

IMPEL CHAIRS

2008 - 2020

Introduction

In honour of those chairs that paved the way for IMPEL since its inception as independent international non-profit association in 2008, IMPEL would like to put them in the spotlights.

IMPEL asked the chairmen and chairwomen about the job they already had in their daily lives when they became chair, the state of play of IMPEL during that period, their most important focus and goals during their tenure as chair and their best experience or memory. Looking back, this is what some of them told IMPEL.

Gerard Wolters, The Netherlands, chair 2008 – 2012 (4 years)



“When I took office in 2008, my position was Inspector-General for International Environmental Enforcement Cooperation. At the time, I was also co-chair of INECE, the global network for Environmental compliance and enforcement.

Under my chairmanship, we have worked hard to strengthen the position and functioning of IMPEL as a more professional, independent international non-profit association with a clear governance structure, in which the responsibilities and (financial) commitment of the IMPEL members were clearly described. For this it was necessary to give IMPEL a legal status with a clear profile. We then recorded the relationship and the cooperation with the European Commission in a Memorandum of Understanding with the European Commission. In my opinion, then the foundation was laid for the way IMPEL still functions in general.

A historic moment was of course the first meeting of the new IMPEL General Assembly in Ljubljana, June 2008, in which we were elected as the new IMPEL Board. I also keep good memories of the General Assembly in Cordoba, Spain, in which Iceland participated for the first time; memorable because of a volcano eruption in Iceland which made it impossible to return home by plane afterwards!”



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Zofia Tucinska, Sweden, chair 2012- 2013 (1 year)



Zofia has been a chair for one year. Her position at the time was Senior Adviser with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, dealing with international negotiations with a focus on air quality and crime, and strategic EU affairs.

Previously Zofia, as environment counsellor in Brussels, fulfilled the important role of permanent representation of Sweden to the European Union. She was Chair of the Council's environment working group during the Swedish Presidency and negotiator for the Swedish government for the EU's environment policy and legislation. This relevant experience she brought into IMPEL as chair, which was highly valuable at the time.

Her main contribution for IMPEL has been to consolidate the work done by her predecessor, which was necessary after a time of strategic change and turmoil. Zofia: "I am described best as an international environmental advocate. I find it interesting to communicate about complex issues such as EU politics, legislation and policies. The fact that everything can be seen from many perspectives, I find enriching."



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John Seager, United Kingdom, chair 2013 – 2016 (4 years)



"When I started as chair my day job was Head of Environment Strategy, Environment Agency, England. At the time, IMPEL was in a good position. Its membership was growing and its work programme expanding. A survey of its member organisations

revealed that there were some major outstanding implementation challenges in countries that IMPEL needed to address by sharing know-how and good practices.

My main goal was to focus IMPEL's work on the most important implementation challenges and to broaden its existing portfolio that had historically concentrated on industry and waste regulation. We added new areas, including nature protection, water and cross-cutting regulatory issues. We also wanted to improve the level of engagement and take-up of IMPEL's work by its member organisations. We addressed this through a series of country visits.

Chairing my first IMPEL Conference in Malta is one of my best memories. This was the first time I had an opportunity of meeting the whole IMPEL community. I was taken aback by the warm welcome and the friendly atmosphere there. It was then that I knew that I had made the right decision to take on the role of chair!"



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Chris Dijkens, The Netherlands, chair 2016 - 2018 (2 years)



"When I was appointed as chair, I also worked as Director International Enforcement Cooperation at the Dutch Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (ILT). During my period as chair and first 4 years as vice chair, a strong focus was on the implementation of recommendations of IMPEL's evaluation.

Furthermore, priority was given to the implementation of the 'Implementation Challenge' project to align IMPEL's work with the needs of its members. A milestone was the entering into strategic partnerships with European enforcement networks such as ENPE (prosecutors), EUFJE (judges) and EnviCrimeNet (police).

IMPEL's long-term and future-proof vision (Position Paper), its position in the ECA Initiative, and a sustainable financial embedding are my good memories as chair."



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Dimitris Dermatas, Greece, chair 2018 – 2019 (1 year)



At the time of his start as chair of IMPEL, Dimitris Dermatas served as the Special Secretary of Inspectorate of the Ministry of Environment & Energy in Greece, where he was actively engaged in among others the development and implementation of environmental strategy, policy and planning, environmental governance and regulation, compliance and enforcement.

During his tenure as chair he focused on the need for the practical implementation and enforcement of laws on the ground in order to make environmental policies work. As examples of IMPEL's work he highlighted the Enforcement Actions on transfrontier shipments of waste and the IMPEL Review Initiatives.

During an important presentation in Brussels (Green Week 2019) he said: "There is no circle in a circular economy if the waste ends up illegally outside the EU."

After his resignation he returned to his role of Professor of Geo-environmental Engineering at the School of Civil Engineering of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA). He obtained his MSc and Ph.D. from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UC Berkeley, USA.



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Kristina Rabe, Germany, current chair 2019 –





Kristina: “The IMPEL General Assembly in Helsinki elected me as IMPEL Chair in November 2019.

Before, I worked as German National IMPEL Coordinator, facilitating expert contributions from German State’s environmental authorities. As a lawyer in the Federal Environmental Ministry, my main topics are cross-sectoral and EU-related.

IMPEL is a unique network of implementation practitioners all across Europe. Their exchange and feedback on “what works, what doesn’t, and what is needed” is key for evidence-based, effective environmental protection. Consequently, the network has grown a lot, and we must now face the challenge to adapt its structures and responsibilities.

This is not easy; but with the network’s spirit of enthusiastic collaboration, we will succeed. Each time I witness the benefits of this mutual European support, I feel proud to be part of IMPEL.”
