

“Making zero pollution integration across policies work”

Workshop on 14 March 2023 – Brussels, Belgium

Discussion document for the breakout sessions

Introduction

The aim of this workshop is to discuss, based on existing activities and proposals, effective improvements of pollution prevention and reduction through cross-cutting approaches and foster an integrated zero pollution philosophy for policy making and implementation. The workshop will also focus on consideration of the various environmental challenges in an integrated, cross-cutting manner: a key question will be how water, soil and air can be comprehensively protected from the various stressors through cross-cutting approaches and what enables effective cross-cutting dialogue and cooperation.

Nearly two years after the adoption of the Zero Pollution Action Plan, it will be interesting to see how much progress has been made at EU level in the integration efforts across policies and how this is discussed and implemented at national level.

The [Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook 2022](#) clearly shows the progress but also the shortcomings in achieving EU targets and obligations linked to pollution. It also highlights that pollution challenges are cross-cutting and often cross-media (air, water, soil) so that only an integrated policy response can address these challenges effectively. In many cases, the significant implementation gap of the existing acquis is the reason for these results as demonstrated by the [Environment Implementation Review 2022](#).

During the breakout sessions, it would be interesting to learn from the participants what are the strengths and weaknesses in current practices. Moreover, the discussions aim at identifying opportunities to overcome potential barriers in the implementation of the zero pollution ambition and at identifying threat factors that could be turned into opportunities, so that EU policy and implementation can become more effective and deliver its envisaged results. Overall, the headline questions for the three breakout groups are:

- Focus on experiences and opportunities stemming from existing policy and instruments: are existing instruments and the way they are co-acting effective as intended? What has worked and what not? If not, why not?
- Which opportunities or barriers exist for integrated, cross-cutting approaches? What are the key enablers?

As a result, the workshop participants can help identify priorities for further action at EU level to support the transition towards zero pollution, e.g. suggesting activities in the context of the Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform or the Zero Pollution Steering Group of the Member States. Also the discussions shall deliver inspiration for the participants for their daily work as well as future activities.

More detailed information on the organisation and the focus of each of the breakout groups is set out below.

Break out group - topic 1: Integrated assessment including ‘one substance, one assessment’

(Moderator & Rapporteur: Lena Vierke (UBA) & Ian Marnane (EEA))

Setting the Scene

Chemical pollution is beside other stressors a critical threat for human health and the environment. Chemicals are needed almost everywhere in our daily life and are needed for a green and digital transition. Activities from different stakeholder are ongoing for moving towards a zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment but still there are risks for human health and the environment due to pollution.

As part of the European Green Deal, the Zero Pollution Action Plan¹ and the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability put an important emphasis on integrating and streamlining the assessments of pollution and chemicals. The Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook presented a number of such assessments, e.g. the [cross-cutting stories of the EEA](#) or the [integrated nutrient outlook of the JRC](#). Moreover, the ‘[one substance, one assessment](#)’ initiative under the Chemicals Strategy will streamline EU-level chemical safety assessment by simplifying the current arrangements for assessments, improving the quality and consistency of safety assessments across legislation and ensuring that resources are used more efficiently. The recent [proposal on the lists of water pollutants](#) under the Water Framework Directive takes an important step in this direction by assigning an increasing role to the European Chemicals Agency and the European Environment Agency in the implementation and review of the lists. The breakout group will explore how these efforts can help foster a more holistic view on pollution challenges and possible solutions.

The following **presentations** will set the scene for the discussions:

- EU initiatives including “one substances, one assessment” (Peter Korytar, DG ENV)
- How to identify the best possible risk management approach addressing a pollution problem (Anja Klauk, UBA)

Discussion

The EU has a comprehensive framework of legislation addressing chemical pollution. These legislations must work together for addressing the entire life cycle of chemicals. We will not discuss individual legislative acts and their ongoing revisions but focus on their interaction and further needs to reduce pollution impacts. Along the two examples from the input presentations the discussion will consider the concept of “one substance, one assessment” as well as the identification of best possible risk management approaches.

Starting with the current system, we will discuss the following questions:

- How can more integrated assessments help tackle pollution challenges?
- What are the obstacles that prevent progress?
- Are there positive examples (at European and national level) of integrated approaches for cross-cutting pollution problem?
- What are opportunities to foster integrated approach based on a cross-regulatory analysis more widely?

¹ and the related Staff Working Document on monitoring and outlook ([SWD\(2021\) 141](#))

- What are the barriers related to the interaction of existing instrument to sufficiently protect human health and the environment from pollution?

Also we will look into the future and discuss what could be criteria for selecting a specific risk management approach to a pollution problem on the basis of a cross-regulatory analysis. We will ask whether a specific process or governance is needed for selecting measures (i.e. risk management approach), and what are the criteria and the process to systematically identify a pollutant which would qualify for cross-cutting action. For kicking off the discussion, we will give some input on the trifluoro acetate case (without solving this specific case in the discussion).

Conclusions

The aim of the discussion is to promote efforts and identify priorities for further action to foster a more integrated assessment of chemical pollution.

