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The EU Environmental Implementation Review: Common challenges and how to combine efforts to deliver better results

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1. THE NEED TO DELIVER

More than 75% of European citizens find EU environmental legislation necessary for protecting the environment in their country, and nearly 80% agree that the EU institutions should be able to check that environmental legislation is being applied correctly in their country 1 .

The EU's environmental policy and legislation bring undeniable benefits: they protect, preserve and improve the environment for present and future generations, and preserve the quality of life of EU citizens. Weak implementation generates high societal, economic and environmental costs and it creates an uneven playing field for businesses. The importance of the correct implementation of the EU's environmental acquis is also reflected in the Seventh Environmental Action Programme 2 .

Here are a few examples of what could be achieved if EU environmental requirements were fully implemented:

- full compliance with EU waste policy by 2020 could create an additional 400,000 jobs and an additional annual turnover in the waste management and recycling industries of EUR 42 billion 3 ;
- if existing EU water legislation were to be fully implemented, and all water bodies to achieve a 'good' status ranking, the combined annual benefits could reach at least EUR 2,8 billion 4 ;
- the Natura 2000 network delivers estimated gains of EUR 200-300 billion per year across the EU and full implementation of Natura 2000 would lead to the creation of 174,000 additional jobs 5 .

In May 2016, the Commission launched the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR), a two-year cycle of analysis and dialogue to improve the implementation of existing EU environmental policy and legislation⁶. The EIR complements ongoing implementation efforts such as ensuring compliance and infringement procedures. It offers a coherent framework to tackle common implementation challenges and will contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

This Communication is accompanied by an Annex and 28 EIR country reports. These describe the main challenges and opportunities on environmental implementation for each Member State⁷, based on the distance between the EU legal obligations and policy agreements, and the reality on the ground. The factual information included in the reports has been verified with the Member States.

This Communication also identifies challenges that are common to several Member States and provides preliminary findings on possible root causes of implementation gaps. Addressing these challenges will help remove obstacles to implementation, focus investments, reduce the number of legal procedures against Member States, create green jobs and, most of all, contribute to a better quality of life.

Tackling structural challenges requires a holistic approach across sectors, beyond the environmental policy community, through technical cooperation but also political involvement. The EIR offers a new opportunity to raise attention to the remaining environmental implementation gaps among all key national and local players as well as among the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee.

2. THE STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION: COMMON CHALLENGES, COMMON OPPORTUNITIES AND POINTS OF EXCELLENCE

The country reports⁸ show that the main challenges and most pressing implementation gaps across Member States are found in the policy fields of waste management, nature and biodiversity, air quality, noise and water quality and management.

Circular Economy and Waste management

Waste management cannot be seen in isolation from the transition to a circular economy, which is not only an environmental objective but also affects how we produce, work, buy and live. The Commission is implementing the 2015 Circular Economy action plan⁹ and has urged swift adoption by the European Parliament and by the Council of the proposals to review waste legislation. All Member States have started work in this field but several are frontrunners and have adopted national or regional circular economy plans (e.g. the Netherlands, Belgium) or integrated them in other policies (e.g. Germany, France). Around 20 Member States have adopted schemes to make the goods and services they purchase (through public procurement) more sustainable. Such measures are key to truly "close the loop", going beyond waste management to cover the whole life-cycle of a product.

Under the EU "waste hierarchy" the priority is prevention, followed by (preparing for) reuse, recycling, recovery and, as the least preferred option, disposal (which includes landfilling and incineration without energy recovery). The most relevant indicators to assess compliance with EU requirements on waste are the mandatory landfill and recycling targets, as well as the existence of up-to-date plans for prevention and management of waste.

This first edition of the EIR country reports focuses on the management of municipal waste for which EU legislation set recycling targets for 2020. Management of municipal waste is crucial for our health and wellbeing, but has posed problems in many Member States.

Policy findings:

- Waste prevention remains an important challenge in all Member States, including those with high recycling rates. Eight Member States produce at least twice as much municipal waste per inhabitant than a Member State with the lowest waste generation. Decoupling of waste production from economic growth is a pertinent goal within the wider context of the circular economy agenda.
- Based on the most recent ESTAT data, six Member States have already reached the municipal waste recycling target of 50%, while nine countries need to step up their efforts significantly to reach this target by 2020. The Commission is planning to follow-up on the status of compliance with the 2020 targets in an 'early warning' report in 2018. Six Member States have not managed to limit the landfilling of biodegradable municipal waste (50% by 2009).
- Drawing up of national waste management plans and waste prevention programmes is required by the Waste Framework Directive. It is also a precondition for cohesion policy funding in 2014-2020. Most Member States have waste prevention programmes in place but two Member States are missing them. One Member State does not have a national plan on waste management in place and five Member States miss at least some regional plans.
- Around half of the Member States have to increase effectiveness of separate waste collection, which is a prerequisite for improving recycling both as regards quantity and quality. Another issue is the inappropriate pricing of residual waste treatment (mechanical and biological treatment, landfilling and incineration) which does not provide sufficient incentives to push waste towards the higher levels of the waste hierarchy. This is coupled with the insufficient use of other market-based instruments, such as extended producer responsibility or "pay-as-you-throw". A better use of public procurement rules can lead to more cost-efficient solutions.
- In five Member States, lack of coordination between the different administrative levels and fragmented governance of environmental issues have been identified as a cause of insufficient implementation. However there are other governance issues (lack of legal enforcement, lack of capacity to manage large investment projects, unreliable data, or insufficient control and monitoring) which appear to contribute to the waste implementation gap.

Successful practices:

Slovenia provides a good example of how to improve waste management in a relatively short time frame. Ljubljana has been rated as the best EU capital in terms of coverage and effectiveness of separate collection. Within 10 years, with the support of EU funds, the Slovenian capital decreased the amount of municipal waste sent to landfill by 59% and reduced the municipal waste generation by 15%¹⁰.

