



2026 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

**Simplification, Implementation
& Enforcement**

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a Competitive Circular Economy*



1. Introduction

This second annual report of my mandate provides an overview of the progress made in simplifying, implementing and enforcing EU environmental legislation during the period from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026.

Building on the [first report](#) published in 2025, it highlights the key achievements of my work in simplifying and improving the implementation of environmental policies and legislation, while pursuing the core mission to contribute to a fair clean transition and a competitive circular economy that supports the EU's competitiveness and resilience and allows EU citizens to live well, within the planet's ecological boundaries. The policies also ensure that we protect and restore a biodiversity and natural ecosystems, while minimising pollution and related health risks.

In a context of global volatility, rising energy prices and sharpening geopolitical competition for resources, extreme heat, drought, wildfires and flooding across Europe – projected to intensify with severe implications for people, ecosystems and economy – and rising inequalities, the EU must pursue effective and robust environmental integration across its policies and activities, as required by the Treaties. This approach is essential to reduce pressures on the environment, strengthen resilience to external shocks and strategic dependencies, and ensure that EU spending programmes – including under the next [Multiannual Financial Framework](#) – provide stable and sufficient investment for the clean transition, the circular economy, improved water resilience and the protection of nature as a vital resource for climate adaptation, mitigation and long-term societal stability.

2. Executive Summary

I have continued to work on **simplification, implementation and enforcement of the acquis**, in line with my mandate as well as with the Commission's commitment set out in the Communication entitled “a [Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU Rulebook](#)”.

During the reporting period, **I have presented to the College two important simplification initiatives**: the [simplification package for the EU Deforestation Regulation](#) and the [Environmental Omnibus](#) package. Together, these measures are expected to generate administrative cost savings of around EUR 7 billion annually while maintaining a high level of environmental protection. They reflect a broader, multiannual effort to stress-test environmental legislation, identify unnecessary burdens and improve legal clarity and coherence.

I have also advanced the **regulatory review agenda** through evaluations and fitness checks. Work focused in particular on the Nitrates Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directives and air quality legislation. Stakeholder feedback and evidence gathered through these exercises are feeding into future initiatives, including the forthcoming Circular Economy Act and the revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, with the aim of improving implementation and strengthening the effectiveness of the EU environmental framework.

At the same time, together with my services, I continued to provide extensive **implementation support** to Member States through guidance, expert groups, technical workshops, structured dialogues and targeted capacity-building activities across all major environmental policy areas, supported by feedback received – notably – during implementation dialogues. The currently estimated EUR 180 billion annual cost for the EU economy due to implementation gaps with EU environmental law, as reported in the [2025 EIR](#), significantly surpasses the estimated investment gap of circa EUR 122 billion per year. Filling the investment gap is therefore a significant priority, since prevention is less costly than repair.

A strategic approach to enforcing EU law is a central pillar of the Commission's enforcement policy, with action increasingly targeted at priority areas where it can have the greatest impact to the benefit of people, businesses, EU competitiveness and resilience. During the reporting period, in the environmental field, the Commission handled 348 active infringement cases, opened 88 new cases and closed 49 cases following compliance, with 82% of cases resolved without referral to the Court of Justice. **Enforcement action focused on areas with the greatest environmental, health and Single Market impacts, including waste management, air quality, water protection, nature conservation, industrial emissions and environmental governance.**

This approach is consistent with the Commission's broader commitment to step up enforcement in selected focus areas and, where necessary, pursue infringements across Member States.

Geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and an increasing competition for critical resources on global markets affect the competitiveness, strategic autonomy and resilience of EU economy. In this context, enforcement and targeted investment are instrumental to tackle the loss of valuable resources, notably through circularity and through reduced reliance on landfilling. By preventing illegal and substandard landfills, enforcement helps keep

recyclable and reusable materials in the EU economy and support a sustainable supply chain. The enforcement action in the environmental field has delivered measurable progress: the number of illegal or substandard landfills covered by the Commission's enforcement action fell from 1753 in 2019 to 796 by mid-July this year.

Based on EU's comprehensive Water Resilience Strategy, progress is made in achieving cleaner water for all, whilst stimulating a more efficient and effective water use across all economic sectors, bringing tangible benefits for Europeans in their daily lives through cleaner rivers and beaches, safer drinking water and healthier environment. This progress is also visible in urban wastewater compliance rates: the number of agglomerations covered by the Commission's enforcement action that fail to comply with EU standards on the collection and treatment requirements of the Urban Wastewater Directive was 2910 in mid-July 2026, down from 3398 at the end of 2024.

Preserving and restoring nature is paramount for a resilient society and economy, also in light of the increasing impact of climate change. Major progress has been made, with only 1.4% of Natura 2000 sites still lacking appropriate legal protection. This is a prerequisite for effective site management on the ground and reflects the advances made in strengthening nature protection.

Looking ahead, I intend to continue in this vein, pursuing the circularity and clean agenda, according to my mandate including by supporting the required investments in the Commission environmental priorities and by improving the efficiency, consistency and effectiveness of implementation and enforcement activities.

3. Delivering Results: Key Measures

A. Simplification and costs savings

In the period covered by this annual report, two major simplification efforts were published as my contribution to the Commission's overall efforts to simplify legislation and improve its implementation and enforcement. The first presents the simplification measures for the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation presented in May 2026. The second is the Environmental Omnibus from December 2025. These initiatives are the results of a systematic, multi-annual approach to stress-testing the body of legislation managed by Directorate-General for Environment.

