



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Simplifying environmental reporting: more information for citizens, less administrative burden

Today the European Commission adopted a report and an action plan to improve citizens' access to high quality information on environmental issues and to cut administrative burdens for EU Member States.

We all want to be reassured that the air we breathe and the water we drink is clean and that our beaches, lakes and rivers are safe to swim in. Europe's citizens have the right to know about the quality of their local natural environment and whether EU actions are improving air and water quality, waste management or nature protection. To achieve this, information needs to be available and accessible at the local level.

The Action Plan adopted today aims at ensuring that **information is of high quality, easier to get and more widely used**. This will benefit everybody involved or interested in the environment. For instance, administrations will benefit through reduced administrative burden. Businesses involved in reporting and regulatory monitoring will face smoother and simpler procedures. Policy makers will have access to higher quality information to underpin decisions. Finally, citizens will have better access to information on important issues that affect them.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, responsible for Better Regulation said: "*This action plan is about simplifying environmental reporting and informing citizens better. It's a good example of how better regulation helps us uphold our high environmental standards and meet our evidence-based policy objectives.*"

Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: "*Two weeks ago we adopted the new Bathing Water Report. Anyone who uses Europe's beaches has an interest in the information in it. Indeed, last year the information was accessed and searched directly more than a million times. This is an example of extremely useful information that is processed and shared quickly. Our ambition is to replicate this positive experience for all environmental issues.*"

The actions are cross-cutting and grouped in five areas:

1. Getting the **right information** in the right form at the **right time** including through changing or repealing reporting obligations.
2. **Streamlining** the reporting process by using **new technologies** to provide rapid and geographically specific evidence.
3. **Promoting active dissemination** of environmental information so that citizens can better understand the state of the environment they live in.
4. **Exploiting** other **data sources** and alternative approaches, such as from the EU earth observation programme Copernicus.

5. **Improving cooperation** to make sure that data reported to the Commission is used as widely as possible.

Background

There are 181 reporting obligations found in 58 pieces of EU environmental legislation, requiring numerical and geospatial information. Most of this information is currently in text format, which is generally difficult to report, structure and analyse. The frequency and type of reporting also varies. Around half are every two or more years, and around half lead to a Commission report to the other EU institutions. Finally, responsibility for processing data and making it available also varies, with the European Environment Agency often playing this role, as in the case of the bathing water report.

The **Fitness Check evaluation of reporting and monitoring of EU Environment Policy** was carried out as part of the Commission's Better Regulation policy, which includes improving implementation of existing legislation, and policies as well as reducing burdens and simplifying them. The fitness check found reporting to be largely efficient and the associated administrative burden (estimated cost of EUR 22 million annually) to be moderate, justified and proportionate. The benefits, such as improved and more targeted implementation and better public information, greatly outweigh the costs.

For More Information

Commission Report "Actions to streamline environmental reporting"

Commission Staff Working Document "Fitness check of reporting and monitoring of EU environment policy"

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/reporting/fc_overview_en.htm