Ireland offers a useful example with its major reform of the waste sector, closing illegal landfills and financing extensive clean-up and remediation works. The reforms were carried out in close cooperation with the Commission, resulting in a system that ensures a high level of compliance with EU waste legislation.

Nature and biodiversity

Biodiversity is the extraordinary variety of ecosystems, habitats, and species that surround us. It gives us food, fresh water and clean air, shelter and medicine, mitigating natural disasters, pests and diseases and contributing to regulating the climate. Biodiversity is therefore our natural capital, delivering ecosystem services that underpin our economy. The EU Biodiversity Strategy¹¹ seeks to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services and restore them as far as possible by 2020.

The Habitats and Birds Directives require Member States to designate sites as part of the Natura 2000 network, in order to protect habitats and species of Community interest. This network is an essential tool to meet the goal of "favourable conservation status". Following a thorough Fitness Check 12, the Commission concluded in December 2016 that the Directives are fit for purpose, but that the full achievement of their objectives will depend on substantial improvement in their implementation. This conclusion is also mirrored by the policy findings below. For land ecosystems, the most frequently reported pressures and threats to biodiversity are non-sustainable agricultural practices, the modification of natural conditions, and pollution. For marine biodiversity, these pressures are unsustainable fishing and harvesting of aquatic resources, modification of natural conditions, climate change and ocean acidification, pollution by chemicals, plastics and noise.

Policy findings:

- The assessment of the 28 EIR country reports reflects the findings of the State of the Nature 2015 report prepared by the European Environmental Agency 13, i.e. the overall status of protected species and habitats has not significantly improved over the last six years. Across the EU, more than three quarters of the habitats assessments indicate an unfavourable conservation status and a significant proportion is continuing to deteriorate. As regards non-bird species, 60% of EU level assessments indicate an unfavourable status. The status of 15 % of all wild bird species is near threatened, declining or depleted and another 17% are threatened.
- While there has been progress in many areas and there are local success stories, there are significant gaps in implementation, financing and policy integration. At the current rate of efforts, biodiversity loss would continue in the EU with potentially serious consequences for the capacity of natural ecosystems to provide for human needs in the future.
- Only seven Member States 14 have (almost) completed the designation of "Sites of Community Interest" under the Habitats Directive. 17 Member States have designated most sites on land but there are insufficiencies in the marine component of their network. The remaining four Member States have insufficiencies both on land and sea.
- Systemic issues causing poor implementation of the Nature Directives are the absence of management plans for Natura 2000 sites or their management. The country reports provide evidence for three Member States that are struggling with applying appropriate assessment procedures to determine the effect of new plans and projects on Natura 2000 sites.
- Furthermore, a lack of knowledge on species, habitats and sites is one of the major obstacles to effective implementation in most of the Member States, including with regards to marine ecosystems.
- Further issues are a lack of adequate funding, a lack of human resources and poor involvement and engagement of local communities and stakeholders such as landowners and land users.

Successful practices

France has developed an effective participatory approach for the management of its Natura 2000 network, which has also created several hundred jobs. The French Green and Blue Trails (TGB) 15 provide a planning tool used by the regional and local levels to establish coherent ecological networks.

Thanks to an extensive range of Natura 2000 sites restoration measures carried out since 2003 in the frame of six coordinated LIFE projects covering several thousands of hectares of peat bogs and wetlands in the Belgian Ardennes 16, the Belgian authorities were able to report, in

2013, significant positive trends in the conservation status of a dozen different habitat types and associated species protected by the EU Habitats Directive 17 .

Estonia has provided one of the most complete integrated planning frameworks for the financing of Natura 2000 sites from different EU funds. Estonia presented a comprehensive priorities action framework 18 , including conservation priorities, measures needed to achieve improvement of conservation status of the protected habitats and species, and related financing needs, together with a thorough analysis of financing opportunities.

The Netherlands is a leader in the area of natural capital accounting. It has finalised a large natural capital programme 19 providing evidence on how the concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services can be integrated into decision-making in different domains, such as agriculture, flood defence and international trade. The Netherlands also tested local level ecosystem accounts. NGOs, companies and governmental organisations have agreed to collaborate on the valuation of natural and social capital.

Air quality and noise

The EU has adopted and regularly updated a body of legislation 20 on ambient air quality aimed at protecting both the environment and human health, by establishing binding standards and objectives for a number of air pollutants 21 . As a result, up-to-date information on ambient air quality is routinely made available to the public and excessive air pollution levels are being tackled through air quality plans setting out practical measures. In addition, the National Emission Ceilings Directive provides for emission reductions at national levels so that citizens do not suffer from bad air quality caused by the emissions of the neighbouring Member States.

Given the harmful effect of air pollution on human health (estimates of the health impacts attributable to exposure of air pollution indicate that in the EU-28 NO₂, O₃ and PM_{2.5} concentrations were responsible for 68,000, 16,000 and 436,000 premature deaths respectively in 2013) 22 , the Commission remains concerned about the overall pace of progress in achieving the limit values set by EU legislation in Member States.

Policy findings:

- Air quality in the EU has improved over the past few decades as regards several pollutants, but more needs to be done with regard to PM₁₀ and NO₂. Five Member States have no exceedances of limit value and air quality is reported to be generally good with some exceptions. However, 16 Member States are facing legal action for exceeding PM₁₀ limit values, and 12 Member States for NO₂ exceedances as well as for lack of effective measures taken at national level.
- The PM₁₀ pollution can be caused by a wide range of sources (e.g. domestic heating, industrial emission, agriculture, traffic). To reduce PM emissions from domestic heating, measures addressing solid fuel burning need to be implemented 18 Member States. This practice has already been banned in some cities suffering from high levels of air pollution. Industrial sources should be tackled by permits that could go beyond the best available techniques. In addition, agricultural waste burning continues to lead to particulate matter pollution in some areas, and needs to be addressed.
- Measures to achieve NO₂ compliance have to target diesel vehicles in particular e.g. by introducing progressively stringent low emission zones in inner city areas or by phasing out preferential tax treatment. Transport demands in general should be addressed through the implementation of strategic urban mobility plans.