Simplification of the EU Deforestation Regulation

On 4 May 2026, under my leadership, the Commission presented a **package of measures to simplify the implementation of the revised EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)** and facilitate its effective application. Building on this initiative, the Commission [issued a report on the simplification](#) of the [revised EU Deforestation Regulation](#) while my services published updated guidance and submitted to public feedback a draft delegated act clarifying the scope of products covered by the EUDR. In parallel, the Commission also submitted to the Member States a draft **updated implementing act on the operation of the [Information System](#) supporting the practical implementation of the EUDR**. The Report to the European Parliament and the Council describes the simplification measures adopted since the entry into force of the EUDR in June 2023 (see annex for more details). Together, these measures are expected to reduce annual compliance costs for companies subject to EUDR obligations by 75% compared with the initial framework, representing estimated savings of approximately EUR 6.1 billion per year. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) will benefit in particular from an additional year to prepare for the application of the Regulation and from simplified compliance requirements. On 13 July 2026, following stakeholder consultation and public feedback, the Delegated Act on product scope was adopted (pending a 2-month scrutiny period for the co-legislators) and the digital tools to support the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation, which will apply by the end of December, were updated. This completes the simplification package presented by the Commission in May 2026, to allow businesses sufficient time to prepare.

Environmental Omnibus

The [Environmental Omnibus](#) package covers the areas of (1) circular economy; (2) industrial emissions; (3) environmental assessments linked to permitting procedures; and (4) the rules for the European infrastructure for geospatial data. The proposals were informed by extensive stakeholder consultations, including a [high-level roundtable discussion](#) with businesses and civil society, which helped identify areas where administrative burdens

and legal complexity could be reduced. The Environmental Omnibus includes inter-alia measures to simplify the reporting on emissions from industrial installations, streamline requirements for environmental management systems, discontinue ineffective data collection on hazardous substances in products, align the rules on geospatial data with the horizontal EU data framework, and simplify procedures and timelines for environmental assessments linked to obtaining permits for strategic projects (see Annex for further details). Overall, the Environmental Omnibus proposals are expected to reduce administrative costs by approximately close to EUR 1 billion per year.

The Environmental Omnibus is currently being negotiated by the European Parliament and the Council. The Cypriot Presidency of the Council has agreed on the mandates on three of the proposals from the Environmental Omnibus package in June 2026. The Irish Presidency is expected to continue the work in view of reaching a mandate on the environmental assessment proposal. In the European Parliament, the ENVI Committee (lead for this file) will adopt its report in November, and the EP Plenary will hold the final vote on the EP negotiation mandate in November/December 2026.

Chemicals Omnibus

Together with Executive Vice-President Séjourné, I have contributed to the Commission's simplification agenda through the [Omnibus VI](#) (Chemicals), proposed on 8 July 2025 and provisionally agreed by the co-legislators on 16 June 2026. In this package, I co-lead on the Classification, Registration and Packaging (CLP) Regulation. The proposal simplifies EU rules on the labelling of chemicals, and, despite some partial reduction of simplification elements during the legislative process, is expected to reduce administrative and compliance burdens while maintaining a high level of protection for health and the environment. I will continue to modernise and simplify chemicals legislation. Notably, this will be achieved through the better coordination, planning and prioritisation of regulatory action in the field of chemicals and the greater use of restrictions rather than authorisations under [REACH](#) when it is appropriate to do so.

Stress-testing

Details of the immediate stress-testing activities and priorities were presented in the [Commission's communication accompanying the Environmental Omnibus](#). In February 2026, Commissioner Hansen and I hosted an [implementation dialogue](#) with participants from the agriculture, water and civil society sectors about the implementation of the [Nitrates Directive](#), [Water Framework Directive](#) and the [Birds](#) and [Habitats Directives](#). All stakeholders underlined the necessity of environmental protection in safeguarding farming, food security, economy, drinking water, human health, and ecosystems. Some noted implementation deficiencies, while others supported updating the Directives. All representatives voiced concerns over the gap between environmental requirements and investments needed. The country-specific examples and experiences on implementation problems directly feed into the ongoing Structured Water Dialogues with the Member States in the framework of the [Water Resilience Strategy](#). The feedback from the implementation dialogue will also be used in designing the [Assistance Toolbox](#) to reduce nutrient pollution (action under the [Water Resilience Strategy](#)) and help in the preparation of future guidance documents. Input on the Birds and Habitats Directives will inform the ongoing stress-test of the directives that will be completed towards the end of 2026. The process includes an [open public consultation](#), a dedicated implementation dialogue that I will host, and an analytical part which builds on the 2017 fitness check. The stress test of the Birds and Habitats Directives aims to assess whether the directives remain fit to achieve their objectives in a cost-efficient way. It aims to identify potential areas for simplification and administrative burden reduction while maintaining the directives' ambition and high standards of nature protection. All Member States and more than 100 stakeholder organisations, from businesses to farmers and civil society, have also been invited to contribute to the stress test through a structured and targeted consultation process to gather further evidence until the 10th of August. In this context, I will have my second implementation dialogue on the stress test of the Birds and Habitats Directives, in October this year.

