





and to secure further reductions in air and noise pollution. The EAP also sets out a long-term vision of a **non-toxic environment** and proposes to address risks associated with the use of chemicals in products and chemical mixtures, especially those that interfere with the endocrine system. In parallel, a more predictable framework combined with more investment in knowledge is intended to encourage innovation and the development of more sustainable solutions.

## A solid foundation

The new programme includes an “enabling framework” with the next four priority objectives to help Europe deliver on these goals: better implementation of legislation, better information by improving the knowledge base, more and wiser investment for the environment, and full integration of environmental requirements and considerations into other policies.

4. Better **implementation** of existing legislation will bring numerous benefits. A study prepared for the Commission in 2012 estimated that full implementation of EU waste legislation would save €72 billion a year, increase the annual turnover of the EU waste management and recycling sector by €42 billion and create over 400,000 new jobs by 2020. If properly implemented, EU environment legislation creates a level playing-field and opportunities in the single market for sustainable investments, in addition to environmental benefits.

The EAP recognises the importance of much greater public access to information in improving public understanding of environmental issues and in helping people secure improvements to their own environment. It recognises the need for an enhanced system of inspections and surveillance, as well as better access to justice in environmental matters.



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5. Scientific research, monitoring and reporting environmental developments mean that our understanding of the environment is constantly increasing. This **knowledge base** should be made more accessible to citizens and policymakers to ensure policy continues to draw on a sound understanding of the state of the environment. At the same time, the precautionary principle<sup>1</sup> will continue to guide the EU’s approach to policy-making in this field.

Our current knowledge tells us we need immediate action in areas like climate change, species loss, environmental thresholds and ecological tipping points, but the issues are complex and we need to refine our understanding if we are to develop the most effective approaches. The EAP aims to address these challenges by improving the way data and other information is collected, managed and used across the EU, investing in research to fill knowledge gaps, and developing a more systematic approach to new and emerging risks.

6. Adequate **investments** and **innovation** in products, services and public policies will be needed **from public and private sources**, in order to achieve the objectives set out in the programme. This can only happen if impacts on the environment are properly accounted for and if **market signals** also reflect the true costs to the environment. This involves applying the polluter-pays principle more systematically, phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies, shifting taxation from labour towards pollution, and expanding markets for environmental goods and services. As a concrete example, the EAP calls for a minimum 20 % share of the EU budget 2014-2020 to be devoted to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Companies increasingly see advantages in expanding eco-innovation and taking up new technologies, in measuring the environmental impact of their businesses and disclosing to their investors and customers environmental information in their annual reporting. The EAP sets out some ways in which this can be further developed.

7. The fourth enabling condition in the programme is better **integration** of environmental concerns into other policy areas, such as regional policy, agriculture, fisheries, energy and transport. Systematically assessing the environmental, social and economic impacts of policy initiatives and full implementation of Environmental Impact Assessment legislation will ensure better decision-making and coherent policy approaches that deliver multiple benefits.

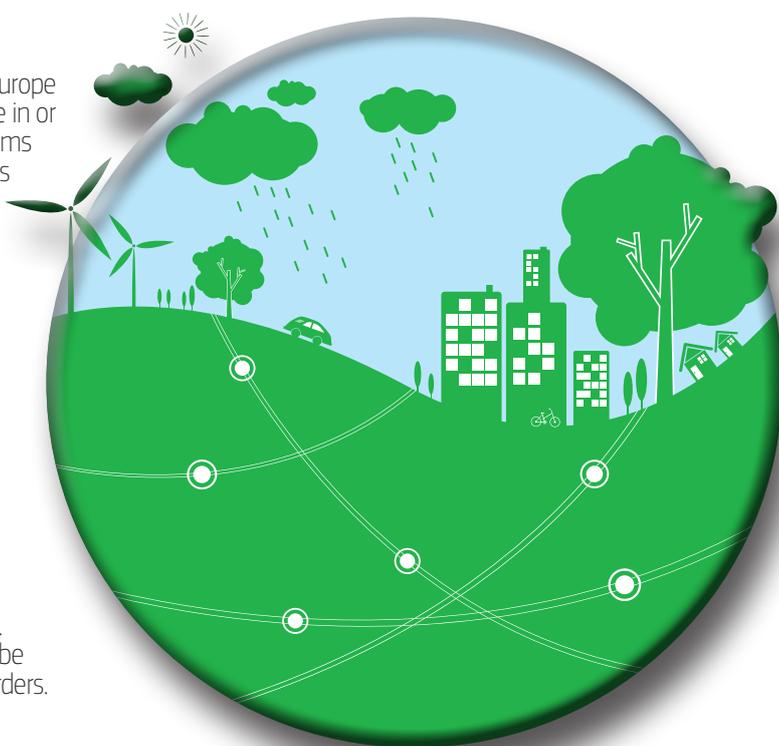
<sup>1</sup>As set out in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the precautionary principle aims at ensuring a higher level of environmental protection through preventative decision-taking in the case of risk: [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/consumers/consumer\\_safety/l32042\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/consumers/consumer_safety/l32042_en.htm)

## Local, regional and global challenges

Two further priority objectives complete the programme.

8. The first is to help **cities** become **more sustainable**. Europe is densely populated and 80 % of its citizens are likely to live in or near a city by 2020. Cities often share a common set of problems such as poor air quality, high levels of noise, greenhouse gas emissions, water scarcity, and waste. Addressing these problems means working together. This is why the EAP aims to promote and expand initiatives that support innovation and best practice sharing in cities. The aim is to ensure that **by 2020, most cities in the EU are implementing policies for sustainable urban planning and design**, and are using the EU funding available for this purpose.

9. The final priority concerns **wider global challenges**. Many of the priority objectives in the EAP can only be achieved in cooperation with partner countries or as part of a global approach. The EU and its Member States are committed to engage more effectively in working with international partners towards the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals as a follow-up to the Rio+20 conference. The EAP also proposes to explore further steps that could be taken to reduce impacts on the environment beyond EU borders. «Living well, within the limits of our planet» is a global aim.



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### Links

You can find more details about the General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/newprg/index.htm>.

In addition, DG Environment's website features more detailed information on policies and actions:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment>



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