- Excessive noise is the second-worst environmental cause of ill health behind only ultra-fine particulate matter air pollution 23 . The EU acquis sets out several requirements, including assessing the exposure to noise through mapping and drawing up action plans to address causes of noise. For the current five-year reporting cycle, more than 30% of the required noise maps and around 60% of the action plans are missing.

Successful practices:

Many European cities have introduced low emission zones which limit the circulation of certain vehicle categories depending on their respective emission potential. In many cases these have proven to be successful 24 : for example the 'Air Quality Plan for Berlin 2011-2017' estimated that by implementing a low emission zone in 2008, transport emissions were reduced significantly and as a result 10 exceedance days of the daily limit value of PM10 were avoided in the year 2010. The estimates also indicated that NO2 pollution for that year was reduced by about 5% and pollution from traffic related soot particles along roads by more than half 25 .

Water quality and management

The main objective of EU water policy and legislation 26 is to ensure good quality water in sufficient quantity for the public, economic activities and nature by addressing pollution sources (from e.g. agriculture, urban areas and industrial activities), physical and hydrological modifications to water bodies and the management of risks of flooding.

The acquis requires Member States to adopt River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) as an essential means of achieving in a coherent manner the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment across the EU. More specific obligations include: the collection and treatment of waste waters before discharging them; the adoption of plans to protect water quality by preventing nitrates from agricultural sources polluting ground and surface waters; the adoption of Flood Risk Management Plans; the adoption of marine strategies to achieve good environmental status of marine waters by 2020.

The most common pressures on water quality are pollution from agricultural activities and industry, followed by poor flow regulation and morphological alterations, weak river management and illegal or excessive water abstraction.

Policy findings:

- In one third of the Member States more than 50% of all natural surface water bodies have good or high ecological status. However, in five Member States less than 20% of water bodies have a good ecological status. As regards groundwater bodies, they have a good quantitative status in 13 Member States. In 10 Member States, 70-90% of all groundwater bodies have a good quantitative status and in five countries the figure is between 20-70%.
- All first generation RBMPs have some or significant deficiencies, mostly regarding monitoring and methods for assessing and classifying the status of water bodies. All Member States rely on exemptions allowing extension of deadlines. Many allow new projects that are detrimental to achieving good status of these water bodies, without giving always proper justification. The Commission has issued recommendations to Member States to address these deficiencies and close these gaps in the second RBMPs. These were included in action plans to fulfil preconditions for receiving European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for water infrastructure investments.

- Five Member States have not yet adopted any of their second generation RBMPs, due by end 2015, and in three Member States the adoption is not complete yet 27 .
- Root causes include ineffective control measures, a lack of coordination between water management authorities at different regional or local levels, a lack of cooperation between water and nature governance bodies, but also with authorities competent for other sectors, and lack of access to data. Another common challenge in the water sector concerns inadequate water pricing policies.
- Although implementation of the Nitrates Directive has led to some improvements, nitrates concentrations and eutrophication levels remain a serious issue in nearly all Member States. Eutrophication of the Baltic Sea, mainly due to intensive agriculture practices, is particularly problematic.
- On drinking water quality, almost all Member States have very high compliance rates. In three Member States only there are local quality problems and certain areas are missing appropriate infrastructure.
- On bathing waters, 96% of all sites meet the minimum quality requirements set out in the EU's Bathing Water Directive ('i.e. they are of 'sufficient quality'). Many Member States reach higher quality standards: in eight of them, more than 90% of all bathing waters were of excellent quality in 2015. In 11 Member States the share of bathing sites with excellent quality is above the EU average of 84.4%.
- Six countries have excellent compliance rates on collection and treatment of urban wastewater, but most Member States struggle to reach full implementation and so far 13 face EU legal action. Closing the implementation gap by building up the necessary infrastructure requires good governance structures, adequate planning, and coordination to secure funding (substantial EU funds have been made available).
- Despite the 2015 deadline, as of the end of November 2016, only 18 Member States have reported information on their 2015 Flood Risk Management Plans.
- All Member States having marine waters still have gaps in implementing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, starting with the definition of good environmental status. Most Member States' monitoring programmes will not be fully operational before 2018 or even 2020, which would lead to information gaps in the next assessment of their marine waters, due in 2018. By March 2016, Member States were due to adopt programmes of measures that provide the core actions that will give their marine waters good environmental status. However, 10 Member States have not yet done so.

Successful practices:

Good practices can among others be found in Cyprus in relation to water inspection within the enforcement programme on agricultural abstractions using satellite photography and onsite inspections 28 . This is noted as a model for possible future enforcement work.

Finland is implementing a large scale LIFE integrated demonstration project (FRESHABIT) 29 , involving different sectors, to develop new methodology and indicators for assessing the conservation status of freshwater habitats and to improve the ecological status, management and sustainable use of freshwater Natura 2000 sites. The project will enhance capacity building inter alia by setting up coordination structures and also develop new model frameworks to facilitate long-lasting results.

Enabling tools

Market-based instruments and investments

Fiscal measures, such as environmental taxation and the phasing out of environmentally harmful subsidies offer an effective and efficient way of achieving environmental policy objectives. While it is for each Member State to set up its taxation system, the Commission has explored the potential of environmental taxation per country in the context of the European Semester.

Making good use of the EU funds is also important to achieve the environmental goals and improve the integration of environmental requirements into other policy areas. The analysis in the country reports will support further exploration of how to put in place the right conditions to ensure adequate funding, and how to address environmental externalities through the use of green public procurement and other EU market-based instruments and investment opportunities.

