



- Conference Conclusions -

EU Environmental Enforcement Networks Conference

12-13 May 2016

Utrecht, the Netherlands

"Strengthening environmental compliance: Challenges and Solutions"

Conference Statement

For the first time, four key European Environment Networks have joined together to host a conference of 194 participants from 35 countries in Europe with the explicit task of working to strengthen environmental enforcement of EU law and the compliance chain as a whole.

IMPEL, the EU Network of environmental practitioners; 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; have highlighted our common purpose in the good implementation of EU environmental law and examined how better to cooperate in strengthening the compliance chain.

Alongside our key partner, the European Commission, as well as partners in academia, NGOs, Interpol, Eurojust and fellow networks, ECRAN and The Regional Environment Center represented by THEMIS; this immensely valuable conference has been a great initiative to show what practical solutions there are to common problems and challenges in implementing EU environmental law but also in how working together through networks and sharing intelligence can realise benefits for all involved.

The organising partner networks affirm that:

[1] The conference reflects the need for collaboration between all major players in the compliance chain and we welcome the opportunity for networking and capacity building. It provides a forum for the discussion of common problems and best practice. Case studies give practical help and solutions to all involved and helps the less experienced to learn from the more experienced practitioners.

[2] The European Commission plays a crucial part in setting out good environmental legislation, establishing clear priorities and action plans and then through its funding of networks to support strong implementation.



[3] The conference helps to reduce inconsistencies in application of EU environmental law, aims at developing a harmonised approach and create a level playing field for Europe's business interests.

[4] We recognise the value of always seeking to make the polluter pay and tracking down and recovering the proceeds of crime.

[5] We 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.

[6] Prosecutors understand that they are dependent on the quality and expertise of investigating officers, witnesses and judges.

[7] There is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of all links in the compliance chain: permit writers, inspectors, police, prosecutors and judges, as a safeguard for the environment.

[8] We have to have an active attitude to the gathering of information. We must collect intelligence efficiently and effectively, analyse it and use it in law enforcement and criminal enforcement in a careful and consistent way.

[9] The four networks agree that our work helps to support improvements in the framing and implementation of policy with practical experience and expertise.

Recommendations

The organising partner networks recommend that:

1. Building on the very fruitful discussions at this first conference, cooperation between the four Networks should be further strengthened and sustained. This could include,

- The setting up of interest groups that look at specific topics involving organisations intervening in different parts of the enforcement chain;
- Problem-solving on issues of common concern;
- Sharing and promoting learning from case studies; and
- Carrying out jointly managed and funded projects such as European enforcement projects.



2. The networks explore ways to support connections within Member States and within regions of the EU, both within specialisms (e.g. to connect environmental prosecutors within a Member State where these work in isolation), and between specialisms (e.g. connecting environmental police and prosecutors).

3. In the absence of consistent data and the necessary mechanisms at European level for data collection, the Networks should focus on how, by working together, they can help to improve the availability and quality of data, information, intelligence and evidence that is fundamental in underpinning the enforcement chain, for example, by:

- Raising awareness on the databases and tools that are already available;
- Supporting specific projects that aim to improve data collection, management and dissemination;
- Developing guidance, protocols and standards to improve data quality; and
- Advising on the potential for a more systematic pan-European approach for data collection and reporting across the enforcement chain;
- Use the data and information to support improvements in the framing and implementation of policy.

4. The Networks should continue to work together to raise awareness on appropriate sanctions and penalties for those committing environmental crimes and offences, for example, by sharing learning on successes and failures and what factors contributed to those successes and failures; and through relevant training.

5. The European Commission is invited to continue to support networks through the funding of practical projects and activities. As a quid pro quo, networks will provide the time resource of specialist expertise from its membership to manage and run such activities.

6. We continue to build bridges and strengthen cooperation between our networks and encourage capacity building, which is at the core of our networks' activities. As appropriate, we will make connections with other groups of experts involved in compliance and enforcement e.g. digital, financial etc. Capacity building should emphasise training, specialisation and cooperation between all actors in the compliance chain. Learning is sought from, and contributes to, international / non-European forums and networks.

7. The networks will seek to hold joint plenary meetings.



Done in Utrecht, Netherlands on 13 May 2016.

Signed:

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[On behalf of European Network of Prosecutors
for the Environment]

Luc Lavrysen, President of EUFJE

[On behalf of EU Forum of Judges for the
Environment]

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