (for example, of transport, energy or tourism) when they have significant environmental implications. The Convention does not specify exactly what provisions for public participation are necessary in this case, but several rules still apply: authorities must provide reasonable time frames for participation and

opportunities for early participation, and they must take “due account” of the outcomes of participation in their decision.

## **6. Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making**

### **6.1. Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessments**

Procedures have been in place in Cyprus for the approval of development projects since 2001 when Law 57(I)/2001 on the Assessment of the Impacts on the Environment from Certain Projects came into force. This has been replaced by Law 140(I)/2005 which fully satisfies the public participation requirements. The Law states that every person or public authority submitting an EIA has to issue a public notice providing information on:

- the nature of the proposed project, and
- the detailed arrangements for public participation.

Any person may submit comments or opinions within 30 days from the date of the notification. When the decision is taken by the competent authority the environmental authority notifies the public and informs them that information is available on the content of the decision, the evaluation process and the way the opinions expressed were taken into account in the decision-making process. The Law also provides for access to justice against a decision.

### **6.2. Public Participation in Strategic Environmental Assessments**

The European Commission formally adopted the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC on 5th June 2001. The purpose of the SEA-Directive is to ensure that environmental consequences of certain plans and programmes are identified and assessed during their preparation and before their adoption. The public and environmental authorities can give their opinion and all results are integrated and taken into account in the course of the planning procedure. After the adoption of the plan or programme the public is informed about the decision and the way in which it was made. In the case of likely transboundary significant effects the affected Member State and its public are informed and have the possibility to make comments which are also integrated into the national decision making process

Law 102(I)/2005 has been ratified according to the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and fully satisfies the public participation requirements during Strategic Environmental Assessments thus providing for public participation in decisions over plans and programmes.

The objective of the Law is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, an environmental assessment is carried out for certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

When a competent authority submits a preliminary plan or programme, it has to notify the public by publishing in the Cyprus Government Gazette, two National newspapers and the internet, the following details:

- The date of submission of the plan or programme, and the name of the submitting authority
- The nature of the proposed plan or programme
- That the plan or programme can be inspected during working hours, at the offices of the Environment Service and other relevant responsible authorities.
- That any person may submit comments or opinions within 35 days from the date of the notification

During the evaluation of the study the environmental authority carries out consultations with the public. The comments or opinions expressed must be taken into account by the Evaluation Committee when evaluating the study and the competent authority when making a decision over the plan or programme.

After a justified recommendation from the Environment Service, which is submitted after consultation with the relevant responsible authority and the Evaluation Committee, the Council of Ministers may decide to hold a public hearing, prior to the evaluation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the plan or programme. The public hearing procedure takes place taking account of the regulations which are published by the Council of Ministers according to Annex 26 of the Law.

The environmental authority after assessing the plan or programme prepares its decision and informs the public and the other relevant stakeholders by a public notice informing the public of the decision and specifying the time and place where information can be obtained in the plan or programme and the evaluation process.

### 6.3. The Amending Laws

In view of Aarhus agreement, a number of Environmental Laws have been amended to make appropriate provisions for public participation. The following laws have been amended:

| <b>Legislation</b>  | <b>Amending law</b> | <b>Original law</b> |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| The Law on Environmental Impact Assessments                   | N.140(I)/2005       | N.57(I)/2001        |
| The Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste                      | N.159(I)/2005       | N.32(I)/2002        |
| The Law on the Control of Water and Soil Pollution            | N.160(I)/2005       | N.13(I) 2004        |
| The Law on Solids and Hazardous Wastes                        | N.162(I)/2005       | N.215(I)/2002       |
| The Law on the Quality of the Atmospheric Air                 | N.161(I)/2005       | N.188(I)/2002       |
| The Law on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPCC) | N.15(I)/2006        | N.56(I)/2003        |

**Table 1: The Amending Laws**

The Amending Laws incorporate the following basic provisions for public participation:

1. The competent authority must issue a public notice informing the public
  - for every proposal for a new plan/programme or the modification or review of an existing one,
  - of the nature of the possible decisions which may be taken,
  - that information relevant to the proposal is available to the public during working days and hours at the offices of the competent authorities.
  - that any person may submit comments or opinions within 35 days from the date of the notification.

Public Notices must be placed in the, official Cyprus Government Gazette, two daily newspapers, and the internet

2. During the evaluation of the plan/programme the competent authority may carry out consultations with the interested public. The opinions expressed by the public must be taken into account in the decision-making.
3. Once the decision is taken, the competent authority must issue a public notice informing the public of the decision and that information is available on the nature of the plan/programme as this was approved and the evaluation process, including the way in which the opinions expressed were taken into account in the final decisions.

