

Directive 2004/35/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage

Article 1

Subject matter

The purpose of this Directive is to establish a framework of environmental liability based on the ‘polluter-pays’ principle, to prevent and remedy environmental damage.

Article 2

Definitions

For the purpose of this Directive the following definitions shall apply:

1. ‘environmental damage’ means:
 - (a) damage to protected species and natural habitats, which is any damage that has significant adverse effects on reaching or maintaining the favourable conservation status of such habitats or species. The significance of such effects is to be assessed with reference to the baseline condition, taking account of the criteria set out in Annex I;

Damage to protected species and natural habitats does not include previously identified adverse effects which result from an act by an operator which was expressly authorised by the relevant authorities in accordance with provisions implementing Article 6(3) and (4) or Article 16 of Directive 92/43/EEC or Article 9 of Directive 79/409/EEC or, in the case of habitats and species not covered by Community law, in accordance with equivalent provisions of national law on nature conservation.
 - (b) [^{F1}‘water damage’, which is any damage that significantly adversely affects:
 - (i) the ecological, chemical or quantitative status or the ecological potential, as defined in Directive 2000/60/EC, of the waters concerned, with the exception of adverse effects where Article 4(7) of that Directive applies; or
 - (ii) the environmental status of the marine waters concerned, as defined in Directive 2008/56/EC, in so far as particular aspects of the environmental status of the marine environment are not already addressed through Directive 2000/60/EC;]
 - (c) land damage, which is any land contamination that creates a significant risk of human health being adversely affected as a result of the direct or indirect introduction, in, on or under land, of substances, preparations, organisms or micro-organisms;
2. ‘damage’ means a measurable adverse change in a natural resource or measurable impairment of a natural resource service which may occur directly or indirectly;

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3. ‘protected species and natural habitats’ means:
- (a) the species mentioned in Article 4(2) of Directive 79/409/EEC or listed in Annex I thereto or listed in Annexes II and IV to Directive 92/43/EEC;
 - (b) the habitats of species mentioned in Article 4(2) of Directive 79/409/EEC or listed in Annex I thereto or listed in Annex II to Directive 92/43/EEC, and the natural habitats listed in Annex I to Directive 92/43/EEC and the breeding sites or resting places of the species listed in Annex IV to Directive 92/43/EEC; and
 - (c) where a Member State so determines, any habitat or species, not listed in those Annexes which the Member State designates for equivalent purposes as those laid down in these two Directives;
4. ‘conservation status’ means:
- (a) in respect of a natural habitat, the sum of the influences acting on a natural habitat and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long-term survival of its typical species within, as the case may be, the European territory of the Member States to which the Treaty applies or the territory of a Member State or the natural range of that habitat;

The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as ‘favourable’ when:

 - its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing,
 - the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
 - the conservation status of its typical species is favourable, as defined in (b);
 - (b) in respect of a species, the sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations within, as the case may be, the European territory of the Member States to which the Treaty applies or the territory of a Member State or the natural range of that species;

The conservation status of a species will be taken as ‘favourable’ when:

 - population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats,
 - the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
 - there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis;
5. ‘waters’ mean all waters covered by Directive 2000/60/EC;
6. ‘operator’ means any natural or legal, private or public person who operates or controls the occupational activity or, where this is provided for in national legislation, to whom decisive economic power over the technical functioning of such an activity has been