The [evaluation of the National Emissions Reductions Commitments Directive](#) is another important simplification initiative. The evaluation identified some short- to medium-term simplification opportunities, such as clarifying the format of the national air pollution control programme, improving the Policies and Measures (PaM) web tool, and enhancing ecosystem monitoring. The [Evaluation of the Nitrates Directive](#) was published on 15 July 2026. The Nitrates Directive is found to remain overall effective and relevant as it has helped reduce and prevent nitrate

pollution from agriculture and improve water quality across the EU, while leaving wide flexibility to the Member States to adapt measures to local conditions. Yet, the evaluation also identifies opportunities to simplify its implementation, reduce administrative burden and improve outcomes for both farmers and the environment. The [Evaluation of the Environmental Liability Directive](#) and the [Fitness Check of the Polluter Pays Principle](#) were published on 16 July 2026, identifying opportunities to improve their implementation and effectiveness. In terms of other ongoing evaluations, the evaluation of the Regulation on prior informed consent for the export of chemicals, and a fitness check of the legislation on the trade in seal products are nearing completion. The evaluation of the Directive on Single Use Plastic is well underway while others such as that on the Water Reuse Regulation and the [access to genetic materials and benefits sharing under the EU ABS Regulation](#) are in the early phase of planning.

Regulatory deep cleaning

At its meeting on 19 March 2026, [the European Council](#) reaffirmed its commitment to reinforce European competitiveness through a better functioning single market and efforts to simplify EU legislation. Bringing together simplification and improved market efficiency can magnify the benefits for business. This is a major theme of the Commission's plans for [A Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU Rulebook](#) of 28 April 2026 which announced the inclusion of the Circular Economy Act in the new action plan on regulatory deep cleaning. The action plan also includes the envisaged revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The Circular Economy Act will be key to achieving my commitment towards the new regulatory deep cleaning action plan environment, through the simplification and removal of barriers to circularity in the Single Market, and harmonisation of existing measures and legislation.

In my work, I will consider increasing the use of directly applicable regulations to achieve greater harmonisation in implementation and to overcome 'gold-plating' at national level when transposing measures linked to circularity, including in waste legislation. In particular, the recent engagement with stakeholders on the Environmental Omnibus raised issues about the operation of schemes for extended producer responsibility, which were considered too fragmented, and the criteria to determine when waste and by-products become a valuable material. These will be important areas for simplification that are being considered in the Circular Economy Act envisaged for adoption later in 2026.

Another deep cleaning action I have undertaken is the revision of the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#). Building on the evaluation of the Directive¹, an impact assessment is exploring how to simplify implementation, reduce administrative burdens for public administration, and safeguard the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment. The revision provides an opportunity to achieve closer synergies with my fellow Commissioner Kadis as regards the preparation of the Ocean Act, building on the revision of the [Maritime Spatial Planning Directive](#).

Implementing acts and delegated acts

In February 2026, I informed the European Parliament and the Council about the acts the Commission considers as priority acts (and deprioritised acts) for 2025-2026. Some of the delegated and implementing acts contribute to simplification as they unify diverging practices across Member States and help to consolidate the single market, ensuring a level playing field. For example, they aim to ensure that rules on circularity, notably waste management, are the same across the EU and so reinforce the single market.

We have also screened upcoming and planned implementing and delegated acts, and have given priority to acts that are legally required and/or necessary for the achievement of EU policy objectives, notably those needed to implement legislation, simplify it and provide benefits for citizens, businesses and administrations. For 2026, there are 27 priority delegated acts, 53 priority implementing acts, 11 deprioritised delegated acts and 5 deprioritised implementing acts. For some of the deprioritised acts, the Environmental Omnibus proposal removes the corresponding legal requirements (e.g. acts regarding transformation plans and environmental management systems under the [Industrial Emissions Directive](#)).

¹ <https://environment.ec.europa.eu/document/>

B. Implementation

Alongside simplification efforts and the above-mentioned [implementation dialogue](#), my services continued to provide targeted implementation support to Member States and stakeholders, focusing on areas where administrative capacity, technical complexity and divergent practices create obstacles to the Single Market and to the effective application of the EU environmental legislation.

My services continued supporting the implementation of the **EU waste legislation** through a broad range of compliance promotion, monitoring and capacity-building activities. Regular exchanges with Member States continued through the [Expert Group on Waste](#) and its dedicated sub-groups, including 10 meetings on batteries, three on waste shipment, two on the Waste Framework Directive, one on waste electrical and electronic equipment and one on ship recycling. My services further supported implementation through the assessment of Waste Management Plans, Waste Prevention Programmes and implementation plans linked to waste management targets, as well as through guidance documents, technical reports and best-practice exchanges. In parallel, the [European Environment Agency](#) contributed through analyses of national waste prevention programmes and reporting on waste prevention policies, helping to identify trends, challenges and good practices across Member States. These efforts were complemented by the 2026 Tour of Capitals, which provided a platform for discussions with national authorities and stakeholders on implementation challenges and opportunities for simplification in the circular economy and waste sectors.

To support the implementation of the [Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation](#) ahead of its entry into application in August 2026, we intensified engagement with Member States and stakeholders through a high number of stakeholder meetings and a dedicated [Packaging Waste Expert Group](#), which met three times during the reporting period and provided a platform for discussions on key provisions of the new framework, including producer responsibility, labelling, reuse obligations and PFAS concentration limits. My services further supported harmonised implementation through meetings of the [Technical Adaptation Committee](#), and the preparation of [guidance](#) and [frequently asked questions](#) clarifying the interpretation of the Regulation. We will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure an effective and pragmatic implementation.

