

Thirty-one European countries join together to combat illegal waste shipments

Transboundary Enforcement Actions project results in 17,500 inspections

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Regulatory authorities from 31 European countries joined forces to combat illegal waste shipments as part of the IMPEL network's Enforcement Actions Project from March 2014 to November 2015. More than 17,500 shipments were checked by environmental authorities around Europe, with violations including illegal shipments of electronic items, waste vehicles, household waste and incorrect documentation.

Trans-frontier shipments of waste are regulated by a number of international agreements in order to prevent harmful waste moving to countries that do not have the technology to properly dispose of the waste. In the European Union, the Waste Shipment Regulationⁱ requires Member States to carry out inspections and work together to prevent and detect illegal shipments. The Enforcement Actions initiative was created by IMPEL to promote and improve inspections of trans-frontier shipments of waste.

IMPEL Vice Chair, Chris Dijkens, said "Enforcement actions like these underline the importance of cross-border collaboration. IMPEL is the only EU wide network that facilitates this level of operational cooperation between law enforcement agencies of the various countries in order to combat illegal waste shipments. The development of tools that help inspectors in their day-to-day job is therefore a key activity for us. IMPEL will continue to assist member countries in the practical application of EU environmental laws in order to meet their obligations. Ongoing support from the European Commission for our work is essential."

The results of the project show that significant progress has been made with increasing participation by environmental authorities coupled with greater partnership working across regional and national boundaries with Police and customs authorities. The project is having a positive impact on the daily inspection and enforcement work of participating organisations. Checks are more targeted and efficient as a result of the project, and new participants are trained and supported through officer exchange programmes.

The waste streams most commonly detected in transport violations were metals (19%), paper and cardboard (14%), plastics (13%), waste of electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) (12%) and end-of-life vehicles and car parts (11%). Most illegal shipments appear to be intra-EU movements. However shipments to China and Hong Kong are the most common destinations outside the EU.

The fact that not all EU Member States participate nor exchange information, show that considerable effort is still needed to move towards better enforcement to close 'escape routes' (e.g. by port-hopping) from the Community. Physical controls could be expanded to more borders and harbours, and regional cooperation could be strengthened further. IMPEL will be continuing this work in a follow up project to assist European countries in tackling illegal waste shipments. Future work will also include the development of inspection tools and technologies to collect and analyse the inspection data.

IMPEL is an international non-profit association of environmental authorities in Europe. The network is committed to enabling more effective application of EU environmental law by joint initiatives.

More information and contact details:

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ⁱ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/shipments/>