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- delegated, including the holder of a permit or authorisation for such an activity or the person registering or notifying such an activity;
7. ‘occupational activity’ means any activity carried out in the course of an economic activity, a business or an undertaking, irrespectively of its private or public, profit or non-profit character;
 8. ‘emission’ means the release in the environment, as a result of human activities, of substances, preparations, organisms or micro-organisms;
 9. ‘imminent threat of damage’ means a sufficient likelihood that environmental damage will occur in the near future;
 10. ‘preventive measures’ means any measures taken in response to an event, act or omission that has created an imminent threat of environmental damage, with a view to preventing or minimising that damage;
 11. ‘remedial measures’ means any action, or combination of actions, including mitigating or interim measures to restore, rehabilitate or replace damaged natural resources and/or impaired services, or to provide an equivalent alternative to those resources or services as foreseen in Annex II;
 12. ‘natural resource’ means protected species and natural habitats, water and land;
 13. ‘services’ and ‘natural resources services’ mean the functions performed by a natural resource for the benefit of another natural resource or the public;
 14. ‘baseline condition’ means the condition at the time of the damage of the natural resources and services that would have existed had the environmental damage not occurred, estimated on the basis of the best information available;
 15. ‘recovery’, including ‘natural recovery’, means, in the case of water, protected species and natural habitats the return of damaged natural resources and/or impaired services to baseline condition and in the case of land damage, the elimination of any significant risk of adversely affecting human health;
 16. ‘costs’ means costs which are justified by the need to ensure the proper and effective implementation of this Directive including the costs of assessing environmental damage, an imminent threat of such damage, alternatives for action as well as the administrative, legal, and enforcement costs, the costs of data collection and other general costs, monitoring and supervision costs.

Textual Amendments

- F1** Substituted by [Directive 2013/30/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 June 2013 on safety of offshore oil and gas operations and amending Directive 2004/35/EC \(Text with EEA relevance\)](#).

Article 3

Scope

- 1 This Directive shall apply to:

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- a environmental damage caused by any of the occupational activities listed in Annex III, and to any imminent threat of such damage occurring by reason of any of those activities;
- b damage to protected species and natural habitats caused by any occupational activities other than those listed in Annex III, and to any imminent threat of such damage occurring by reason of any of those activities, whenever the operator has been at fault or negligent.

2 This Directive shall apply without prejudice to more stringent Community legislation regulating the operation of any of the activities falling within the scope of this Directive and without prejudice to Community legislation containing rules on conflicts of jurisdiction.

3 Without prejudice to relevant national legislation, this Directive shall not give private parties a right of compensation as a consequence of environmental damage or of an imminent threat of such damage.

Article 4

Exceptions

1 This Directive shall not cover environmental damage or an imminent threat of such damage caused by:

- a an act of armed conflict, hostilities, civil war or insurrection;
- b a natural phenomenon of exceptional, inevitable and irresistible character.

2 This Directive shall not apply to environmental damage or to any imminent threat of such damage arising from an incident in respect of which liability or compensation falls within the scope of any of the International Conventions listed in Annex IV, including any future amendments thereof, which is in force in the Member State concerned.

3 This Directive shall be without prejudice to the right of the operator to limit his liability in accordance with national legislation implementing the Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims (LLMC), 1976, including any future amendment to the Convention, or the Strasbourg Convention on Limitation of Liability in Inland Navigation (CLNI), 1988, including any future amendment to the Convention.

4 This Directive shall not apply to such nuclear risks or environmental damage or imminent threat of such damage as may be caused by the activities covered by the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community or caused by an incident or activity in respect of which liability or compensation falls within the scope of any of the international instruments listed in Annex V, including any future amendments thereof.

5 This Directive shall only apply to environmental damage or to an imminent threat of such damage caused by pollution of a diffuse character, where it is possible to establish a causal link between the damage and the activities of individual operators.

6 This Directive shall not apply to activities the main purpose of which is to serve national defence or international security nor to activities the sole purpose of which is to protect from natural disasters.

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Article 5

Preventive action

1 Where environmental damage has not yet occurred but there is an imminent threat of such damage occurring, the operator shall, without delay, take the necessary preventive measures.

2 Member States shall provide that, where appropriate, and in any case whenever an imminent threat of environmental damage is not dispelled despite the preventive measures taken by the operator, operators are to inform the competent authority of all relevant aspects of the situation, as soon as possible.

