

## FOREWORD

Over the last 30 years, the European Union has developed a comprehensive body of legislation to provide European citizens with a high level of environmental protection. But to be effective, this body of law must be fully and correctly implemented and all aspects and details of this legislation must be respected.

Proper implementation of EU environmental laws will help Member States not only to protect their biodiversity and natural resources but also to give their citizens the quality of life and the safe, pleasant surroundings they deserve. Therefore, I share with my predecessor, Margot Wallström, the emphasis on the importance of ensuring that Member States increase their overall efforts to comply fully with our laws. It is an essential task for the Commission, as guardian of the Treaty, to check that national implementing measures meet the requirements of environmental directives.

Better implementation of Community environmental law and its proper application on the ground will be among my work priorities during my mandate over the next 5 years. As the new European Commissioner responsible for the environment, I will ensure that my services continue to take pro-active initiatives and to organise regular meetings with the national authorities in order to avoid problems where possible. We will also continue to produce interpretative texts and guidance documents to help Member States in transposing environmental directives correctly and on time as well as in answering key implementation questions that may arise. Where violations of Community environmental law are identified, appropriate action under Articles 226 and 228 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (the EC Treaty) will be taken.

Ensuring proper environmental compliance is even more a challenge following the recent enlargement of the European Union. In principle, the whole *acquis communautaire* in the area of the environment had to be transposed by the new Member States before their accession to the European Union, but transition periods for the implementation of certain environmental obligations were agreed during the accession negotiations. Due attention will be paid to timely and correct implementation, and the first infringement procedures against the new Member States for non-transposition of EU environmental law were initiated at the end of 2004. I am ready to devote all necessary efforts to ensure overall coherence and consistency with EU environmental legislation across the European Union.

I am very pleased to present this Sixth Annual Survey, covering the year 2004, which aims to inform the public about the state of implementation of EU environmental legislation and about the comparative compliance records of all Member States. I believe that this document will also provide Member States with a useful source of information and will make them even more committed to ensuring that they fully and effectively implement and apply Community environmental law.

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