These provisions will apply for the drawing up of those plans/programmes that are required under each of the 4 laws and specifically:

- **Law on the Control of Water and Soil pollution:** programmes for the protection of water sources from nitrification.
- **Law on Solid and Hazardous Wastes:** the Waste Management Strategy and programmes for the management of batteries and accumulators.
- **Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste:** packaging management programmes and systems for the return, collection and recycling of packaging waste.
- **Law on the Quality of the Atmospheric Air:** plans/programmes for the zones and settlements where the levels of one or more atmospheric pollutants are above the set limit values.

It is important to note that all new Cypriot legislation procedures regarding the environment will, from now on incorporate the basic provision for public participation as outlined in the Aarhus Convention.

## 7. Public Participation during the Planning Process

### 7.1. Public Participation during the Preparation of Local Plans and Area Schemes

The 1972 Town and Country Planning Law (N.90/72) does not clearly specify procedures for promoting active public participation in the planning process. However, it specifies how the public may influence the provisions of a Local Plan or Area Scheme at two stages. In the first instance, the public is theoretically involved at the plan-making stage. Stakeholders include representatives of the Local Authorities involved, government agencies and public bodies whose policies are affected by the plans under consideration, organised citizens' groups and NGO's with an interest in the area under study, as well as persons of special knowledge or expertise in relation to the study area. These Stakeholders form the Joint Board which advises the Planning Board and the Minister of the Interior during the plan making process. This process is essentially consultative and its main objective is to inform the Interior Minister on opinions and suggestions in relation to a Development Plan's current or proposed policies. Public participation during the plan making/revising stage is thus very weak, because the organisation of public meetings where the proposed new plan policies can be discussed with the wider public is not a statutory obligation.

After its approval by the Planning Board and the Council of Ministers, a Development Plan is published and put on deposit for the public's inspection. Local Authorities, NGOs, or any interested body or individual may thereafter submit objections against any of the plan's provisions within a period of 8 months after its publication. The published Development Plan is in force during the objections period. This is something that does not happen in the UK

where the Development Plan is not in force until all the objections have been examined. The Minister of the Interior examines any objections, submits his suggestions and remarks to the Council of Ministers for considerations and decisions, and eventually publishes the Approved Development Plan, which remains in force until its following amendment. Local ad hoc pressure groups and NGOs have raised issues and questions, which directly relate to spatial planning policy though the above participatory processes but in many cases pressures and opinions have reached decision makers through other ad-hoc and unorganised procedures. In many cases political pressure from various interested groups (developers etc) has had considerable effects on the implementation of several provisions of published Development Plans through various ad-hoc and informal communication channels. The Government of Cyprus has now formed a special Committee with the aim of amending and updating the Town and Country Planning Law. It is recommended that the results of this activity of the CAMP project are given for consideration to this Committee.

## **7.2. Public Participation during Planning Applications**

In certain cases prescribed by the Planning Law, the Planning Authority is obliged to ensure that the submission of an application for planning permission has been adequately publicised. The relevant procedure intends to inform the public and in particular those citizens who may be affected by any proposed development in a timely and reliable manner so that any views and representations may be submitted to the Planning Authority before decision-making.

The Planning Authority keeps an updated Register of Applications and planning decisions which may be inspected by any interested person. The public is invited to submit in writing any views, representations or objections with respect to the application under consideration within the period specified in the relevant notification.

## **7.3. Public Participation during Planning Applications for Planning Permission through Planning Deviations**

When a planning application deviates from the provisions of development plans, then it is examined by both the Planning Authority and by a body which advises the Minister of Interior. This body is called the *Board for Consideration of Planning Deviations*.

When applications for a planning permission through deviations from the provisions of the Development Plan are under consideration, the Planning Authority ensures that a notification is published in the Local Press and posted in the offices of the Planning and of the Local Authority for inspection. In some larger applications which are defined in the relevant Regulations, the Planning Authority ensures that the application is additionally posted on the site of the proposed development and shall often dispatch letters addressed to the owners of neighbouring property inviting them to submit their views.

In cases of applications for planning permission through deviations, the public and organised groups may submit their views to the Planning Authority within the specified period and the Planning Authority should include such views in the report that has to be prepared and submitted to the *Board for Consideration of Planning Deviations*.

