



Launch of the European Pollutant Emission Register (EPER)

European Environment Agency, Copenhagen

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Welcome remarks by Prof. Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director, EEA

Minister Hans Christian Schmidt,
Environmental Mayor Winnie Berndtson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency, to this event to launch the European Pollutant Emission Register. Thank you both to our distinguished speakers and to those of you in the audience for taking the time to be with us. We are very glad that many of you who are involved at national level in making EPER a reality have been able to come to Copenhagen today.

The creation of EPER, which can be used by anyone with access to a computer, is a landmark event in the provision of environmental information to the European public. So it is entirely fitting that EPER should be launched here in Denmark, the host country of the Århus Convention. The convention is not only doing so much to promote public access to environmental information and participation in decision-making; it is also a driving force for the development of public Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

Another good reason for holding this event here is that Denmark is launching its own national register today as well ! We are honoured that Hans Christian Schmidt has nevertheless found time to be with us.

Though EPER is not a voluntary instrument for EU Member States and their industries, in some ways it can be seen as a partnership involving a wide range of stakeholders with a shared interest in transparency.

Individual facilities and their permitting authorities work together to get accurate emissions data. Administrations at local, national and EU level cooperate to collate the register and get it online.

And I imagine it will not be long before citizens and NGOs, armed with data from EPER, engage local industries in a dialogue about how they could further reduce emissions. In time, regulators may wish to start similar discussions with entire industry sectors!

I am glad to be able to welcome representatives from many of these partners here today.

Some companies have already voluntarily published emissions data for their facilities in their corporate environmental reports and elsewhere, and this openness is to be warmly welcomed. Now EPER is creating a baseline, and quite a demanding one, that those large and medium-sized facilities which have not yet done also need to meet.

For Norway and Hungary, EPER is of course entirely voluntary – and that makes it especially encouraging that these two EEA members have decided to contribute their emissions data. Their voluntary participation is a vote for openness and an example that I hope other countries who are not yet part of EPER will consider following.

Important as it is, for all of us ‘EPER 2004’ is only a first step. EPER’s expansion to cover all 25 EU Member States from 2006 is already planned. Let me just say that the Agency will continue to assist the Commission with these developments in every way possible. Partnership has been very much the hallmark of our cooperation on EPER.

What makes EPER especially useful to citizens is that it gives them localised information directly relevant to their immediate environment. It recognises that communities have a ‘right to know’ and seeks to satisfy that demand for knowledge.

In that spirit, the EEA intends to build on EPER over the coming years by developing an extensive internet portal to regional and localised environmental information covering all of our 31 member countries. The aim is that by entering their postal code or by using interactive maps and tools, people will be able to find information on the environmental conditions affecting the air, land and water in their neighbourhood or region. The portal

will draw on EPER but also on several other national and international initiatives.

We have a busy morning ahead of us, so I would like to give the floor now to the first of our speakers.

Unfortunately Margot Wallström is unable to be with us today so Paul McAleavey from her private office will speak in her name.