My services continued supporting the implementation of **EU water legislation** through expert groups, technical workshops, guidance and exchanges of good practices. Following the adoption of the [Water Resilience Strategy](#), I launched [Structured Dialogues](#) with Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Hungary, Italy Poland, Sweden and Slovakia based on the [assessment of the third River Basin Management Plans](#). These dialogues have led to a better shared understanding of the key implementation challenges and the Commission's support, laying the groundwork for political agreements with the responsible Ministers on joint commitments to advance implementation. Upon my initiative, the Commission also adopted a [guidance](#) for the implementation of the [Water Framework Directive](#) in permitting procedures, including for mining projects, clarifying requirements and available flexibilities while ensuring a high level of environmental protection.

As regards the [implementation](#) of the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#), work focused on developing harmonised methodologies for assessing good environmental status and preparing the next implementation assessment. To facilitate the transposition and implementation of the recast [Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive](#), my services are currently developing practical support tools on issues such as extended producer responsibility for micropollutants, promoted exchanges on transposition challenges. They established a dedicated [expert group](#) and [technical subgroups](#) and cooperated with the [European Environment Agency](#) on future reporting arrangements. A transposition checklist was shared with the Member States. Support also continued under the Drinking Water Directive, including work on water leakage assessment methodologies. The subgroup on water leakage levels developed a template to support Member States in reporting their national assessments of water leakages to the Commission by January 2026 and in harmonising their datasets to increase comparability. In June 2025, the template was presented to the members of the Drinking Water Expert Group (DWEG), and the vast majority indicated that they would use it for their communication to the Commission. Furthermore, support was provided on the evaluation implementation of the Water Reuse Regulation. In particular, a Joint Research Centre Seminar took place in May 2026, bringing together experts and practitioners to share insights on the concept of the multi-barrier approach embedded in the Water Reuse Regulation to achieve equivalent higher quality class at the irrigation field. Moreover, an expert working Group meeting was held in Cyprus on 26-28 May, among representatives from EU member states, EFTA countries and the European Commission, as well as relevant stakeholders, to share experience and good practice in the management and protection of groundwater. Best practices and country examples were shared on risk management plans, monitoring, reporting and water reuse in the industrial sector.

To facilitate the transposition and implementation of the [revised Industrial Emissions Directive](#) and support **industrial innovation and decarbonisation**, my services expanded practical support tools for permitting authorities, operators and other stakeholders. This included a series of [workshops](#) under the [European Innovation Centre for Industrial Transformation and Emissions](#) (INCITE). The [IED Platform](#) continued to hold dedicated workshops on the implementation of Best Available Techniques (BAT). Work also continued on guidance and exchanges of good practices on electronic permitting and permitting of innovative first-of-a-kind projects. Through the [Technical Support Instrument](#), Poland received support for the simplification and digitalisation of environmental permitting procedures for industrial installations. Under the [Industrial Emissions Portal Regulation](#), [guidance](#) was published on the application of key concepts. As regards the [Seveso III Directive](#), my services strengthened implementation governance by establishing a new technical [expert subgroup on inspections and major accidents](#) (TEMSI) and organising large-scale [Technical Assistance and Information Exchange](#) workshops in [Brussels](#) and [Vienna](#). Moreover, a [report](#) was issued on the implementation and efficient functioning of the Seveso III Directive, assessing the level of implementation of the Directive and identifying any shortcomings that need to be addressed to prevent major accidents, better manage risks, prepare for crises, and enhance the safety and security of our population. Work also continued on guidance and exchanges of good practices on electronic permitting and permitting of innovative first-of-a-kind projects.

To support the implementation of EU **air quality legislation** and facilitate knowledge exchange among Member States, my services continued its work through the [Ambient Air Quality Committee](#) and [Air Quality Expert Group](#), providing a forum for discussion of policy developments, implementation challenges and best practices. The Commission further supported implementation through the adoption of an [implementing decision](#), the preparation of technical support documents on [air quality modelling](#) and [monitoring](#), and the commissioning of a [study](#) and an [analysis](#) on sampling points. Stakeholder engagement and peer learning were promoted through the [Fifth EU Clean Air Forum](#) and a series of dedicated workshops, including [exchanges](#) related to the implementation of the [National Emission Reduction Commitments Directive](#) and a [workshop](#) on the implementation of the [Revised Air Quality Directive](#), helping authorities strengthen planning, reporting and compliance efforts. To support the implementation of the [Environmental Noise Directive](#), my services organised a meeting of the [Noise Expert Group](#) and published a [Technical Support Document for Noise Action Plans](#).

In the area of **nature protection**, we focused on supporting practical implementation of the [Birds](#) and [Habitats](#) Directives, and the [Nature Restoration Regulation](#) (NRR). In close collaboration with the [European Environment Agency](#), my services supported Member States in preparing their draft [National Restoration Plan](#), via the NRR Expert Group as well as a high number of bilateral contacts with Member States and stakeholders. Moreover, [France](#) received support from the [Technical Support Instrument facility](#), while Croatia, Netherlands and Poland got support through a [flagship technical support project aiming at strengthening natural resources management](#) in line with agreed global and European biodiversity as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation goals. An [additional support module](#) was agreed to include advisory on nature credits, with an extended deadline by one year to October 2027. Several guidance documents were published, including [guidance on Natura 2000 and fisheries](#), supporting [climate adaptation](#) in Natura 2000 sites and [species protection under the Birds Directive](#), while additional [guidance on tourism activities in Natura 2000 sites](#) was adopted on 14 July 2026. Member States also benefited from targeted implementation support events on topics such as [restoration planning](#), [wildfire risk management](#), [marine Natura 2000 conservation objectives](#) or [restoring grasslands](#). Nature Dialogues held with Latvia and Estonia provided opportunities for direct exchanges on implementation challenges and solutions.