The assessment of applications through deviation is an exceptional process of dealing with planning proposals and therefore, the procedure being followed is quite transparent and

ensures that all those, who may be directly or indirectly affected by the granting of such permission, are fully and timely informed. The procedure encourages the submission of representations by persons, bodies or organised groups, at various stages.

In addition, the procedure allows for public hearings to provide an opportunity for a public dialogue with regard to any development of great significance or public interest. In the event of a public hearing for the consideration of such applications, persons or organised groups may attend or ask the Board in advance to allow their participation in the hearing. Public hearings aims to provide the Board with as much information as possible with regards the development and are necessary for cases of proposed large scale developments as outlined in Annex 3 of the Regulations. These developments include big scale waste treatment plants, regional abattoirs and incinerators, theme parks, power stations, large commercial and recreational developments, universities and hospitals which are located in areas not foreseen in development plans. The Board for Consideration of Planning Deviations can also decide based on determined criteria whether public hearings can take place under special circumstances for other developments not stated in Annex 3 of the Regulations. The public hearing procedure is carried out with base procedural rules that are determined by the Minister and it cannot last longer than 30 days. The participants in such a public hearing are the following:

- Government or other public services, relevant to the matter under examination.
- The applicant and his consultants.
- The Planning and Local Authority
- The president or a representative the Planning Board.
- The president or a representative of the Technical and Scientific Chamber of Cyprus
- The director or a representative of the Department of Town Planning and Housing.

The procedure followed for the above-mentioned public hearings is the following:

1. The Board invites all interested parties to the public hearing with a written invitation
2. All interested parties can submit their written views if they wish, 10 days before the hearing.
3. The hearing is open to the public.
4. The Board usually visits the development site on the day of the hearing (before the actual meeting starts)
5. During the hearing, the applicant and all the interested parties that have been invited express their views. The general public may also attend and express their views provided they seek and are granted permission by the president of the Board
6. Discussion between the interested parties during the hearing, is controlled and regulated by the president of the Board.
7. The decision of the Board is not announced during the hearing.

The Board for consideration of Planning Deviation shall support its suggestions submitted to the Council of Ministers (including the decisions taken without the procedure of a public hearing), with adequate reasoning, publish all relevant decisions within a period of 15 days and keep a Register of applications and decisions, so that any interested party will have the possibility to inspect the Register.

Public hearings are also enforced for certain developments such as the development of Golf courses in Cyprus.

## 8. Conclusions

Until recently there were no clear procedures for public participation processes in Cyprus. Gradually, and particularly since Cyprus has adopted and enforced all the European directives and regulations after joining the European Union in 2004, through incorporation and transposition into the national legislation, public participation procedures have become more commonplace mainly in the decision making of the environmental planning process. This statement does not really apply to the main planning process which promotes and regulates development in Cyprus. Public participation procedures in the town and country planning process are still weak, ad-hoc and inadequate. Participation in the planning process is done only through some consultation and not through inclusion. An exception is the procedure for considering applications for planning deviations, but even this procedure has its weaknesses. This is a major disadvantage for affecting the desired integrated planning process. The fact that the Town and Country Planning Law is now being revised provides the opportunity for improvements in the current planning public participation procedures and for coordination with the public participation procedures for the environment which have been adopted or which are in the process of being adopted. These public participation procedures concerning the Environment are summarised in the next paragraphs.

Cyprus has signed and ratified the Aarhus convention which sets out precise provisions on public participation and for access to information on the environment held by public authorities. The legislation for public hearings has also changed since the ratification of the Aarhus convention. The only public hearing procedure that existed prior to the ratification was the procedure when applying for Planning Permission through Departure. Public hearing measures have now been incorporated and will apply for the drawing up of those plans/programmes that are required under each of the following 4 laws:

- Law on the Control of Water and Soil pollution
- Law on Solid and Hazardous Wastes
- Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste
- Law on the Quality of the Atmospheric Air

Public hearing procedures are compulsory for plans/programmes that are required under the Law on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPCC).

The procedures for public hearings for Environmental plans and programmes are currently being finalized by the Environment Service and will be published early in 2007.

The legal/institutional framework for public participation is now in place to assist in environmental decision making in the coastal development process in Cyprus, something that was not openly available prior to the Aarhus Convention. The signing and ratification of the Aarhus Convention has meant that environmental legislation has been amended to include the provisions set out in the agreement and to ensure the participation of the public and non-governmental organisations in making environmental decisions.