Break out group - topic 2: Implementation, compliance and enforcement
(Moderator & Rapporteur: Stephanos Ampatzis or Marianthi Podimata (ENV) & Francesco Andreotti (IMPEL))

Setting the Scene

The Zero Pollution Action Plan² puts on the application of existing EU laws since many persistent pollution problems could already be solved if existing laws were better implemented and enforced. The Action Plan has addressed these issues through a flagship initiative entitled: “**Enforcing zero pollution together**”. The Commission committed via Flagship 5, inter alia, to “bring together environmental and other enforcement authorities (e.g. those in charge of EU transport, energy, agriculture or consumer protection legislation) to kick off the exchange of best practices and encourage Member States to devise cross-sectorial compliance actions towards zero tolerance for pollution at national and transboundary level.” A first discussion with Member States and compliance networks took place on 14 November 2022 at the [TAIEX EIR workshop](#). As a result, experts and practitioners identified some key priority sectors for stepped up enforcement, such as agriculture, waste shipment, chemicals and pharmaceuticals production, addressing key remaining sources of air pollution, including in cities close to port areas. Underground noise was also identified as part of the needed innovation in the design and operation of the cleaner ships of the future. Participants also stressed the need for more training, better sharing of key policy developments, better integration of cutting-end technologies (e.g. earth observation, artificial intelligence), better interoperability of relevant databases, including enhanced interaction with Europol, to assist cross-border enforcement actions, not least given the structural inadequacy of human resources allocated to environmental enforcement. Building on these discussions, the breakout group will explore what priorities for EU initiatives can be identified, e.g. by identifying concrete actions that IMPEL in collaboration with the other enforcement networks can embark on.

The following **presentations** will set the scene for the discussions:

² and the related Staff Working Document on monitoring and outlook ([SWD\(2021\) 141](#))

- EU efforts on strengthening implementation and enforcement (Marianthi Podimata & Stephanos Ampatzis, DG ENV), as presented in the morning plenary session
- Integrated implementation and enforcement - experiences from practitioners (Monica Crisan , IMPEL)

Discussion

The specific questions for this breakout group are:

- How cross-sectorial compliance verification could be further improved, at EU and national levels?
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- How could joint³ actions across the compliance chain be stimulated by different compliance/enforcement authorities at local/regional/national/international level and further get strengthen on the pathway to zero pollution? E.g. can existing efforts be enhanced to share ‘good practices’ or can Member States make better use of the TAIEX/EIR peer-to-peer programme?
- Which concrete projects can IMPEL and other European networks of environmental agencies continue or start to help foster better implementation and enforcement for zero pollution?

Conclusions

The aim of the discussion is to facilitate exchanges of views on existing challenges and obstacles⁴ regarding compliance and enforcement and to bring the discussion with the Member States on lessons learnt to shed light on practical solutions and identify concrete priority actions or initiatives which can be supported via TAIEX/EIR peer-to-peer or IMPEL or other relevant networks.

³ For example: joint actions between port authorities and environmental authorities developed to assist the former in identifying environmental issues and enforce if needed; joint actions between environmental authorities and authorities charged with the responsibility for regulating/licensing and monitoring of transportation vehicles and infrastructure; joint actions between tourism enforcement authorities and environmental authorities developed to assist in cases of violations of EU environmental law or in any condition subject to which a licence granted in respect of tourism operation is not being complied with environmental legislation etc

⁴ Such as obstacles related to financing, cooperate culture among different authorities/institutions, lack of human and other resources; complexity in EU law and national legal systems; lack of expertise

Break out group – topic 3: Mainstreaming the zero pollution ambition
(Moderator & Rapporteur: Marcel Langner or André Conrad (UBA) & Joachim D'Eugenio (COM))

Setting the Scene

In order to reach the zero pollution ambition for 2050 with levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems, we not only have to do more, we also have to do things differently. With respect to the six zero pollution targets to be reached by 2030, the recent Zero Pollution Monitoring and Outlook presented the progress to date and the outlook on whether they can be achieved building on the actions already taken or under discussion.

. However, to achieve the desired zero pollution ambition for toxic-free environment by 2050, mainstreaming is a promising and essential approach. In this context, mainstreaming means integrating the goal of a zero pollution into all sectors of society, including policy-making. It should become a key consideration with respect to behavioural changes, e. g. with respect to nutrition and use of home-working opportunities, and should include all economic sectors like industry, food, energy, housing and transportation.

Mainstreaming zero pollution means considering holistic ideas and approaches to pollution reduction, such as promoting cleaner production, encouraging the use of renewable energy, reducing waste, and promoting circular economy. It also involves promoting public awareness, education, skills and training as well as participation in pollution reduction efforts. Mainstreaming includes not only measures to design technical processes in a more efficient way with less emissions of pollutants. Moreover, behavioural changes can reduce the use of certain resources and support the transformation to sustainability. From this point of view, mainstreaming is also strongly linked to the concept of eco-sufficiency.

The following **presentation** will set the scene for the discussion:

- Mainstreaming the Zero Pollution Ambition: Additional efforts are needed to reach the zero pollution vision for 2050 (Marcel Langner or André Conrad, UBA)

Discussion

Focussing on concrete ideas of mainstreaming approaches, we will discuss how the six zero pollution targets would be affected. In a second step, we will look on three administrative levels (EU, national, local) and how mainstreaming can be implemented on these levels.

The specific questions for this breakout group are:

- How important is mainstreaming as an appropriate approach for achieving the 2030 zero pollution targets and the 2050 ambition?
- How can administrative actions become the enabler to put mainstreaming approaches into place and which administrative levels can act in which way?
- Which opportunities or barriers exist for mainstreaming approaches?

Conclusions

The aim of the discussion is to illustrate and promote the use of mainstreaming approaches and to identify promising starting points to strengthen mainstreaming as a key element of the zero pollution ambition.