Policy findings:

- The country reports show that the percentage of environmental tax revenues of total revenues varies from 10.61% to 4.57 %, the EU average being 6.35%. Member States need to explore the full potential of environmental taxation (including on waste landfilling, water abstraction and fuel efficiency) to harvest environmental, economic and social (jobs) benefits.
- Specific environmentally harmful subsidies, such as preferential tax treatment for certain fuels and tax advantages for privately used company cars, which impede progress in tackling traffic congestion and air pollution are still in place in many countries and need to be phased out.
- Within the ESIF 'environmental protection and resource efficiency' constitutes the highest allocation area in the 2014-20 period in 12 Member States, but the available EU funding opportunities for environmental objectives should be used by Member States without delay.

Successful practices:

Since the 1990s several Member States have established environmental tax committees opening up debates on possible options for tax-shift. This is a first but essential step in assessing the potential for such reforms within the national context. A recent example is Portugal, where some recommendations of the Commission for Green Tax Reform have been adopted by Parliament.

Spain, Italy, Greece and Poland have set up networks of cohesion policy managing authorities to promote environmental integration into the use of the EU financing.

Effective governance and capacity to implement rules

Effective governance of EU environmental legislation and policies requires an appropriate institutional framework, policy coherence and coordination, applying legal and non-legal instruments, engaging with non-governmental stakeholders, having adequate levels of knowledge and skills, and last but not least, strategic plans.

Policy coherence includes ratifying international environmental agreements concluded by the Union to address transboundary and global challenges. Delayed ratification by several Member States compromises environmental implementation, the Union's strength in related negotiations, and its credibility in advocating action by third countries.

Ensuring compliance with EU-derived environmental rules by economic operators, utilities and individuals depends on the effectiveness of a range of public authorities, including environmental inspectorates, police, customs, prosecution services and audit bodies, several of which

share knowledge and practice in pan-European networks of practitioners 30 . Good practice has moved towards a risk-based approach in which the best mix of monitoring, promotion and enforcement is directed at the most serious compliance problems. Further cohesion policy offers a wide range of capacity-building tools, including the PEER 2 PEER tool for exchange of expertise between public authorities 31 .

EU environmental legislation confers a range of substantive and procedural rights to citizens which need to be upheld by national courts on the basis of environmental access to justice. The good functioning of national justice systems is crucial for achieving the objectives of EU law, including in the field of environment 32 .

Electronic data-sharing between public authorities under the INSPIRE Directive 33 , can help Member States to report on the environment more efficiently, and facilitate complex implementation tasks such as flood prevention, which depend on good use of topographical, hydrological, meteorological and other information.

Policy findings:

- Sustainable development strategies exist in many Member States, including at regional level, although in some cases these are not updated. Less common are comprehensive national or regional environmental policy plans.
- Most Member States have established co-ordination mechanisms to improve effective cooperation between different governance levels. Ineffective enforcement and fragmentation of responsibility for the environment at regional level have been identified in a few Member States, and incorrect transposition of EU legislation at regional level remains a concern in several Member States. Regulatory impact assessment is deployed in many Member States, while some have streamlined the environmental assessment procedures where more than one EU directive is involved 34 .
- Participation in existing networks of practitioners remains patchy. Information about how Member States ensure environmental compliance is incomplete, in particular on diffuse water pollution, urban air pollution, threatened habitats and species and the lack of or sub-standard waste-water treatment plants and collection systems. More information is needed on how both national and the EU level to ensure that rules are met.
- In some Member States there continue to be obstacles to access to justice in environmental matters, whether related to the excessive costs of litigation or restrictive rules on who can bring a legal challenge.
- In most Member States, data-sharing has not progressed as much as the INSPIRE Directive intended, and Member States need to step up efforts if they are to derive the full benefits of the Directive's potential.

Successful practices:

The Irish Environmental Protection Agency has developed a Licencing, Monitoring and Assessment system (LEMA) to enable officials to electronically manage, analyse, share and use the data they collect from the holders of industrial permits and through inspections, including for the planning of future work 35 . The Agency also co-ordinates a national compliance and enforcement network 36 aimed at ensuring a high level of consistency in compliance assurance work across more than thirty local authorities.

A risk-based methodology for planning inspections and other compliance assurance activities developed by the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) has been taken up in several Member States, thanks to the work of IMPEL, the European network of environmental inspectorates.

The Flemish Region in Belgium ³⁷ and the Spanish Environmental Prosecution Office ³⁸ produce annual reports and analysis of environmental inspections and prosecutions, helping to inform the public and providing statistics for evaluation of compliance assurance work.

Scotland's Environment Web ³⁹ and the Dutch National SDI (PDOK) ⁴⁰ for spatial data infrastructure are exemplary in making free spatial data available to the public in line with the INSPIRE Directive.

3.Common root causes: First findings

Solving environmental implementation gaps requires more than examining the fulfilment of EU policy and legislation. The EIR provides a new opportunity for national authorities and the Commission to have a closer look at underlying root causes for poor implementation. The country reports show that there are root causes common to several Member States ⁴¹ .

This first EIR exercise includes only a preliminary assessment of these root causes. To endorse country-specific solutions, more detailed evidence is needed. In order to improve knowledge in the next EIR reports, the Commission will need feedback from the Member States, in particular through the national dialogues which will follow the publication of the country reports.

Policy findings on the main common root causes identified so far:

- Ineffective coordination among local, regional and national authorities: This can be an obstacle to implementation in Member States. For example, the responsibilities on monitoring water quality are often dispersed among different authorities without sufficient coordination.
- Lack of administrative capacity and insufficient financing: In some countries, a lack of financial and human resources poses an obstacle to implementation, as this prevents the authorities from preparing and implementing investment projects. Even when financing is available, local authorities sometimes lack the human resources and/or the know-how for organising public procurement and monitoring the quality of the service provided. For example, in the area of nature protection, the lack of capacity has resulted in the inability to carry out and monitor necessary management and conservation measures.
- Lack of knowledge and data: A lack of (access to) data and unreliable data causes implementation problems in many Member States. For example, a lack of knowledge and data on species and habitats hinders their effective protection.
- Insufficient compliance assurance mechanisms: The analysis demonstrates that there are often concerns over compliance monitoring and enforcement, including through effective and proportionate sanctions.
- Lack of integration and policy coherence: The analysis shows that a lack of integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas constitutes a root cause for poor implementation, such as illustrated in the air-mobility nexus referred to above.

