

Civil Society position for a swift transition to Zero Pollution by 2030

Environmental pollution is a major determinant of both people's health and the health of ecosystems we depend on. The health and environmental costs of policy inaction or delay are unacceptably high. Ending air, water, soil, noise and light pollution is urgent.

The European Green Deal's commitment to transition to a toxic-free environment and achieve zero pollution is an essential commitment to put people's health and the protection of the environment at centre stage of policy making, while giving a clear direction to business as to the common future that we seek.

Zero pollution was already a commitment under a few EU laws - phase out obligations of priority hazardous substances under the Water Framework Directive or Substances of Very High Concern under REACH Regulation. There is a commitment to protect human health and environment in the EU Treaties, and the UN recently recognised the right to a clean and healthy environment for all as a fundamental human right. **An actionable EU commitment for a Zero Pollution is therefore an essential step forward.**

The zero pollution objective needs to be mainstreamed into all policy and legislative proposals, as well as in funding. Effective implementation and enforcement of the zero pollution commitment requires that all forms of pollution be adequately addressed throughout all relevant EU policies, including transport, agriculture, nature and biodiversity, energy and households.

In practice, what is needed from decision-makers across the board is to act to transition to:

- **Zero harm from pollution to people and planet:** The Zero Pollution Action Plan needs to effectively prevent, and for essential activities or uses, reduce the pollution at source;
- **Zero money for pollution** and full internalisation of pollution costs in any policy and finance frameworks; the green oath commitment to "do no harm" needs to be systematically applied;
- **Zero delay in ending pollution,** including no tolerance of poor implementation of EU rules.

The Zero Pollution Action Plan needs to implement the principles enshrined by EU Treaties:

- **Pollution prevention principle:** preventing pollution by acting at source (e.g. establishing legally binding standards for avoiding pollution);
- **Precautionary principle:** by taking preventive action, and shifting the burden of proof onto the proponent of an activity in cases where there is a potential risk to the environment and people's health;
- **Polluter-pays principle:** by keeping polluters accountable and recovering the costs from them to rectify the damage they cause;
- **Transparency principle:** through accessible decision-making processes; publicly available pollution data.

The G10 organisations recommend all EU institutions fully embrace zero pollution ambition and remain committed to engage with decision-makers on the further development and roll out of the ZPAP, as well as helping mainstream – at EU and national levels - zero pollution ambition across policy, legislation and funding, and strengthen measures to minimise non-compliance.

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