

Evolution in EU environmental law (1-1-2025 till 30-4-2026)

The period of the second mandate of the Von der Leyen-Commission (2025-2029) is marked so far by the reaction to the two reports from Mario Draghi et Francesco Lettera on the (lack of) competitiveness of the EU economy. This had also consequences on EU environmental law and policy. The EU hardly adopted new environmental legislation (between 1/2025 and 4/2026), but tried to soften certain measures taken. To appease public opinion, the Commission assembled its deregulation proposals in so-called “omnibus” packages, for agriculture, (omnibus III), chemicals (omnibus VI- COM (2026)531), environment (omnibus VIII- COM (2025)981 to 984), vehicles (omnibus IX- COM (2025)949) and food and feed (omnibus X- COM (2025) 1030); these packages are at present being discussed in the European Parliament and the Council. Agricultural measures were already adopted (Regulation 2024/1468).

The carbon border adjustment mechanism was amended to exclude imports of less than 50 tons per producer and per year (Regulation 2025(2083). The application of the new regulation on batteries and provisions on an increase road tax for heavy vehicles were postponed by some time (Regulation 2025/1561 and Directive 2025/2459). The EU softened the provisions on corporate due diligence reporting and postponed their coming into effect (Regulation 2025/794).

The EU introduced a platform for chemicals (Regulation 2025/2455), which shall be publicly accessible and assemble also information on chemicals which are presently dispersed in different EU pieces the EU legislation; Member States may also feed the platform.

Furthermore, the EU adopted the target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, by overall 90 per cent (Regulation 2026/667); this, however, is an obligation of the EU as such, not of the Member States, and can, therefore, not be enforced. A Commission Recommendation (2026/536) aimed at an improvement of the energy performance of buildings.

The new Directive 2015/2360 aims at the protection of soils and asks Member States among other things to establish a register of contaminated sites. Directive 2025/1237 amended Directive 92/43 and placed the wolf from annex IV (strictly protected) to annex V (protected). Commission Decision 2026/401 amended the lists of all nine bio-geographical regions. Commission Decision 2025/1422 increased the number of invasive alien species covered by EU legislation.

To promote circular economy, a new regulation on packaging (Regulation 2025/40) and a directive on waste textiles (directive 2025/1892) were adopted.

The Commission adopted a decision on a watch-list for dangerous substances in water (Decision 2025/439). Its assessment of Directive 2000/60¹ found that only about 40 per cent of surface waters had a good ecological status (2022) and that the Directive’s objectives would not be reached by 2027 (the original date of 2015 was long since forgotten). In view of this, the EU adopted Directive 2026/805 L of 30 March 2026, which amended Directives 2000/60, 2006/118 (groundwater) and 2008/105 (substances in water). The date for compliance with Directive 2000/60 was postponed until 2041, with the possibility to further prolong compliance dates.

¹ Commission COM (2025)2.

In contrast, the assessment of Directive 2006/7 came to very positive results².

The trade agreement with Mercosur was provisionally adopted and provisionally applied since 1 May 2026. There is pending an opinion of the CJEU on compliance of the agreement with the Treaties (Article 218(11) TFEU). And Regulation 1367/2006 was amended by Commission Regulation 2025/905 to allow, in future, an internal review of State aids which might be contrary to environmental law.

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² Commission, SWD (2025)52.