4.the way forward

The country reports, this Communication and the guidance provided in the Annex, should form a basis for Member States to address common implementation challenges, in collaboration with, local and regional authorities and stakeholders, as well as with other Member States.

The Member States are responsible for closing the implementation gaps and the Commission will support and accompany these endeavours. The table in the Annex brings together all actions the Commission suggests to the Member States in the country reports to improve the delivery of EU environmental policy and legislation. In the country reports these suggestions have been put in their wider context and, where needed, explained.

The Commission will carry on the ongoing efforts to improve implementation by targeted enforcement action at EU level and to co-finance environmental investments using the EU funds. In 2017, the Commission will provide guidance on how to promote, monitor and ensure environmental compliance. To facilitate judicial action by citizens and environmental NGOs, an interpretative communication on access to justice in national courts on environmental matters will help increase the effectiveness of remedies in case of non-implementation.

The Commission will also explore with Member States and the European Environment Agency how to strengthen policy knowledge and to better target it to the specific requirements of EU environmental acquis. To do so, the Fitness Check on Environmental Monitoring and Reporting will help develop a more effective and efficient monitoring and reporting system. In addition, the Commission will take steps to ensure that research and innovation policies support the development of new tools and business models, including indicators and ways to monitor effectiveness.

The country reports identified that inefficiency of public administrations is an important root cause for poor implementation, which deserves special attention. It is analysed in the context of the European Semester and is an investment priority in the ESIF Funds. In addition, in 2015 the Commission published a Toolbox for practitioners⁴². The Commission intends to further deepen, together with the Member States, the knowledge about public administration quality and governance when it is a root cause of weak environmental implementation.

In addition to these ongoing initiatives, and without prejudice to its enforcement powers under the EU Treaties, the Commission offers to facilitate the Member States' efforts through a new dedicated framework:

Policy proposals:

1. Setting up a structured implementation dialogue with each Member State: The purpose is to reflect on how to address the structural issues and the needs of the respective Member State. The dialogues should focus on delivering concrete action. Transparency and wide participation of relevant stakeholders from different sectors and different levels of administration is essential.
2. Providing tailored support to Member States' experts directly by their peers in other Member States: Peer exchange is an important means to improve mutual learning and expertise and to make sure that tested solutions are passed on to others. The Commission is establishing a corresponding tool for the Member States under the EIR.
3. Discussing common structural issues in the Council in order to improve the implementation of the EU's environmental rules: The key findings and guidance of the EIR should be the subject of strategic discussions both at national and at EU level, with a view to further the implementation of EU environmental rules and to speed up meeting their objectives. Member States should be able to exchange views in the Council about common challenges, in particular where they have cross-border impacts. Connected issues should be examined as a whole with a view to identify the best solutions accommodating the legitimate interests of all sectors involved, in line with the shift from sectoral approaches to holistic solutions, encouraged under the Sustainable Development Goals⁴³. Implementation problems arising from a lack of clarity, coherence or consistency in EU policy and legislation could also be addressed in this context. Stakeholders such as NGOs, businesses and research as well as the European Parliament should be involved where appropriate.

After the country dialogues in 2017, the Commission will evaluate the first EIR cycle, taking on board the comments from Member States and other players. It will then incorporate the lessons learned into the upcoming cycles.

(1) European Commission (2014): Special Eurobarometer 416, p. 26.

(2) OJ L 354/171.

(3) European Commission, 2011. Implementing EU legislation for Green Growth.

(4) European Parliamentary Research Service, 2015. Water Legislation: Cost of Non-Europe Report.

(5) [The Economic benefits of the Natura 2000 Network](#) European Commission, 2013. .

(6) [COM \(2016\) 316 final](#) .

(7) Climate change, industrial emissions, and chemicals are not part of this first round of the EIR.

(8) The EIR is mainly based on information contained in the latest reports sent by national authorities. The latter may be in possession of more recent data. This was reflected in the reports whenever possible.

(9) COM (2015) 614 final.

(10) Study by BiPRO, Assessment of separate collection schemes in the 28 capitals of the EU, November 2015.

(11) [COM \(2011\) 244 final](#) .

(12) SWD(2016) 472 final.

(13) <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/state-of-nature-in-the-eu>

(14) http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/nat2000news/nat40_en.pdf

(15) <http://www.trameverteetbleue.fr/> .

(16) <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be/fr/meta-projet-life-de-restauration-des-tourbieres-de-haute-ardenne.html?IDC=5778> .

(17) <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be/fr/resultats-du-rapportage-article-17-au-titre-de-la-directive-92-43-cee-pour-la-periode-2007-2012.html?IDD=4237&IDC=5803>

(18) Natura 2000 prioritised action frameworks are important planning tools to strengthen the integration of Natura 2000 financing into the use of relevant EU financial instruments.

(19) <http://www.atlasnatuurlijkkapitaal.nl/en/home>

(20) [Air Quality Standards](#) <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/quality/standards.htm> European Commission, 2016. ,

(21) Major primary pollutants produced by human activity include PM10 which is a mixture of fine aerosol particles (solid and liquid) covering a wide range of sizes emitted from many anthropogenic sources, including combustion, and chemical compositions and NOx, which is emitted during fuel combustion e.g. from industrial facilities and the road transport sector. NOx is a group of gases comprising nitrogen monoxide (NO) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2).

(22) [Air quality in Europe 2016 report](#) EEA, 2016. .

(23) [Noise in Europe 2014](#) EEA, citing WHO p. 6.

(24) For low emission zones to unfold their full potential they need to target the main air pollution sources, provide traffic access restrictions for all but low emission vehicles and be updated to reflect evolving emission standards.

