

Better implementation for the future

- a new strategic direction for IMPEL -

Background

In December 2013 the General Assembly discussed IMPEL's focus and priorities for the next few years and how it needs to adapt to meet the challenges ahead. As a result of these discussions, and the work of a Task Group, the General Assembly agreed a proposal on IMPEL's future strategic direction in May 2014.

Why does IMPEL need to change?

A recent independent evaluation of IMPEL and its work programme confirmed that IMPEL's work is highly valued by its members and other stakeholders, particularly its focus on practical implementation, and its informal ways of working, openness and transparency. However, IMPEL could achieve more by improving the level of engagement with its members, the focus and prioritisation of its work programme, the communication and embedding of outputs, and partnership working with other networks.

IMPEL also needs to respond to other important challenges and opportunities, including:

- ✓ its key role in the 7th EU Environment Action Programme (EAP) agenda to strengthen the implementation of environmental law across Europe
- ✓ the request of the European Commission, which is a major stakeholder and funder, that IMPEL should broaden its focus and consider other areas of the acquis, such as water, waste and nature protection in its work programme
- ✓ the need to support member organisations which are facing increasing implementation challenges with fewer resources.

Better implementation for the future – how can IMPEL make a contribution?

There are several ways IMPEL can help strengthen the implementation of environmental law in Europe, including:

- ✓ helping countries get to compliance more quickly, for example, by sharing knowledge, skills and good practices, and carrying out peer reviews (IRIs);
- ✓ helping implementing organisations use their limited resources more effectively, for example, by producing technical guidance and promoting the use of risk-based approaches to target effort;
- ✓ coordinating action between countries, for example, in the enforcement of regulations to tackle illegal trans-frontier movements of waste;
- ✓ facilitating communication between different actors and networks, for example, prosecutors, judges and ombudsmen;
- ✓ informing policy with practical experience and expertise.

Understanding and addressing implementation gaps

We need to develop a better understanding of the practical problems and gaps in the implementation of EU legislation so that we can identify how IMPEL can help to bridge them. This understanding will help to shape work programme priorities for the future.

Work is already underway to do this including; assessing the priorities in the 7th EAP, consulting with the European Commission and the European Environment Agency and other stakeholders including NGOs and business groups, and carrying out a survey of our members to gain their perspective on implementation problems and solutions.

Structure, governance and ways of working

We have reviewed a range of options and have agreed that IMPEL should move from its current structure of two clusters to a single integrated programme with a common process for prioritisation of activities and budget allocation.

The new programme will have five thematic areas:

1. Industry regulation
2. Waste and TFS
3. Water and land
4. Nature protection
5. Cross-cutting tools and approaches

Expert Teams (ETs) will develop each of these thematic areas. The ETs are responsible for specifying activities that address key implementation gaps, producing proposals for funding, overseeing the delivery of those activities and the quality of outputs.

A programme management group, called the Cluster Management Group (CMG), will bring together the 5 thematic areas into a single integrated programme. The CMG is responsible for proposing a prioritised programme of activities consistent with the available budget for agreement with the General Assembly.

The programme will have fewer activities overall so that that they are better funded, more inclusive (have more IMPEL members involved), have better communications, and more focus on evaluation of project outcomes and the realisation of benefits.

We will implement a set of minimum criteria for the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for proposed activities that will ensure agreed standards with regard to relevance, value, participation, project management, delivery of benefits, communication and evaluation.

We will actively explore other funding sources for initiatives that are of interest to IMPEL's members but cannot be directly funded through IMPEL's limited budget.

Improving the level of engagement with IMPEL's members and with others

We will step up engagement with IMPEL's member countries to raise awareness of the importance of our work and to achieve greater benefits for member organisations through enhanced take-up of activities and outputs.

We will also take forward opportunities to develop partnerships and joint working with other networks that are working in the field of environmental protection and enforcement in Europe and internationally.

Making the most of IMPEL's resources

We must make the best use of IMPEL's limited budget by minimising the costs of management activities wherever possible and focusing resources on the activities that will directly benefit practitioners in our member organisations. We will actively explore and adopt innovative ways of working, for example, in the use of technology to reduce the costs (and carbon emissions) of travel and meetings. We will also reduce the normal frequency of General Assembly meetings from two to one per year and ask members to fund their own travel and subsistence costs for these meetings.

Next steps

The necessary preparatory work and structural changes are in progress. A final decision on the new arrangements and the content of the 2015 work programme will be taken at the next General Assembly to take place in Rome in December 2014. A mechanism for overseeing and reviewing progress with the changes thereafter will also be put in place.

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