

- Press release -

IMPEL study confirms that significant challenges remain in implementing EU environmental law

23 March 2015 - The European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) today publishes a report of research that looked at remaining challenges in implementing EU environmental law and how IMPEL could help to overcome them. The study includes an analysis of responses from environmental regulators across Europe on practical implementation challenges that they are facing.

Implementation challenges

The project confirms that significant challenges remain in the implementation of EU environmental law and highlights a number of practical challenges such as:

- Waste Framework Directive and hazardous waste enforcement
- An Integrated regulatory approach for the agriculture sector
- Permitting of installations to reflect Industrial Emissions Directive requirements (BAT Conclusions) and air quality standards
- Inspections and enforcement related to Birds and Habitats Directives
- Water Framework Directive

Of the sectors that present the greatest challenges in implementation Waste Management was the most frequently cited, followed by Chemicals and Agriculture.

Common causes for poor implementation

The nature of the implementation challenges varies across different sectors and involves different problems and actors. However, there are some common underlying factors which are significant causes of poor progress with implementation, including: lack of resources, insufficient capacity in the organisations responsible for environmental regulation and enforcement, and inadequate sanctions and low level of fines for those that breach the law.

Overcoming barriers

Working as a network of practitioners there are several important things that IMPEL can do to overcome the barriers to effective implementation. These include: improving the sharing of knowledge and good practice between countries; developing new approaches and techniques to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental regulation; and improving communication and cooperation between different actors involved in compliance and enforcement.



"IMPEL plays a key role in helping to strengthen the implementation of environmental law across Europe. This project is a major step forward in improving our understanding of where and how countries are encountering challenges in implementation. It will be invaluable in guiding IMPEL's work for the future, helping us to better target our effort to support our member organisations in overcoming these challenges." says John Seager, Chair of IMPEL.

Background

The implementation gap in EU environmental legislation was one of the key topics emerging from IMPEL's 2013 conference. It was recognised that the implementation gap in Europe is undermining the creation of a level playing-field. It was at this conference that it was agreed to further assess the practical implementation problems that are being experienced in countries and how practitioners can work together to identify appropriate solutions.

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