



20 Years of working for a better environment

Conference on Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental legislation

“Working together to Improve and Innovate”

Conference Statement

With more than 200 participants from 34 countries in Europe, and Australia, the European Commission, industry, environmental NGOs, partner enforcement networks, and IMPEL met at the Conference on Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental legislation in Malta on 1- 4 October 2013.

Organised jointly by IMPEL, the European Commission and the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, the conference examined and explored a broad range of challenges relating to the implementation of environmental law and how these could be overcome.

The Conference was convened with the aim of bringing together practitioners in the field of environmental regulation, inspection and enforcement, policy makers, prosecutors, judges, ombudsman and representatives of industry and civil society to discuss the practical barriers and solutions to better implementation and enforcement. Improving communication and coordination between these different actors was recognised as very important in overcoming these barriers.

Conference delegates recognised the significant progress that has been made in many areas in improving the state of the environment in Europe over the last 40 years, but much remains to be done. There are continuing disparities and persistent challenges in implementation and enforcement in many areas of environment legislation.

The conference re-affirmed that cooperation and sharing of experience and knowledge in Networks (like IMPEL and those for prosecutors, judges and ombudsmen), can make a vital contribution to more effective implementation. They can play a key role in promoting and developing best practice and encouraging shared learning and capacity building.

As a result of the various workshops and panel sessions at this conference, the following have been identified as key conclusions and priorities for forthcoming efforts to help us to ‘improve and innovate’:



Recognising the implementation gap

- We recognise that there is a significant implementation gap in Europe. This gap is currently undermining the creation of a level playing-field. More needs to be done to strengthen implementation and to secure the necessary resources to achieve a better environment in Europe and to avoid the increasing social and economic costs of non-implementation.
- There needs to be more systematic assessment of the real implementation problems that are being experienced on the ground and practitioners should be involved in identifying and implementing practical approaches and solutions to the problems that are encountered.

Simpler and more enforceable policy and legislation

- Practitioners can play a key role in developing legislation to ensure that it is practically applicable and enforceable. More systematic approaches and tools should be used to involve practitioners and make better use of their practical expertise.
- More effort needs to be put into streamlining and simplifying regulatory requirements to reduce bureaucracy and make it easier for businesses to do the right thing.
- There is room for more transparency of environmental governance in order to improve participation of stakeholders, civil society and citizens.
- There is a need to simplify, streamline and make more accessible the information needed to support better compliance with environmental law.

Greater support for implementing organisations

- Improving coordination between different actors is a clear priority. We should seek opportunities for closer and more effective collaboration between networks across Europe, between individual countries, and also between the relevant authorities within countries.
- Peer review has proven to be a very effective mechanism for identifying and finding solutions to implementation problems. We encourage the greater and wider use of peer review approaches at both national, European and international levels.
- There is a clear need for more and better training of practitioners. We need to identify priority areas for training of regulators, inspectors, prosecutors, judges and ombudsmen, including joint training programmes, where appropriate.



- There is a continuing need to develop and embed methods and tools to help implementing organisations to prioritise and target their effort to deliver the best outcomes for people and the environment with their limited resources.
- We encourage the development of fora to promote innovative thinking and approaches on how the whole implementation cycle could be made more efficient and effective, delivering greater environmental benefits, improving competitiveness and supporting a greener economy in Europe.

The Conference urges decision-makers at European level and in individual countries to consider these recommendations and take action to deliver the greater benefits that will flow from better implementation. Networks have an important role in taking forward these actions and we encourage countries to participate actively in them.

The conference wishes to thank the European Commission for its generous contribution and for playing such an active role in supporting this event, to the Malta Environment & Planning Authority for hosting the conference on its beautiful island and finally to all delegates for working so hard to collaborate, share and learn from one another.