3 The competent authority may, at any time:

- a require the operator to provide information on any imminent threat of environmental damage or in suspected cases of such an imminent threat;
- b require the operator to take the necessary preventive measures;
- c give instructions to the operator to be followed on the necessary preventive measures to be taken; or
- d itself take the necessary preventive measures.

4 The competent authority shall require that the preventive measures are taken by the operator. If the operator fails to comply with the obligations laid down in paragraph 1 or 3(b) or (c), cannot be identified or is not required to bear the costs under this Directive, the competent authority may take these measures itself.

Article 6

Remedial action

1 Where environmental damage has occurred the operator shall, without delay, inform the competent authority of all relevant aspects of the situation and take:

- a all practicable steps to immediately control, contain, remove or otherwise manage the relevant contaminants and/or any other damage factors in order to limit or to prevent further environmental damage and adverse effects on human health or further impairment of services and
- b the necessary remedial measures, in accordance with Article 7.

2 The competent authority may, at any time:

- a require the operator to provide supplementary information on any damage that has occurred;
- b take, require the operator to take or give instructions to the operator concerning, all practicable steps to immediately control, contain, remove or otherwise manage the relevant contaminants and/or any other damage factors in order to limit or to prevent further environmental damage and adverse effect on human health, or further impairment of services;
- c require the operator to take the necessary remedial measures;
- d give instructions to the operator to be followed on the necessary remedial measures to be taken; or
- e itself take the necessary remedial measures.

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3 The competent authority shall require that the remedial measures are taken by the operator. If the operator fails to comply with the obligations laid down in paragraph 1 or 2(b), (c) or (d), cannot be identified or is not required to bear the costs under this Directive, the competent authority may take these measures itself, as a means of last resort.

Article 7

Determination of remedial measures

1 Operators shall identify, in accordance with Annex II, potential remedial measures and submit them to the competent authority for its approval, unless the competent authority has taken action under Article 6(2)(e) and (3).

2 The competent authority shall decide which remedial measures shall be implemented in accordance with Annex II, and with the cooperation of the relevant operator, as required.

3 Where several instances of environmental damage have occurred in such a manner that the competent authority cannot ensure that the necessary remedial measures are taken at the same time, the competent authority shall be entitled to decide which instance of environmental damage must be remedied first.

In making that decision, the competent authority shall have regard, inter alia, to the nature, extent and gravity of the various instances of environmental damage concerned, and to the possibility of natural recovery. Risks to human health shall also be taken into account.

4 The competent authority shall invite the persons referred to in Article 12(1) and in any case the persons on whose land remedial measures would be carried out to submit their observations and shall take them into account.

Article 8

Prevention and remediation costs

1 The operator shall bear the costs for the preventive and remedial actions taken pursuant to this Directive.

2 Subject to paragraphs 3 and 4, the competent authority shall recover, inter alia, via security over property or other appropriate guarantees from the operator who has caused the damage or the imminent threat of damage, the costs it has incurred in relation to the preventive or remedial actions taken under this Directive.

However, the competent authority may decide not to recover the full costs where the expenditure required to do so would be greater than the recoverable sum or where the operator cannot be identified.

3 An operator shall not be required to bear the cost of preventive or remedial actions taken pursuant to this Directive when he can prove that the environmental damage or imminent threat of such damage:

- a was caused by a third party and occurred despite the fact that appropriate safety measures were in place; or
- b resulted from compliance with a compulsory order or instruction emanating from a public authority other than an order or instruction consequent upon an emission or incident caused by the operator's own activities.

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In such cases Member States shall take the appropriate measures to enable the operator to recover the costs incurred.

4 The Member States may allow the operator not to bear the cost of remedial actions taken pursuant to this Directive where he demonstrates that he was not at fault or negligent and that the environmental damage was caused by:

- a an emission or event expressly authorised by, and fully in accordance with the conditions of, an authorisation conferred by or given under applicable national laws and regulations which implement those legislative measures adopted by the Community specified in Annex III, as applied at the date of the emission or event;
- b an emission or activity or any manner of using a product in the course of an activity which the operator demonstrates was not considered likely to cause environmental damage according to the state of scientific and technical knowledge at the time when the emission was released or the activity took place.

