



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

### **Environment: Better implementation will lower costs and improve the environment**

Brussels, 7 March 2012 – Failing to implement environment legislation is thought to cost the EU economy around €50 billion every year in health costs and direct costs to the environment. In an effort to reduce that figure and deliver better environmental outcomes for people and businesses, the Commission today issued a communication on better implementation of EU environment law.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik said: *"EU law is not an invention from Brussels; it is democratically adopted by all Member States and the Parliament for the benefit of citizens. Our environment is protected by some 200 pieces of well established law, but all too often they are not properly applied. This doesn't just harm the environment – it also damages human health, leads to uncertainty for industry, and undermines the Single Market. In a time of crisis, these are costs we cannot afford."*

Today's communication underlines the positive benefits of environment law, showing how preventing damage to the environment can cost far less than long-term remediation. Environment legislation can bring advantages to industry: full implementation of EU waste legislation would generate an additional 400,000 jobs, for example, with net costs that are €72 billion less than the alternative scenario of non-implementation.

The communication is intended to intensify the dialogue with governments and all other stakeholders on how we can work better together to achieve better implementation of EU law by improving collection and sharing knowledge and by having greater ownership by all for environmental objectives. More specifically, the communication will outline measures to help Member States achieve a fully systematic approach to knowledge collection and dissemination, including ways to encourage more responsiveness on environmental issues.

Implementation and enforcement of EU environmental law is a shared task with national, regional and local authorities. Poor implementation is often exacerbated by a lack of accurate information on environmental issues. Monitoring efforts are uneven across Europe, the information generated can be patchy and out-of-date and not enough useful information is placed online. Better and more accessible information at national, regional and local levels would allow major environmental problems to be identified earlier, saving costs in the longer term.

Good implementation involves responding effectively to actual or potential environmental problems. Suggestions for improvements include better inspections and surveillance, criteria for how Member States should deal with citizen complaints, more access to justice in environmental matters, and support for European networks of environmental professionals. In cases where there are problems, there should be clearer commitments from those responsible for implementing the rules to deliver improvements with concrete deadlines and benchmarks for performance which can be publicly assessed.

## **Next Steps**

The Communication will be addressed to the European Parliament, Member States, their citizens and all actors in the area of implementation and enforcement. The outcome of discussions between the three EU institutions will prepare the ground for the 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme.

## **Background**

Member States are responsible for ensuring that the EU's environment laws are implemented in their countries. The Commission's role is to check that Member States' commitments are respected and take action if they are not.

Implementation has several dimensions. Member States must adopt national laws that give detailed effect to laws agreed at EU level. They must organise their administrations to make sure that these laws are respected in practice. Required investments must be made, e.g. to treat waste properly. There should also be means of responding wherever required tasks are left unfulfilled or other problems arise, for example illegal disposal of waste or illegal hunting of protected wildlife.

## **Further information:**

[Communication on implementing Environment Law](#)

## **See also:**

[2008 Communication on implementing Environment Law](#)

Contacts :

[Robert Flies](#) (+32 2 295 35 93)

[Monica Westeren](#) (+32 2 299 18 30)