

EU ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

BusinessEurope priorities
for **2024-2029**



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THE CONTEXT

Companies are continuously engaging in extensive efforts to upgrade their production processes, and supply chain management, along with adapting their business models and developing innovative solutions to be more resource efficient and environmentally sustainable.

However, the current EU environment policy framework includes barriers that hamper rather than foster European businesses' green transformation. Among other things these include:

Growing **complexity and overly prescriptive environmental legislation**, leading to risks of delaying industrial permitting processes, increasing compliance costs and complicating implementation

An **excessive administrative burden** that hampers long term competitiveness and companies' means to invest in their transformation

Lack of support for **research and innovation** in environmentally sustainable solutions and technologies





OUR VISION

European businesses are fully committed to accelerating the green transition. For this to happen, we need competitive companies which have the means to invest in new technologies and solutions.

For the EU to deliver on its environmental objectives and to enhance its competitiveness, the focus for the next five years must be on:

- implementing and, as much as possible, simplifying the existing legislative framework,
- overcoming the remaining barriers companies are confronted with.

The following proposals provide an overview of the main HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES and THEMATIC PRIORITIES identified by BusinessEurope and its members as seven policy priorities for action in the next EU political cycle.

1

Ensure effective implementation of EU legislation

To ensure that the adopted environmental legislation delivers on its objectives and enhances future competitiveness, it is crucial that time and resources are now invested in ensuring its effective roll-out.



OUR TOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Prioritising tools and guidance for businesses:** identify levers to minimise the administrative workload on reporting requirements, life-cycle analysis methodologies, calculation of environmental footprints, etc.
- **Adopting well-designed delegated and implementing acts in a timely manner:** harness industry expertise in all relevant steps of the process.
- **Identifying and avoiding goal conflicts:** address environmental challenges in a holistic way that ensures a better balance between sustainable developments goals.

2

Harness the full potential of the single market

The single market was, and still, is the economic powerhouse of the EU, driving integration and fuelling growth in our economies. Extensive efforts should be made during the next political cycle to ensure that the regulatory landscape creates favourable market conditions for the green transition. This includes putting a particular focus on efficient, harmonised legislation which strengthens the business case for green products and technologies.

OUR TOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Harmonising the implementation of environmental legislation:** avoid a patchwork of rules across the EU, realise the full market potential and reduce operational and administrative costs.
- **Focusing on effective enforcement and strengthening market surveillance mechanisms:** new product regulations will only effectively deliver for the environment and set standards beyond the EU, if they are properly enforced.
- **Prioritising market-driven and internationally aligned standards:** for the green transition it is essential that private-public partnerships are maintained, and that standards remain market-driven while also respecting the public interest.

3

Stimulate investments in R&D and innovation

The green transition requires the development of new business models, processes and technologies, including low-carbon, zero-pollution, effective land-use and energy-and resource efficient technologies. It is therefore imperative to create favourable conditions for innovation and investments in research and development.



OUR TOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Creating favourable conditions for innovation and investments in R&D:** legislation should aim to promote technological openness and -neutrality and avoid being overly prescriptive.
- **Enabling additional financing options:** introduce additional investment incentives and ensure that existing EU funding can be allocated towards innovative green solutions and associated infrastructure.
- **Promoting R&D-friendly conditions:** enable the use of test-facilities and provide frameworks for regulatory sandboxes to speed up the demonstration and testing of new innovations and technologies.

4

Implement strong 'better regulation' principles

The EU must maintain trust in science-based policymaking to ensure decisions continue to be predictable for market participants, are driven by progress, and supported by robust data. The administrative burden should be reduced for companies of all sizes. Coherence between different circular economy legislations should be ensured and overlaps avoided.

OUR TOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Focusing on policy coherence:** avoid conflicting requirements under different environmental legislations and ensure that EU rules fit into the system and contribute to common objectives.
- **Reducing administrative burdens:** simplify procedures and remove unnecessary hurdles for companies that do not provide tangible environmental benefits.
- **Avoiding potential uncertainties and unpredictability coming from the use of delegated and implementing acts:** the main legal acts should clearly define the relevant terms and address especially technical issues in as much detail as possible.

5

Water

Climate change is putting pressure on the supply of fresh water. Adding the de-risking of global supply chains and the shift towards more regionally focused supply chains, the pressure on European water resources is increasing. To maintain stable communities and supply chains, water resources must be secured.

OUR TOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Recognising the importance of water for EU competitiveness:** the green transition requires boosted European manufacturing of clean tech., critical raw materials, semiconductors or technologies such as hydrogen – in all these industrial processes, water is a crucial resource.
- **Removing barriers to industrial permits:** consider eliminating barriers to industrial permits caused by the ‘non-deterioration’ principle in the Water Framework Directive.
- **Enabling knowledge sharing:** a European platform to collect and disseminate knowledge and experience on water management should be facilitated.

6

Biodiversity and bioeconomy

Increasing demands for space – for instance for renewable energy, industry and raw materials – can negatively impact nature and ecosystems. To continue to obtain resources from ecosystems in a responsible manner it is crucial for ensuring ecosystem resilience and enhancing the ability to respond to climate change.

OUR TOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Granting flexibility to member states:** the challenges relating to biodiversity loss differ vastly between member states, which is why flexibility must be granted to prioritise measures according to national circumstances.
- **Taking a holistic perspective:** measures to strengthen biodiversity should be cost-effective and implemented where they have the greatest impact and in coherence with other socio-economic considerations, such as domestic raw material production, securing jobs and meeting energy needs.
- **Launching an industrial bioeconomy strategy:** to support the transition towards renewable sources, the EU needs a genuine industrial bioeconomy strategy. This is key for boosting the competitiveness of Europe's bioeconomy industries and to building new capacities in biobased raw materials, bio-solutions and biotechnologies.

7

Chemicals

Chemicals are crucial to the successful green transformation of the EU's economy and play an important part in the path towards an open, strategic autonomy. While risks to health and the environment need to be properly managed, chemicals are integral components of low-carbon, zero-pollution and resource efficient technologies required to deliver on the Green Deal.

OUR TOP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Ensuring risk-based and science-driven approaches to chemicals' regulation:** when reviewing restrictions on certain chemicals, including PFAS, only a well-justified, science-based and implementable scheme, allowing for innovation, will foster sustainable development in Europe.
- **Analysing and identifying the scope of application of certain chemicals:** the potential impact of restrictions on any chemicals' usage along entire value chains must be properly assessed to avoid unintentional consequences. In particular, it must be ensured that sustainable alternatives with the same characteristics exist or are being developed before restricting chemicals.

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BusinessEurope is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at the European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance. A recognised social partner, we speak for enterprises of all sizes in 36 European countries whose national business federations are our direct members.



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EU circular economy policy - BusinessEurope priorities for 2024-2029

Energy and environment

Circular economy

In brief

- Ensure effective implementation 1 of EU legislation
- Harness the full potential of the single market
- Stimulate investments in R&D and innovation
- Implement strong 'better regulation' principles
- Make waste legislation fit for circularity
- Scale-up demand for circular products and services
- Strengthen circularity with smart digital tools

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