

EP Demands Extension of EPPO Mandate to Environmental Offences

Thomas Wahl

News

On 20 May 2021, the plenary of the European Parliament (EP) adopted, by a large majority, a [resolution calling](#) for the revision of the EU rules on the liability of companies for environmental damage. On the one hand, the Environmental Liability Directive ([Directive 2004/35/EC](#)) is to be transformed into a fully harmonising regulation applicable to all companies operating in the EU. On the other hand, the Directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law ([Directive 2008/99/EC](#)) is to be updated. Following a thorough impact assessment new types of environmental crimes should be taken into account.

MEPs also wished to ensure effective enforcement of the legislation. Prosecutor and judges should be trained accordingly. This is especially necessary since environmental crimes are estimated to be the fourth biggest type of criminal activity in the world. MEPs called on the Commission to set up an EU task force on environmental liability to help with implementation in the Member States and to provide support to victims of environmental damage.

Furthermore, MEPs called on the Commission to consider adding environmental offences as a category to the EU list of criminal offences (Art. 83(1) TFEU), so that the EP and Council can adopt common criminal definitions and sanctions in the area of environmental protection.

MEPs deplored the low detection, investigation and conviction rates for environmental crimes. The mandate of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), which started its operational activities on 1 June 2021, should be extended to cover environmental offences (for respective demands in literature → [Francesco de Angelis, eucrim 4/2019, 272-276](#)).

Ultimately, MEPs strongly condemned any forms of violence, harassment or intimidation against environmental human rights defenders and called on Member States to effectively investigate and prosecute such acts. They adopted another [report](#) urging for strong EU support and protection of environmental rights defenders and a recognition of "ecocide" as an international crime under the Rome Statute.

AUTHOR

Thomas Wahl

Senior Researcher
Max Planck Institute for the
Study of Crime, Security and
Law

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