5 Measures taken by the competent authority in pursuance of Article 5(3) and (4) and Article 6(2) and (3) shall be without prejudice to the liability of the relevant operator under this Directive and without prejudice to Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty.

Article 9

Cost allocation in cases of multiple party causation

This Directive is without prejudice to any provisions of national regulations concerning cost allocation in cases of multiple party causation especially concerning the apportionment of liability between the producer and the user of a product.

Article 10

Limitation period for recovery of costs

The competent authority shall be entitled to initiate cost recovery proceedings against the operator, or if appropriate, a third party who has caused the damage or the imminent threat of damage in relation to any measures taken in pursuance of this Directive within five years from the date on which those measures have been completed or the liable operator, or third party, has been identified, whichever is the later.

Article 11

Competent authority

1 Member States shall designate the competent authority(ies) responsible for fulfilling the duties provided for in this Directive.

2 The duty to establish which operator has caused the damage or the imminent threat of damage, to assess the significance of the damage and to determine which remedial measures should be taken with reference to Annex II shall rest with the competent authority. To that effect, the competent authority shall be entitled to require the relevant operator to carry out his own assessment and to supply any information and data necessary.

3 Member States shall ensure that the competent authority may empower or require third parties to carry out the necessary preventive or remedial measures.

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4 Any decision taken pursuant to this Directive which imposes preventive or remedial measures shall state the exact grounds on which it is based. Such decision shall be notified forthwith to the operator concerned, who shall at the same time be informed of the legal remedies available to him under the laws in force in the Member State concerned and of the time-limits to which such remedies are subject.

Article 12

Request for action

- 1 Natural or legal persons:
- a affected or likely to be affected by environmental damage or
 - b having a sufficient interest in environmental decision making relating to the damage or, alternatively,
 - c alleging the impairment of a right, where administrative procedural law of a Member State requires this as a precondition,

shall be entitled to submit to the competent authority any observations relating to instances of environmental damage or an imminent threat of such damage of which they are aware and shall be entitled to request the competent authority to take action under this Directive.

What constitutes a ‘sufficient interest’ and ‘impairment of a right’ shall be determined by the Member States.

To this end, the interest of any non-governmental organisation promoting environmental protection and meeting any requirements under national law shall be deemed sufficient for the purpose of subparagraph (b). Such organisations shall also be deemed to have rights capable of being impaired for the purpose of subparagraph (c).

2 The request for action shall be accompanied by the relevant information and data supporting the observations submitted in relation to the environmental damage in question.

3 Where the request for action and the accompanying observations show in a plausible manner that environmental damage exists, the competent authority shall consider any such observations and requests for action. In such circumstances the competent authority shall give the relevant operator an opportunity to make his views known with respect to the request for action and the accompanying observations.

4 The competent authority shall, as soon as possible and in any case in accordance with the relevant provisions of national law, inform the persons referred to in paragraph 1, which submitted observations to the authority, of its decision to accede to or refuse the request for action and shall provide the reasons for it.

5 Member States may decide not to apply paragraphs 1 and 4 to cases of imminent threat of damage.

Article 13

Review procedures

1 The persons referred to in Article 12(1) shall have access to a court or other independent and impartial public body competent to review the procedural and substantive legality of the decisions, acts or failure to act of the competent authority under this Directive.

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2 This Directive shall be without prejudice to any provisions of national law which regulate access to justice and those which require that administrative review procedures be exhausted prior to recourse to judicial proceedings.

Article 14

Financial security

1 Member States shall take measures to encourage the development of financial security instruments and markets by the appropriate economic and financial operators, including financial mechanisms in case of insolvency, with the aim of enabling operators to use financial guarantees to cover their responsibilities under this Directive.

