



## - Press Release -

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# EU Environmental Enforcement Networks Conference

12-13 May 2016

Utrecht, the Netherlands

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*"Strengthening environmental compliance: Challenges and Solutions"*

### Press Release

**Brussels – 31 May 2016.** Failure to fully implement environmental legislation costs the EU around €50 billion every year in health costs and direct costs to the environment<sup>1</sup>. Strengthening the environmental compliance chain of policy makers, inspectors, police, prosecutors and judges is critical to ensure that environmental crime is reduced, and ultimately stopped, and to build a level playing field for Europe's business communities.

For the first time, four key European Environment Networks<sup>2</sup> have joined together to host a conference, held 12 and 13 May 2016 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, of 194 participants from 35 countries in Europe with the explicit task of working to strengthen enforcement of EU environment and nature law and the compliance chain as a whole.

A high level of environmental protection is one of the fundamental objectives of the EU. The four networks all share the same aim of contributing to improving good implementation and enforcement of EU law that results in the safeguarding of health and our citizens well being.

Working with our key partner, the European Commission, this conference has provided a forum for highlighting common challenges and practical solutions whilst examining case studies that help the less experienced to learn from more experienced practitioners.

The organising partner networks in their closing statement reaffirmed the value of always seeking to make the polluter pay and tracking down and recovering the proceeds of crime; and that they are optimistic about the future of our networks and our ability to provide a strong response, as regards punishment and deterrence to those who might contemplate involvement in environmental crime.

They recommended that European enforcement projects with strong elements of capacity building and training as well as the sharing of information are key practical steps going forward to improve the compliance chain.

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<sup>1</sup> EC study 'The costs for not implementing the environmental acquis', 2011.

<sup>2</sup> [IMPEL](#), the Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of EU Environmental Law; [ENPE](#), the EU Network of Prosecutors for the Environment; [EUFJE](#), the EU Forum of Judges for the Environment; and [ENVI CrimeNet](#), a network of police officers focusing on tackling environmental crime



## Quotes

*"The Conference marked an historic moment in that this was the first time that the four European Networks - regulators, police, prosecutors and judges - had come together to discuss how they can cooperate to strengthen compliance with and enforcement of EU environmental law. From the wide range of case studies from different countries presented at the Conference the scale of the challenge is very clear. The Networks agreed that the Conference had provided an excellent platform for future collaboration, for example, in improving the flow and quality of data and information, and in raising awareness on the need for appropriate sanctions where the law has been breached." – said John Seager (Chair of IMPEL).*

*"Environmental crime is not an emerging threat: The crimes are happening already. Emerging, though, is the damage caused by these crimes. Tackling environmental problems will get a major boost by growing awareness that no one can do the job alone. In the chain of permitting, supervision, enforcement, investigation, prosecution, trial and execution each partner has specific qualities. By using an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, we strengthen our efforts and increase the impact of our actions. This starts with meeting and exchanging best practices. The next step is to create confidence and use opportunities to share and exchange information, and to achieve coordinated interventions. The prospect that we, as representative of the networks of the chain could work in projects in the near future is very appealing" – according to Roel Willekens (Chair of EnvicrimeNet).*

*"Environmental law enforcement is like a chain. If we want to move forward, all partners have to work together and be as strong as the others. If the police do not intervene, or the environmental inspector delivers low quality work, the environmental prosecutor will not be able to bring a good case of suspected environmental crime to court, in which case the judge is likely to dismiss it. On the other hand, if a good case is prepared, but the judge is not aware or interested, no one will be satisfied, and at the end the tax payer and the environment are paying the bill. The Utrecht conference is a start for a better cooperation and to make that there are no more missing or weak links". – stated Jan van den Berghe (EUFJE)*

*"The Networks conference has been a great opportunity to showcase the work of each individual organisation, but an even more important opportunity to forge strong links for better co operation, collaboration and joint working in future". – said Jonathan Robinson (Chair of ENPE)*

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## Further reading

Conference information: <http://www.impel.eu/events/eu-environmental-enforcement-networks-conference/>

Conference conclusions: <http://www.impel.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Conference-Conclusions.pdf>

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