Citizens' summary

Improving the implementation of EU environment law

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- Non-compliance with EU laws on the environment – which aim at protecting air, water, nature and human health as well as reducing waste – carries costs for humans and the natural world, broadly estimated at around €50 billion a year.

- To improve implementation of EU law by Member States, we need increased knowledge of how environmental laws work in practice, better sharing of that knowledge, and more effective responses to actual or potential environmental problems.

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION DOING TO IMPROVE COMPLIANCE?

- Proper implementation is primarily the responsibility of Member States. The Commission's role is to help Member States, check that commitments are respected and take action if they aren't.

- This Communication\(^1\) contains a set of ideas aimed at putting environmental knowledge on a sounder footing and improving the responsiveness of the national bodies and institutions that can guarantee proper implementation.

WHAT WOULD CHANGE?

If Member States adopt the ideas proposed in the Communication, this could result in:

- more environmental information online;
- enhanced inspection and surveillance mechanisms;
- a more consistent structure for citizens to present environmental grievances and concerns;
- a framework for environmental challenges in national courts that is more predictable for citizens, authorities and businesses;
- better European networking for national bodies and institutions;
- structured implementation plans to help Member States target resources at environmental problems requiring well-organised solutions.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **Everyone** – because everyone benefits directly and indirectly from a clean environment, including in terms of their physical health.

- **Our economy** – analysis shows that implementing EU environment laws can be good for jobs, the economy and our long-term prosperity. Laws are designed to cut down on wasteful use of finite resources, and stimulate European enterprises to produce innovations that are useful not only in Europe but across the world.

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\(^{1}\) Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Improving the delivery of benefits from EU environment measures: building confidence through better knowledge and responsiveness\(^{1}\).
• **Responsible authorities and professionals** in Member States - the ideas aim to support them in implementing EU law.

**WHY IS EU ACTION NEEDED?**

• Threats to the environment do not respect national frontiers and the effects of variable levels of implementation can spill over – a river polluted in one Member State can carry the pollution into another, for instance.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?**

• The European Parliament and the Council are invited to consider the ideas set out in the Communication with a view to identifying and endorsing the best way forward. Their response to the Communication will feed into the preparations for the seventh Environmental Action Programme, due later in 2012.

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