F²

Textual Amendments

F2 Deleted by Regulation (EU) 2019/1010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the alignment of reporting obligations in the field of legislation related to the environment, and amending Regulations (EC) No 166/2006 and (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directives 2002/49/EC, 2004/35/EC, 2007/2/EC, 2009/147/EC and 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) No 338/97 and (EC) No 2173/2005, and Council Directive 86/278/EEC (Text with EEA relevance).

Article 15

Cooperation between Member States

1 Where environmental damage affects or is likely to affect several Member States, those Member States shall cooperate, including through the appropriate exchange of information, with a view to ensuring that preventive action and, where necessary, remedial action is taken in respect of any such environmental damage.

2 Where environmental damage has occurred, the Member State in whose territory the damage originates shall provide sufficient information to the potentially affected Member States.

3 Where a Member State identifies damage within its borders which has not been caused within them it may report the issue to the Commission and any other Member State concerned; it may make recommendations for the adoption of preventive or remedial measures and it may seek, in accordance with this Directive, to recover the costs it has incurred in relation to the adoption of preventive or remedial measures.

Article 16

Relationship with national law

1 This Directive shall not prevent Member States from maintaining or adopting more stringent provisions in relation to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage, including the identification of additional activities to be subject to the prevention and

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remediation requirements of this Directive and the identification of additional responsible parties.

2 This Directive shall not prevent Member States from adopting appropriate measures, such as the prohibition of double recovery of costs, in relation to situations where double recovery could occur as a result of concurrent action by a competent authority under this Directive and by a person whose property is affected by environmental damage.

Article 17

Temporal application

This Directive shall not apply to:

- damage caused by an emission, event or incident that took place before the date referred to in Article 19(1),
- damage caused by an emission, event or incident which takes place subsequent to the date referred to in Article 19(1) when it derives from a specific activity that took place and finished before the said date,
- damage, if more than 30 years have passed since the emission, event or incident, resulting in the damage, occurred.

[F3 Article 18

Information on implementation and evidence base

1 The Commission shall collect information from Member States, that has been disseminated in accordance with Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council⁽¹⁾, and as far as available, on the experience gained in the application of this Directive. That information shall cover the data set out in Annex VI to this Directive and be collected by 30 April 2022 and every five years thereafter.

2 On the basis of the information referred to in paragraph 1, the Commission shall carry out an evaluation of this Directive and publish it before 30 April 2023 and every five years thereafter.

3 By 31 December 2020, the Commission shall develop guidelines providing a common understanding of the term ‘environmental damage’ as defined in Article 2.]

Textual Amendments

- F3** Substituted by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the alignment of reporting obligations in the field of legislation related to the environment, and amending Regulations \(EC\) No 166/2006 and \(EU\) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directives 2002/49/EC, 2004/35/EC, 2007/2/EC, 2009/147/EC and 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations \(EC\) No 338/97 and \(EC\) No 2173/2005, and Council Directive 86/278/EEC \(Text with EEA relevance\).](#)

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Article 19

Implementation

1 Member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive by 30 April 2007. They shall forthwith inform the Commission thereof.

When Member States adopt those measures, they shall contain a reference to this Directive or shall be accompanied by such a reference on the occasion of their official publication. The methods of making such reference shall be laid down by Member States.

2 Member States shall communicate to the Commission the text of the main provisions of national law which they adopt in the field covered by this Directive together with a table showing how the provisions of this Directive correspond to the national provisions adopted.

Article 20

Entry into force

This Directive shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Article 21

Addressees

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

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- (1) [^{F3}Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information and repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC (OJ L 41, 14.2.2003, p. 26).]

Textual Amendments

- F3** Substituted by Regulation (EU) 2019/1010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the alignment of reporting obligations in the field of legislation related to the environment, and amending Regulations (EC) No 166/2006 and (EU) No 995/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directives 2002/49/EC, 2004/35/EC, 2007/2/EC, 2009/147/EC and 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) No 338/97 and (EC) No 2173/2005, and Council Directive 86/278/EEC (Text with EEA relevance).