My services further strengthened support for **environmental governance and enforcement**. To facilitate transposition of the [Environmental Crime Directive](#), Member States received detailed explanatory guidance and participated in a dedicated implementation workshop in December 2025. Cooperation with [environmental inspectors](#), [prosecutors](#), [judges](#) and enforcement authorities intensified through a [joint implementation project](#) involving 32 thematic webinars. Moreover, tailored training activities on EU environmental law for Member States' judges continued through a mix of in person and online workshops and extensive digital training material. In parallel, the [Environmental Compliance and Governance Forum](#) continued supporting exchanges of good practices on environmental compliance assurance and strategies to combat environmental crime.

In the area of **environmental assessments**, my services continue to follow closely and assess the notifications submitted by Member States concerning exemptions of projects from the assessment procedure under the [Environmental Impact Assessment Directive](#).

C. Enforcement

Persistent shortcomings in the implementation and application of EU environmental law continue to pose risks to human health, the environment and economy, underscoring the need for strategic and targeted enforcement action. In line with the recent Communication [A Simpler, Clearer and Better Enforced EU Rulebook](#), the Commission is further strengthening its [strategic approach to enforcement](#) by focusing on areas of particular importance for the single market, accelerating infringement procedures and promoting a more targeted and impact-driven application of EU law, while continuing efforts to reduce long-standing cases and improving compliance across Member States. During the reporting period, my services handled 348 active infringement cases (341 initiated on own initiative and 7 based on other sources, e.g. complaints and petitions), opening 72 new cases and closing 49 cases following compliance. As part of the continued effort to reduce the stock of long-standing infringements, my services successfully resolved 18 cases that had been open for five years or longer. In 82% of cases within the remit of my portfolio, resolution was achieved without the need for referral to the Court of Justice².

Stepping up its work on enforcing the **single market rulebook**, with the support of my services, I have prioritised enforcement action on single market focus areas by tackling non-compliance with **waste targets cases** set under the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and the Waste Framework Directive. [Fifteen Member States](#) have failed to meet 50% target for 2020 of preparing for reuse and recycling of municipal waste and waste materials under the [Waste Framework Directive](#) and [eight Member States](#) have failed to meet several targets under the [Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive](#). Using enforcement action to further push towards achieving these recycling targets will foster the single market for secondary raw material, enhance circularity and EU competitiveness by reducing the EU's dependence on imports from third countries. Increased recycling also reduces landfilling, further supporting resource efficiency, circularity and strategic autonomy within the EU.

I have also advanced [four cases](#) concerning the application of the standards laid down in the [Landfill Directive](#). Enforcement action was taken against [three Member States](#) which failed to address systemic shortcomings in waste treatment prior to landfilling, and put in place an adequate network of waste management installations: [Romania](#) was also referred to the Court of Justice as regards the failure to close and rehabilitate substandard landfills. [Three cases](#) were closed, two of them following full implementation of judgements: [Spain](#) has closed and rehabilitated 61 illegal landfills, fully implementing a Court judgement of 15 March 2017 in case C-563/15. [Slovenia](#) has closed and rehabilitated the illegal landfill of waste in Bukovžlak and paid the fines imposed by the Court in case C-318/23.

My services also reviewed the transposition of the [Waste Framework Directive](#) in [six Member States](#) and of the [Single Use Plastics Directive](#) in [three Member States](#), launching or advancing [infringement proceedings](#) for non-conform transposition. These actions help prevent waste generation, increase recycling and reduce the environmental and health impacts of plastic pollution.

Using the Technical Regulation Information System ([TRIS](#)), established under the [Single Market Transparency Directive](#), my services reviewed more than 200 draft national measures in the reporting period to identify potential single market barriers, gold-plating and inconsistencies with EU law at an early stage. They reacted to several of them, notably by directly contributing to issuing five detailed opinions³, to support coherent application of EU environmental legislation and avoid internal market fragmentation. This included preventing gold-plating by addressing national proposals that went beyond the [Batteries and Battery Waste Regulation](#), and clarifying draft rules on waste and packaging to improve legal certainty and alignment with EU law.

To improve [air quality](#) and reduce harmful emissions, I proposed to pursue enforcement action under the [National Emission reduction Commitments Directive](#) (NECD). This included advancing two cases concerning failure to meet

² The cases referred to in this section are hyperlinked to the corporate infringement page, where the Member States concerned are explicitly identified.

³ Notifications 2025/311/ES, 2025/330/FI, 2025/336/FR, 2025/455/BE, 2026/220/RO

emission reduction commitments, while deciding to refer [Bulgaria](#), [Lithuania](#), [Portugal](#) and [Sweden](#) to the Court of Justice. [Three cases](#) related to late reporting after the Member States fulfilled their obligations were closed. In addition, the Commission opened [three cases](#) concerning failure to adopt updated [National Air Pollution Control Programmes](#), underlining the importance of coherent national planning for achieving air quality objectives and reducing impacts on human health and ecosystems. [One of these cases](#) was subsequently closed following the adoption of its national programme.

