©antoine-giret

en | fr | de

Press release | 27.02.2024

A victory in the fight against environmental crime

Environmental Crime

Today, Members of the European Parliament adopted the final agreement on the Environmental Crimes Directive, which establishes criminal offences and penalties to protect the environment more effectively and end impunity for environmental crimes in the EU. The Greens/EFA Group has been instrumental in adding a new provision on 'qualified infringements', which allows for tougher penalties in Member States; when they cause destruction or widespread and substantial damage which is irreversible or long-lasting to an ecosystem, a habitat or the quality of air, soil or water. Moreover, conduct that has an impact on the environment can be subject to criminal prosecution even when in possession of a permit in specific cases.

Marie Toussaint MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Legal Affairs Committee and shadow on the directive, comments:

"This new directive is a victory for the environment. For the first time, the EU recognises the intrinsic value of nature and ecosystems in criminal law. The outdated 2008 directive needed to be revised as a matter of urgency. With this new text, the EU is adopting one of the world's most ambitious pieces of legislation to combat environmental crime. It will allow for a more effective and better protection of individuals who suffer as a result of such damage. The perpetrators of these crimes will therefore be prosecuted and punished more severely in the case of 'qualified offences', which encompass conduct comparable to ecocide. We also welcome the increase in the level of penalties and the introduction of significant additional sanctions. It is a pity that the Council succeeded in introducing a fixed amount for companies, instead of a proportional amount based on turnover. This change will lead to absurd situations that take no account of a company's financial situation."

More:

The new legislation establishes conduct that has an impact on the environment can be subject to criminal prosecution even when in possession of a permit in specific cases, notably where the permit has been obtained by bribery or where it violates higher legal requirements (such as environmental principles).

The new directive also harmonises and sets minimum and maximum penalties for natural and legal persons. The directive raises the prison sentences ranging from 3 to 10 years for individuals and significant additional penalties. As far as companies are concerned, the Council introduced a fixed amount to

determine fines (24 million euros or 40 million depending on the type offence). It is a pity that the Council did not adopt our proposed fines for proportional to turnover, but instead opted for a fixed amount of 24 or 40 million euros.

It increases the number of environmental offences from 8 to 20 compared to the 2008 directive and sets minimum standards, allowing Member States to be more ambitious. Finally, the text improves access to justice, information, the role of civil society, the enforcement chain and cross-border cooperation in the fight against environmental crime.

The directive must be transposed into national law within 24 months of its entry into force.

Recommended

Press release



Right & far-right vote to weaken nature conservation

25.11.2026

Press release

© marek-piwnicki

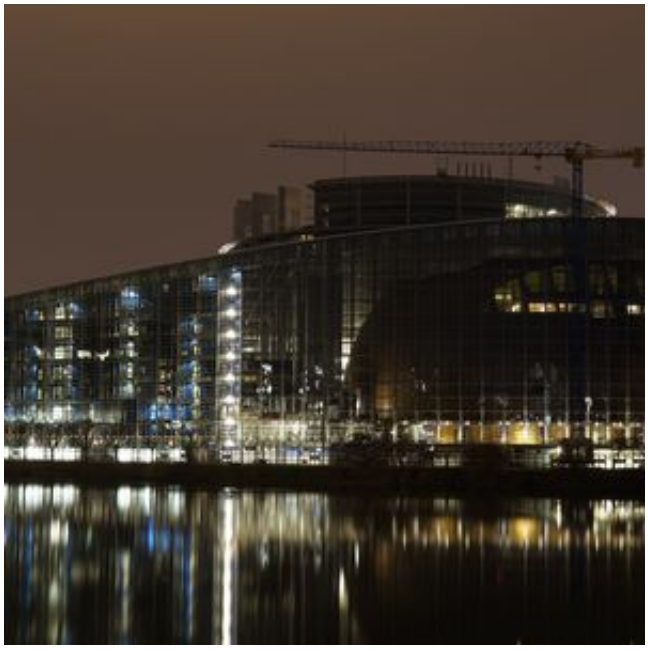


[No deal at COP31 over fights on phasing out fossil fue…]

22.11.2026

News

Dromm CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



[PLENARY FLASH: Greens/EFA Priorities 23 to 26 Novembe…]

20.11.2026

Press release



EU caves in to the fossil fuel lobby

19.11.2026

Responsible MEPs



Marie Toussaint

Vice-President

Contact person



Helena Hellstrom

Harassment Prevention and Response Officer

Please share

- E-Mail