(25) [Luftreinhalteplan 2011 bis 2017 für Berlin](#) / Air Quality Plan for Berlin 2011-2017

(26) Bathing Waters Directive (2006/7/EC) [Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive \(91/271/EEC\)](#) [Drinking Water Directive \(98/83/EC\)](#) Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) [Nitrates Directive \(91/676/EEC\)](#) [Floods Directive \(2007/60/EC\)](#). This includes the), the , the , the , the and the .

(27) The EIR country reports could not reflect the progress achieved in the new RBMPs, still under assessment.

(28) [Comparative study of pressures and measures in the major River Basin Management Plans](#) , 2012

(29) http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=5437

(30) European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL); European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment; the network of police officers specialised on combating environmental crime, the European Forum of Judges for the Environment, and the European Network of Environmental and Managing Authorities.

(31) http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/p2p

(32) https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_effective-justice-systems_en.pdf The effectiveness of national justice systems is addressed by the EU Justice Scoreboard and the European Semester ().

(33) Directive 2007/2/EC.

(34) Streamlining is mandatory for the EIA and the Habitats Directive; as regards the EIA and other environmental assessments, the Commission encourages Member States to use the options available to simplify procedures. See Commission guidance (OJ C 273, 27.7.2016).

(35) <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/enforcement/>.

(36) Network for Ireland's Environmental Compliance and Enforcement or 'NIECE'.

(37) <http://www.vhrm.be/english>

(38) https://www.fiscal.es/fiscal/publico/ciudadano/fiscal_especialista/medio_ambiente/documentos_normativa/

(39) <http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/>

(40) <https://www.pdok.nl/en/about-pdok>

(41) <http://impel.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Implementation-Challenge-Report-23-March-2015.pdf> The identified challenges match findings on structural governance issues identified in the context of the European Semester, in the OECD Environmental Performance Reviews and in a recent IMPEL survey:

(42) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7757>

(43) [SWD\(2016\) 390 final](#) "Nexus approach" referred to in the Communication from the Commission, Next steps for a sustainable European future European action for sustainability, .



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ANNEX
GUIDANCE TO MEMBER STATES: SUGGESTED ACTIONS ON BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION
to the

THE COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

The EU Environmental Implementation Review: Common challenges and how to combine efforts to deliver better results

{SWD(2017) 33 - 60 final}

GUIDANCE TO MEMBER STATES:

SUGGESTED ACTIONS ON BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLEMENTATION 1

Suggested actions	Member State(s)
Developing a circular economy and improving resource efficiency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strengthen the policy framework to speed up the uptake of the circular economy by all economic sectors, providing further support to local businesses and increasing investments in the public research and education systems, especially concerning water and energy savings, waste reduction, the recycling of materials, eco-design and the uptake of secondary raw materials market. 	BE, BG, CZ, DE, HR, HU, IT, RO, SE,SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Implement a better monitoring of the circular economy policies in order to assess their effectiveness and be able to revise them. 	PT, SI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Facilitate development and exchange of good practices between all government entities especially at local level regarding circular economy and eco-innovation matters. 	BE, CY, EL, ES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Incentivise academia and schools in order to promote circular economy. Raise awareness of the consumers and SMEs on the benefits of circular economy. 	IT, PL, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adopt circular economy principles; increase the level of recycling and the use of eco-design in the SME sector, in particular by investing further in education and training. Incentivise resource efficiency measures (e.g. savings of energy and water). 	BE, EL, ES, HU, IT, RO, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Incentivise investments in green products and services. Facilitate green investments and ease the access to funding. Foster R&D funding among SMEs. 	CZ, ES, HU, MT, RO, SE, SK
Waste management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Introduce policies, including economic instruments (Extended Producer Responsibility, Pay As You Throw schemes), to implement further the waste hierarchy, i.e. promote prevention, and make reuse and recycling more economically attractive. Eliminate free-riding and ensure financial viability of waste management companies. 	AT, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Shift reusable and recyclable waste away from incineration by gradually phasing out subsidies to incineration or by introducing an incineration tax. 	AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, IE, LU, PL, PT, SE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Introduce and/or gradually increase landfill taxes to phase-out landfilling of recyclable and recoverable waste. Harmonise regional landfill taxes. Pursue the review of the level of landfill gate fees. Use the revenues from the economic instruments to support the separate collection and alternative infrastructure. 	CY, CZ, EL, ES, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, RO, SI, SK, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Focus on implementation of the separate collection obligation to increase recycling rates and prioritise the separate collection of bio-waste in order to increase composting rates. Establish sites for collection of specific waste (so called 'points for collection of selective waste') in each municipality. 	BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, PL, PT, RO, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Complete and update the Waste Management Plan(s) and/or Waste Prevention Programme(s) in order to cover the whole territory. 	BE, DE, EL, ES, FR, RO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Finalise the work on the irregular landfills as a matter of high priority. 	BG, CY, EL, RO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Avoid building excessive infrastructure for the treatment of residual waste. 	BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, RO, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure waste statistics are compatible with Eurostat Guidelines. Improve consistency of data on waste management from various sources (also as to the large gap between waste generated and treated). 	CZ, SI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intensify cooperation between the regions to use waste treatment capacity more efficiently and to achieve the national recycling targets. 	ES, IT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strengthen and empower enforcement capability. 	MT, PL, RO
Nature and Biodiversity & Estimating Natural Capital	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Complete the site designation process, including in the marine part, and put in place clearly defined conservation objectives and the necessary conservation measures for the sites and provide adequate resources for their implementation in order to maintain/restore species and habitats of community interest to a favourable conservation status across their natural range. Complete and update prioritised action framework (PAFs). Improve knowledge and data availability to be in a better position to implement appropriate conservation measures. 	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that Natura 2000 management plans are being effectively implemented with administrative capacity and finance. Build capacity of competent authorities (central, regional, site management bodies) to implementing Management Plans, increasing awareness about Natura 2000 and incentives for investments promoting its benefits, and tackling illegal 	BG, EE, EL, IT, PL, RO, SI, SK