Under the [Ambient Air Quality Directive](#), my services pursued the analysis of cases concerning exceedances of nitrogen dioxide limit values and shortcomings in air quality monitoring systems. During the reporting period, the Commission decided to refer [Poland](#) and [Romania](#) to the Court of Justice, while the Romanian case is indirectly linked to [two petitions](#); [one case](#) concerning exceedances of sulphur dioxide limit values was closed.

I also pursued strategic enforcement action concerning industrial emissions and major accident hazards. The Commission advanced [four cases](#) related to the non-conform transposition of the [Seveso III Directive](#), while [three cases](#) were closed after the Member States amended their legislation in order to correctly transpose the EU requirements. To support the reduction of air pollutant emissions from medium combustion plants, the Commission continued enforcement actions under the [Medium Combustion Plants Directive](#). This included pursuing non-conformity cases concerning incorrect transposition of the Directive, with [one case](#) advancing to the Reasoned Opinion stage during the reporting period.

To protect public health from harmful [environmental noise](#), my services continued enforcement assessments under the [Environmental Noise Directive](#), focusing on the adoption of noise maps and action plans. The Commission referred [France](#) to the Court of Justice. [Five cases](#) were closed following compliance with the reporting obligation.

To strengthen water resilience and support the EU's [zero pollution objectives](#), my services pursued the analysis of the [Water Framework Directive](#). This included a horizontal verification of whether the obligation to regularly review water abstraction permits is correctly transposed; [seven Member States](#) failed to comply with this obligation which is key in order to ensure that water resources are properly managed and protected. The Commission took enforcement action to tackle the deterioration of the [Oder river](#) and closed a case concerning [the Rhine river](#). The Court of Justice confirmed that [Ireland](#) had failed to correctly and fully transpose several provisions of the [Water Framework Directive](#).

Under the [Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive](#), my services continued to address persistent shortcomings in wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure. During the reporting period, the Court of Justice confirmed [Spain's](#) failure to comply with obligations under the Directive, while the Commission pursued two referrals against [Portugal](#).

Under the [Drinking Water Directive](#), upon my initiative the Commission launched infringement cases against [nine](#) Member States for failure to correctly transpose the revised Directive. [Four cases](#) were closed following the completion of national transposition measures.

Contributing to [nature protection and restoration](#), enforcement action under the [Birds Directive](#) and the [Habitats Directive](#) was further pursued. This included cases against [two Member States](#) regarding failure to adopt conservation objectives and measures for Natura 2000 sites, [one Member State](#) regarding the lack of designation of protected sites, and [two Member States](#) for failures to comply with reporting obligations under both Directives and [two Member States](#) under the [Invasive Alien Species Regulation](#). The Commission decided to refer [Portugal](#) to the Court of Justice for the non-conform transposition of the [Habitats Directive](#). The Commission also advanced cases against [two Member States](#) concerning the bycatch of protected species and a [new case](#) concerning the trapping of finches under a research derogation.

During the reporting period, the Commission advanced infringement proceedings against [three Member States](#) regarding shortcomings in national legislation transposing the **Environmental Impact Assessment Directive**, while [one case](#) was closed. [Ireland](#) was referred to the Court of Justice regarding missing environmental assessment in relation to peat extraction activities. My services also strengthened **environmental rule of law** and effective judicial protection through targeted compliance analysis on **access to justice**. In this context, the Commission pursued [enforcement action](#) concerning access to justice under environmental legislation and closed [one case](#) related to restrictions of the access to justice under the Air Quality Directive following amendments to national legislation.

Failure to comply with environmental EU rules and Court judgments may result in **financial penalties** under Article 260 TFEU, which are designed to ensure effective enforcement of EU law and compliance with judicial decisions. During the reporting period, a notable development concerned the long-running [Campania waste management case](#) against Italy. Following significant progress in establishing the infrastructure necessary to treat the organic fraction of waste and addressing accumulated historical waste, the financial penalty imposed by the Court was further reduced from EUR 80 000 to EUR 20 000 per day. The Commission continued pursuing action against Member States that failed to comply with Court rulings. This included issuing a formal notice under Article 260 TFEU to [Poland](#) concerning continued shortcomings in access to justice in relation to forest management plans. This case is linked to a [petition](#). The Court also delivered a judgment against [Portugal](#) concerning the designation of Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive. In the waste water sector, [Ireland](#) was referred back to the Court for non-compliance with a previous [judgment](#), accompanied by a request for financial sanctions. Besides, [several Member States](#) continue to pay financial penalties into the EU budget due to ongoing non-compliance with Court judgments.

4. Way forward

Simplification and implementation support will remain a key priority in the coming reporting period. I will continue the stress-testing of the Birds and Habitats Directives, supported by a reality check with Member States and stakeholders and an Implementation Dialogue, alongside the publication of the State of Nature Report. Particular attention will also be given to a pragmatic implementation of the Nature Restoration Regulation, including the assessment of draft National Restoration Plans submitted by Member States and working to facilitate simpler and more effective ways to mobilise public and private finance for restoration measures.

I will also accelerate work on implementing measures and guidance under the revised Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, notably regarding the establishment of extended producer responsibility schemes for micropollutant treatment and the identification of risk areas requiring quaternary treatment, in order to provide greater clarity and support a harmonised and pragmatic implementation across the Union.

