

European Waste Shipment Regulation: Enforcement Actions V project

Summary

European Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR) aims to prevent the illegal shipment of waste. Despite controls introduced by this regulation, illegal waste shipments continue to cause environmental degradation globally. Under the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law, Waste and Transfrontier Shipment of Waste (IMPEL-TFS) group, Enforcement Actions was founded to counter the impact of illegal waste shipments. Enforcement Actions projects seek to share best practice and create a network of collaboration between participating countries.

Most recently the Enforcement Actions V project focused on improving inspection and enforcement of waste shipments through and out of Europe. The data collected during these inspections was fundamental to identifying the most problematic waste types, destinations, operators and violation types. The data collected has been analysed to identify trends in illegal waste shipments over time, and inspectors have used the data to target where and when inspections happen to help increase detection of illegal waste shipments and to stop illegal waste trade.

The Chair of the IMPEL Network, Chris Dijkens, in the forward to the Enforcement Actions V report, states: *“There is no doubt in my mind that illegal waste shipments remain a widespread and significant issue for Europe. Criminal waste shipments in particular have the potential to cause serious harm to the environment and human health in receiving countries”* (Gillan and Olley, 2018).



Operation Midnight Sun III, one of the joint inspection and exchange programmes of the Enforcement Actions V project, saw joint inspections carried out by Norwegian and Swedish authorities in June 2017

The challenges

Depletion of the world's natural resources and increasingly demanding waste recovery targets have led to a rise in global waste shipments. By transporting waste to industries across the world waste materials have become a valuable resource, providing economic and environmental benefits. However, inadequate disposal or treatment of waste can cause detrimental impacts to the environment and human health in receiving countries.

The European Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 was introduced to control waste shipments in order to improve environmental protection. The Regulation includes a 'prior written notification and consent' control procedure for certain listed waste types and an obligation for member states to carry out waste shipment inspections. Despite these controls, illegal waste shipments continue to be prevalent and further data was sought to identify the most problematic waste types, destinations, operators and violation types.

The solution

The Enforcement Actions V project included carrying out inspections on waste shipments. Inspections were carried out over six periods throughout 2016 and 2017, taking place at ports, railways, roadsides and known waste facilities. At every inspection standard forms were completed by the competent authority inspectors and subsequently sent to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) for compilation and analysis.

The project also involved sharing knowledge and building capacity in order to harmonise the level of enforcement and expertise within the participating countries.

The main aims of the Enforcement Actions V project were:

- to work towards an adequate level of inspections in all Member States;
- to introduce complete measures in order to prevent and detect illegal waste shipments and to deter illegal waste exporters;
- to verify waste destination and the treatment at destination within or outside Europe;
- to set up training and exchange programmes for inspectors;
- to maintain and improve the network and collaboration of front line inspectors and other competent authorities.

The outcomes

Enforcement Actions V recorded a total of 22,270 transport inspections, of which 5,821 (26%) were waste-related. The waste-related inspections identified 1,873 waste-related violations (32%) which were broken down into three main categories: administrative violations (28%); more serious offences such as national regulations (39%); and, shipments subject to export bans (13%).

The data extracted from inspection reports was used to identify the waste streams and destinations most likely to be involved in waste shipment violations and to identify trends over time. Inspectors used this information to conduct risk assessments that target high-priority waste streams, minimising the random nature of inspections and increasing the detection of illegal waste shipments. The data is also used to show the impact of new measures on the industry; data from 2018 onwards will show the impact of the Chinese National Sword campaign which has seen China implement bans on multiple categories of solid waste and impose strict contamination limits on other wastes.

The findings from Enforcement Actions V have provided a focus for future inspections and the next phase of the project. It is hoped that online reporting will improve the consistency of inspection reporting and the volume of data which can be gathered. The IMPEL Shipment of Waste Enforcement Actions Project (SWEAP), set up to support the circular economy, will continue the work of Enforcement Actions by disrupting illegal waste trade.

Facts and figures

- The five major waste streams involved in transport violations are metals (20%), end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) and car parts (14%), paper (10%), waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) (10%) and plastics (8%).
- Most transport violations concerned shipments within the EU (69%), followed by shipments to Africa (15%) and Asia (13%). Enforcement Actions V identified a decreasing trend of transport violations within the EU and an increasing trend of violations with destinations in Africa and Asia.
- 67% of members in participating countries reported problems in bringing illegal waste shipment prosecutions. Most cases are closed before court.

The Partnership



The Enforcement Actions V project is the ninth inspection project under the umbrella of IMPEL-TFS.

The competent authorities of thirty-four European countries participated in the project: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

References

Gillan, L. and Olley, K. (2018). *IMPEL-TFS Enforcement Actions V Project Report 2016 – 2017*. [online] Available at: www.impel.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FR-2018-04-Enforcement-Actions-project-2016-2017.pdf [Accessed 1 Apr. 2019].

Find out more

IMPEL-TFS website, www.impel.eu/topics/waste-and-tfs/ [Accessed 1 Apr. 2019].

Shipment of Waste Enforcement Actions Project website, www.sweap.eu/ [Accessed 1 Apr. 2019].

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