activities affecting wildlife through enhanced enforcement, both within and outside Natura 2000 areas.	
•Develop and promote smart and streamlined implementation approaches, in particular as regards site and species permitting procedures, ensuring the necessary knowledge and data availability and strengthen communication with stakeholders.	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, HU, IT, LT, MT, PL, PT
•Continue supporting the mapping and assessment of ecosystems and their services, evaluation and development of natural capital accounting systems.	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK
•Build the capacity of the administration in order to improve Appropriate Assessment procedures and prevent deterioration of Natura 2000 sites from damaging developments.	CY, EL, IT
•Ensure the appropriate enforcement of hunting bans for protected bird species.	CY, FR, MT
•Strengthen the integration of biodiversity concerns into other policies (in particular in agriculture, but also in forestry, fisheries, urban and infrastructure planning and tourism) and the promotion of communication between actors.	DE, DK, FR, PT, SI
•Optimise the contribution of the Natura 2000 and the national nature networks to achieving good conservation status, and to reduce habitat fragmentation, atmospheric nitrogen deposition, desiccation and acidification.	NL
•Avoid further habitat fragmentation and take measures to restore connectivity.	LU
•Ensure that the Rural Development Programmes and the implementation of greening favour biodiversity measures and contribute to achieving a favourable conservation status of habitats and species, especially for the maintenance of High Nature Value farming.	LU, NL, RO
•Capitalise valuable natural capital to create jobs and income. In this context, promoting further sustainable tourism.	EL, ES
•Continue to support the ongoing work on a sustainable partnership for biodiversity protection, sustainable development and climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in the Outermost Regions and the Overseas Countries and Territories.	FR, UK
•Improve the incentives for foresters and farmers to better protect forest and grassland habitat. Ensure the sustainable forest management and promote efficient use of biomass.	LV, SK
Marine protection 2	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Continue work to improve the definitions of good environmental status (GES) (in particular for biodiversity descriptors), including through regional cooperation by using the work of the relevant Regional Sea Convention(s). 	BE, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify and address knowledge gaps underpinning the GES. 	BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Further develop approaches assessing (and quantifying) impacts from the main pressures in order to lead to improved and more conclusive assessment results for 2018 reporting. 	BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, HR, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, RO, SE, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Continue to integrate monitoring programmes existing under other EU legislation and to implement joint monitoring programmes developed at (sub)regional level (HELCOM, OSPAR, the Barcelona Convention, the Black Sea Commission). Enhance comparability and consistency of monitoring methods within the country's marine region(s). 	BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Urgently finalise, report and implement the national programme of measures. 	BG, CY, DK, EE, EL, HR, LT, MT, SI, RO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that the Member State's monitoring programme is implemented without delay, and is appropriate to monitor progress towards GES. 	BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, UK
Air quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Maintain downward emissions trends of air pollutants in order to achieve full compliance with currently applicable national emission ceilings and air quality limit values. Reduce adverse air pollution impacts on health, environment and economy. 	AT, BE, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, LU, NL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Maintain downward emissions trends of air pollutants in order to achieve full compliance with air quality limit values. Reduce adverse air pollution impacts on health, environment and economy. 	BG, CZ, EL, HR, HU, IT, LT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Maintain downward emission trends of air pollutants – and reduce adverse air pollution impact on health, environment and economy, including through the development of a comprehensive strategy and action plan to tackle traffic congestion. 	CY, EE, MT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reduce ammonia (NH₃) emissions to comply with currently applicable national emission ceilings, for example by introducing or expanding the use of low-emission agricultural techniques. 	AT, DE, DK, ES, FI, NL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reduce NMVOCs emissions to comply with currently applicable national emission ceilings and, where applicable, to reduce ozone concentrations. 	DE, DK, IE, LU

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reduce nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions to comply with currently applicable national emission ceilings and/or to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO2) (and, where applicable, ozone concentrations), inter alia, by reducing transport related emissions - in particular in urban areas. 	AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reduce PM10 (and where applicable benzo[a]pyrene) emission and concentration, inter alia, by reducing emissions related to energy and heat generation using solid fuels, to transport and to agriculture. 	AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK
Noise	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Complete missing noise action plans. 	BE, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LV, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Complete missing noise maps. 	BE, EL, ES, FR, IT, LV, PT, RO, SK
Water quality and management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improve water policy in line with the intervention logic of the Water Framework Directive in the second cycle of the river basin management plans (RBMPs), i.e., provide a more detailed assessment of pressures to improve monitoring to know the status of water bodies and design Programmes of Measures that address all the main pressures identified, in particular hydromorphological pressures and pollution, from agriculture, industry and urban wastewater. The Programmes of Measures and monitoring programmes should be adequately funded. 	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that exemptions granted fulfil all conditions of the Water Framework Directive and are supported by evidence, in particular regarding the assessment of significantly better environmental option. Maintain effort to reduce the number of exemptions. 	AT, BE, MT, NL, PL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Establish and/or roll out a water pricing policy covering a broad range of water services and based on metering that would include tariffs reflecting environmental and resource costs and provide incentives for more efficient use of water. Exemptions from water fees should be reconsidered. The setup of a national regulator or supervisor body to ensure consistency and the adequate cost-recovery in the tariffs would be also advisable. 	BG, CY, CZ, ES, HU, IE, IT, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that water pollution by agriculture is effectively addressed both under the Nitrates and the Water Framework Directive. Take effective basic and supplementary measures to address that pollution. Monitor the development of agricultural pressure and water quality, with a view to informing the designation of vulnerable zones and the review of Nitrate Action Programmes. Take account, where relevant, of areas of intensive agriculture and nitrate 	BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, UK