In the industrial emissions sector, the focus will be on supporting the implementation of the revised legislative framework through implementing and delegated acts, guidance documents, new BAT conclusions and technical work supporting competent authorities and operators. I will also continue promoting a harmonised application of the Seveso III Directive, including through guidance, technical exchanges and work on emerging risks linked to the energy transition.

In the circular economy area, work will concentrate on preparing the Circular Economy Act, with a particular focus on simplifying extended producer responsibility schemes, reducing barriers to secondary raw materials markets and preventing regulatory fragmentation. At the same time, the revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive will explore opportunities to simplify implementation, reduce administrative burdens and strengthen synergies with broader ocean governance initiatives.

Annex: examples

EU Deforestation

On 4 May 2026, the Commission reported on the simplification of the revised EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and other measures to facilitate implementation⁽⁴⁾. These measures will provide additional clarity to economic operators, Member States, third countries, and other stakeholders, while guaranteeing legal stability and predictability. Updated guidance, and a draft delegated act on the product scope of the EUDR accompanied the Report. In addition, the Commission is presenting an updated implementing act to the Member States on the operation of the Information System supporting the practical application of the EUDR.

The Report to the European Parliament and Council describes the simplification measures taken since the entry into force of the EUDR in June 2023 including the new legislation adopted by the Legislator in December 2025. These measures together will lead to a substantial reduction in administrative burden. They are expected to reduce annual costs by about 75%, compared to the initial situation (representing a saving of approximately EUR 6.1 billion per annum in absolute terms).

The measures introduced by the new legislation in December 2025 include:

- **Extended Deadlines:** The entry into application is delayed by one year.
 - Large Operators/Traders must comply by 30 December 2026.
 - Micro/Small Enterprises must comply by 30 June 2027.
- **Simplified Due Diligence:** only the first operator placing the product on the market is responsible for submitting a full due diligence statement. This reduces administrative burdens by an estimated 75%.
- **Targeted Exemptions:** Printed products (such as books, newspapers, and printed images) were removed from the regulation's scope due to their low risk for deforestation.
- **Information System Improvement:** The postponement provides extra time to fully activate and stabilise the EU Digital Information System that receives the due diligence statements.
- **Simplified Rules for Small Operators:** Micro and small primary operators face reduced requirements, allowing for a one-off simplified declaration.

The report presents planned trade facilitation tools, such as repositories of legislation of producing countries and certification schemes for commodities under the EUDR.

The updated guidance document (and FAQs) addresses the topics most frequently raised by stakeholders. Both documents provide further clarification on obligations for the downstream supply chain, and the very simplified specific regime applicable to micro and small primary operators. Explanations are provided on issues such as e-commerce and geolocation modalities. The updated EUDR supply chain infographics also provide user-friendly practical examples illustrating the various supply chain scenarios. These documents have been extensively discussed with Member States for a harmonised enforcement of the law across the EU.

The [draft] delegated act incorporates targeted amendments to the EUDR product scope. It updates the draft delegated act of last year and incorporates feedback from stakeholders. The draft includes additions of certain downstream products, such as soluble coffee and certain palm oil derivatives. It also includes several exclusions, such as leather or re-treaded tyres, as well as exemptions such as product samples, certain packing materials, used and second-hand products, and waste.

In parallel, the Commission is updating the Information System to reflect the changes introduced by the revised Regulation and enhance the user friendliness of the system. The updated draft implementing act on the Information System will now be submitted to Member States before its adoption. Main developments will include a simplified declaration form for micro and small primary operators, aligned with the existing due diligence statement format;

⁽⁴⁾ COM(2026) 191 final of 4 May 2026, Simplification review on the Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation (EUDR)

updated specifications for the automated application interfaces; a contingency plan for unplanned unavailability; and a voluntary grouping feature introduced in response to requests from the business sector. The Commission is also working closely with Member States to make use of available information from national databases to be directly reflected in the Information System to support companies fulfilling their EUDR obligations. This is expected to further reduce the burden on micro and small primary operators.

Environmental Omnibus

Experience gained through implementation has identified areas where environmental legislation can be made easier to apply, particularly for small businesses, while maintaining a high level of environmental protection. The Environmental Omnibus⁽⁵⁾ aims to address some of known problems. It is based on a wide range of stakeholder contributions. A call for evidence was published in July 2025 and received close to 200 000 responses illustrating how important the issue has become. Many citizens and businesses emphasised the need to preserve Europe's high environmental standards. The Commission also received concrete suggestions on how specific rules could be improved. These suggestions have helped to shape the content of the Environmental Omnibus package that would deliver approximately **EUR 1 billion per annum in reduced administrative costs** for business and public administrations.

Several simplifying provisions were presented in the area of the circular economy related legislation.

Under requirements for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), producers must currently designate an authorised representative when selling products outside their home country. This imposes costs and hinders the seamless functioning of the Internal Market. The Commission's proposal to make this requirement optional / voluntary would give producers more flexibility and benefit SMEs in particular. This proposal does not diminish the responsibility of producers. They will still be required to fulfil their EPR obligations.

Discontinuation of the 'SCIP' database on hazardous substances in products. The database has not been effective in providing the necessary information to recyclers but generates substantial costs for product producers. Instead, its functions will progressively be fulfilled by the EU chemicals legislation and the digital product passport.

In the area of industrial emissions:

- Farmers and aquaculture operators will be exempted from reporting on water, energy and materials under the Industrial emissions reporting legislation. In addition, Member States will be able to report more information on behalf of individual farmers to relieve their burden.
- Environmental Management Systems (EMS) can be prepared at company level instead of at the level of individual installations and will have a simpler content.
- Remove the obligation to prepare an indicative transformation plan, since similar information is already provided under other legislation.

The following element of the Environmental Omnibus is to revise the INSPIRE Directive which governs the management of geospatial data. The aim is to align technical data requirements with the horizontal data legislation to reduce the costs for public administrations when making geospatial data available and encourage their reuse in the economy.

Another important element is to streamline environmental assessments to speed up environmental assessments, while maintaining a high level of environmental protection. Environmental assessments are and will remain vital tools ensuring that environmental considerations are properly taken into account – but strategic projects like renewable energy and grids, net zero technologies, and critical raw material projects should proceed efficiently.

⁽⁵⁾ [COM\(2025\) 980](#) of 10.12.2025, *Simplifying for sustainable competitiveness* (Chapeau Communication with several linked legal proposals).

Improving the functioning of the circular economy

Focus area for Single Market: Waste target cases

The EU's rules on waste are designed to promote a more circular economy throughout the EU and to minimise waste generation. They also aim to reduce the use of primary raw materials, thereby contributing to a sustainable and competitive economy. Packaging waste forms a significant part of waste generated. In order to reduce such waste, all packaging on the EU market should be recyclable in an economically viable way by 2030. This will be achieved by increasing the use of recycled plastics in packaging and decreasing the use of virgin materials. 12 Member States have failed to meet their waste recycling targets for municipal and packaging waste included in the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and the Waste Framework Directive.

Waste shipments in the EU and between the EU and Switzerland

Article 44(2)(f) of [Waste Shipment Regulation](#) (EU) 2024/1157 prohibits the export of mixed municipal waste for recovery from the EU to countries outside the European Economic Area. This would disrupt long-standing, sustainable waste management practices in border regions, particularly in Austria, France, Germany and Italy, where around **200 000 tonnes** of such waste are sent to Switzerland each year. Many EU communities rely on nearby Swiss facilities for efficient waste treatment, in line with the EU's principle that waste should be handled as close as possible to where it is produced. A ban would force waste to be transported over longer distances within the EU, in some cases shifting transport from rail (a greener option) to road. This would increase greenhouse gas emissions, while offering little economic or environmental benefit.

On 29 April 2026, the Commission proposed to modify the relevant provisions in the Waste Shipment Regulation⁽⁶⁾. The Commission's proposal provides a practical solution to avoid unnecessary burdens on local authorities and waste operators, while maintaining high environmental standards. The export of waste for landfilling or incineration without energy recovery will continue to be prohibited, as under current rules.

Digital Waste Shipment System (DIWASS)

Most provisions of the revised [Waste Shipment Regulation](#) entered into application on 21 May 2026, including the launch of the Digital Waste Shipment System (DIWASS). This electronic platform will transform how waste is tracked across the EU, ensuring greater transparency, efficiency, and security in cross-border waste movements. All waste shipments are now subject to the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure (covering hazardous waste, mixed municipal waste, waste destined for disposal, and contaminated waste), which must be processed digitally through DIWASS.

The launch of DIWASS will boost the resilience of EU industry by ensuring the secure and efficient circulation of waste within the single market and facilitating recycling into secondary materials. It will also cut red tape for businesses and authorities, saving an estimated **€1.4 million** per year in administrative costs, at the same time as combating illegal waste trade, which undermines Europe's resource security and environmental goals. Compliance with automated data submission and real-time shipment tracking will be accelerated, too.

DIWASS also simplifies procedures for all stakeholders. For businesses, it means:

- Faster processing of notifications, reducing delays at the borders.
- Simplified reporting, with automated data submission.
- Greater legal certainty, thanks to real-time access to shipment status.
- For authorities, DIWASS provides:
 - Instant access to shipment data, thus improving enforcement.
 - More efficient handling of notifications, reducing bureaucratic delays.
 - Better data collection for EU reporting obligations.

End of waste criteria for plastics

⁽⁶⁾ COM(2026) 183 final of 29 April 2026.

On 23 December 2025, the European Commission released a draft implementing regulation proposing harmonised criteria to determine when plastic waste ceases to be waste and can be classified as a useful product, referred to as “plastic recyclate”. The initiative aims to strengthen the single market for secondary raw materials by simplifying the rules that recyclers must follow in order to place recycled plastics on the market in multiple Member States.

The draft implementing regulation is currently being finalised following feedback received from stakeholders. It is expected to lead to savings in administrative costs for economic operators of EUR 163 million per annum with one-off costs of approximately EUR 37.4 million for adapting to changed criteria that already exist in 3 Member States.

Result of the cost-benefit analysis for the proposed plastics end-of-waste criteria

Yearly cost savings	
Recyclers: reduction in staff costs	EUR 120 million per year
Recyclers: reduction in transport costs	EUR 43 million per year
Total cost savings	EUR 163 million per year
One-off compliance costs	
Waste operators: switch to EU end-of-waste criteria (in 3 countries)	EUR 37.4 million
One-off cost savings	
Public Authorities: reduction in implementation and enforcement costs	EUR 288 thousand

Source: Commission's analysis. 90% of recyclers are SMES (ESTAT)