levels, trends of increasing agricultural pressure and particularly sensitive water bodies, such as the Baltic Sea.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Control of water abstraction both for surface and ground waters should improve. Promote water efficiency and sustainable water retention including natural water retention measures in the Programme of Measures and ensure adequate funding. In the case of Cyprus, water from desalination should not be destined for agricultural use. 	CY, ES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Review water permits, so they are consistent with environmental objectives and ensure that new projects which may cause deterioration of the status are properly assessed according to the Water Framework Directive Article 4(7). In these assessments alternative options and adequate mitigation measures have to be considered. Licencing policy to allow or maintain hydropower plants should be reviewed and updated 	BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, HU, IT, LT, LU, PL, PT, SE, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Complete implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive for all agglomerations. Build up the infrastructure to comply with the Drinking Water Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD). Improve the national reporting system under the UWWTD. Continue to prioritise the investments for UWWT plants, including through efficient use of the Cohesion Policy funding where eligible. 	BE, BG, CY, EL, ES, HR, HU, IE, IT, PL, PT, RO, SI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Measures to rationalise water and wastewater management structures and services could also be considered together with incentives for increasing the level of physical connections to the networks. 	LV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adopt all flood risk and flood hazard maps. Focus on nature-based retention measures when implementing flood protection projects. Combine flood management with water retention in a comprehensive way, considering also the serious water scarcity problems. 	BG, HU, IT, MT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improve the coordinated implementation between water, marine and nature policies as well as between water management authorities. 	BE, IT, PT
International agreements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase efforts to be party to relevant multilateral environmental agreements, by signing and ratifying the remaining ones. 	EL, IE, IT, MT
Effective governance within central, regional and local government & Coordination and Integration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Simplify environmental administrative procedures and improve cooperation of public authorities (at national, regional and local levels) involved in the application of environmental policies. 	EL

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strengthen the administrative capacity in the Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection, as this would affect positively the use of EU Funds and speed up the alignment with the EU environmental policies and legislation. 	HR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Address the fragmentation at regional and local levels by developing better coordination mechanisms for environment. 	ES, HU, IT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that the opinion on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment referred to in Article 6 of the EIA Directive as amended is delivered by a functionally independent authority. 	FR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure increased partnership and transparency all over the public administration and strengthen public participation in decision-making relating to environmental matters. 	HU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Make greater use of impact assessments of draft legislation, covering in particular environmental impacts. 	HU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Establish a clear and transparent process for the authorization of activities and facilities that have impact on the environment. 	HU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improve the timely reporting under the EU environmental legislation and ensure sufficient staff capacity for this purpose in particular and more generally for a more effective implementation and enforcement of the environmental policy. 	MT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that the newly established Environment and Resources Authority has strong responsibilities. There should be clear and transparent processes for the authorization of facilities and activities that have impact on the environment. 	MT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use EU Funds to build necessary capacities and know-how at all levels of administration involved in implementation and enforcement. 	PL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strengthen governance of EU environmental legislation and policies, in particular in nature conservation and water management (e.g. adapt the structure and tasks of the water authorities to better perform the tasks related to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and involve them in the permitting process). 	PL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improve enforcement in case of failures to implement mitigation and compensatory measures imposed on project developers in environmental decisions and construction permits. 	PL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The experience obtained on the definition and implementation of the mitigation and compensation measures regarding the dam projects should be extended to other 	PT

infrastructure likely to have significant impacts on the Natura 2000 network. The composition of follow-up commissions for these projects should be as broad as possible and include representative NGOs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively implementing and making use of the recently created initiatives in order to improve efficiency, effectiveness and coordination of the public sector in the environmental domain, namely improving information sharing and documentation exchange between public entities that are responsible for inspection and monitoring in the areas of Agriculture, Sea and Environment, with an operational platform. 	PT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speed up its implementation of the strategy for strengthening public administration, within which environment should be given due attention. 	RO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the administrative capacity and the coordination of the agencies involved in implementation, in particular with regard to water and waste management as well as to the quality of the impact assessments. 	RO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the EU environmental legislation is respected as part of the reform of the national permitting system aiming to remove unnecessary administrative burden and streamline procedures. 	SI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the application of EIA and SEA as important tools to ensure environmental integration. 	CZ, SK
Compliance assurance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve transparency on the organisation and functioning of compliance assurance and on how significant risks are addressed. 	AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage greater participation of competent authorities in environmental compliance networks. 	AT, BG, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EL, FI, HR, HU, LU, LV, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Step up efforts in the implementation of the Environmental Liability Directive (ELD) with proactive initiatives, such as setting up a national register of ELD incidents and/or drafting national guidance. 	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take further steps to ensure an effective system of financial security for environmental liabilities. 	BE, CY, DK, EE, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, UK
Public participation and access to justice	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Take the necessary measures to ensure standing of environmental NGOs to challenge acts or omissions of a public authority in all sectoral EU environmental laws, in full compliance with EU law as well as the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention). 	AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, HU, IT, PL, SE, SI, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Evaluate the costs of legal challenges involving EU environmental law and pursue efforts in order to ensure that they are not prohibitively expensive. 	CY, DK, EE, ES, FR, IE, LU, MT, RO, UK
Access to Information, knowledge and evidence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Critically review the effectiveness of the country's data policies and amend them, taking 'best practices' into consideration. 	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, HR, HU, IT, LT, MT, PT, RO, SI, SK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify and document all spatial data sets required for the implementation of environmental law, and make the data and documentation at least accessible 'as is' to other public authorities and the public through the digital services foreseen in the INSPIRE Directive. 	AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK

(1) The present Annex summarises the suggested actions contained in the 28 EIR country reports. It should be noted that in this first round of EIR evaluations the Commission decided to focus on a limited number of actions that need to be given priority in each Member State. In addition, in the light of the information available, the Commission decided not to suggest actions in the area of green infrastructure, soil protection, sustainability of cities, green taxation and phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies, green public procurement and investments in this first EIR round, although these areas are reviewed in the reports.

(2) Commission did not formulate guidance to Poland due to its late reporting under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.