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Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Simplifying for sustainable competitiveness

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2023/1542 and Regulation (EU) 2024/1244 as regards simplification of some requirements and reduction of administrative burden

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council suspending the application of the rules on the appointment of an authorised representative for extended producer responsibility for batteries and waste batteries and packaging and packaging waste

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council suspending the application of the rules on the appointment of authorised representatives for extended producer responsibility for waste, waste electrical and electronic equipment and single use plastic waste

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on speeding-up environmental assessments

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directives 2008/98/EC, 2010/75/EU, (EU) 2015/2193 and (EU) 2024/1785 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards simplification of some requirements and reduction of administrative burden

(COM(2025) 980-984 final, COM(2025) 986 final)

(C/2026/3234)

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European Commission documents	COM(2025) 980 final, COM(2025) 981 final, COM(2025) 982 final, COM(2025) 983 final, COM(2025) 984 final, COM(2025) 986 final
Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production SDG 15 – Life on land
Section responsible	Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) considers that, provided that the core objectives and level of ambition of the existing *acquis* are preserved, simplification can contribute to a more efficient and effective regulatory framework, while supporting the competitiveness and resilience of the European economy throughout the green transition. The EESC stresses that reducing administrative burdens and eliminating duplications does not imply lowering environmental standards, but rather improving their effectiveness by allowing companies and public authorities to focus on tangible environmental outcomes instead of procedural complexity.

1.2. The EESC believes that the ongoing simplification exercise provides a strategic opportunity to enhance regulatory clarity, reinforce the unity of the internal market and support an integrated approach to competitiveness and sustainability. By addressing the systemic issues identified across the legislative files reviewed, the EU can strengthen both its environmental objectives and its economic resilience. Here, the EESC points out that simplification is a core principle of better regulation and a necessary condition for ensuring legal certainty, reducing fragmentation between Member States and enabling effective implementation by economic operators, particularly SMEs operating across borders. Simplification must not in any way reduce the level of environmental or health protection, nor weaken control, transparency or citizen participation mechanisms and must simplify the application of the legislation to companies. Any simplification measure must be accompanied by an *ex-ante* and *ex-post* assessment of its impact on climate, competitiveness, biodiversity and health objectives, and be subject to public consultation.

1.3. The EESC welcomes the overall thrust of the environmental simplification package, which should reduce unnecessary administrative burdens and costs for all stakeholders while maintaining very high standards. Cumulative reporting and administrative obligations continue to place a significant burden and further simplification would help.

1.4. The EESC notes that the considerable volume of new legislation adopted during the 2019-2024 term has generated significant implementation challenges for many private sector players across the EU. These challenges are amplified by the simultaneous entry into force of multiple regulatory frameworks, often accompanied by delayed secondary legislation or guidance, which creates uncertainty and undermines investment planning. Certain economic sectors, such as the agri-food sector, would have expected more far-reaching simplification measures. Simplification measures must primarily target the reduction of duplication and the harmonisation of formats, without removing the obligation to monitor environmental impacts. All companies, especially SMEs, must receive technical and financial support to meet regulatory requirements, in particular through dedicated European funds.

1.5. The EESC highlights the fact that companies often face cumulative reporting obligations and administrative requirements that demand substantial resources and may affect their capacity to adapt. A well-calibrated reduction of administrative and reporting burdens, accompanied by appropriate support measures, can therefore help ensure a more coherent, proportionate and predictable application of environmental rules. The EESC considers that the systematic application of the 'once only' principle, whereby the same data are provided only once and reused across regulatory frameworks, should become a cornerstone of EU environmental governance.

1.6. The EESC considers that the scope of the omnibus initiative could be further strengthened to ensure that simplification delivers tangible improvements in the functioning and coherence of environmental legislation, and therefore has several suggestions for areas that would merit inclusion. First, the EESC highlights the need to address inconsistencies arising from differing reporting methodologies and data requirements across parallel legislative acts, which can create unnecessary complexity and hinder effective implementation. In addition, the EESC stresses the need to rationalise permitting and authorisation procedures, ensuring proportionality between the scale, duration and risk of activities and the administrative requirements imposed, particularly for pilot projects, testing activities and circular-economy innovations. Authorisation procedures must remain strict for activities posing a high risk to the environment or human and animal health. While permitting procedures could be simplified by ensuring better coordination and cooperation in the procedures or by attributing additional funding, full and comprehensive environmental assessments per individual project should be maintained. Innovative projects must be subject to enhanced impact assessments, including an analysis of the risks of diffuse pollution, biodiversity loss and cumulative impacts.

1.7. The EESC underlines the importance of regulatory quality. The growing reliance on omnibus initiatives and simplification exercises demonstrates the value of periodically reviewing the *acquis*, but it also highlights a structural problem: if legislation were consistently designed on the basis of fully developed impact assessments, robust scientific evidence and meaningful consultation with affected sectors, the need for extensive corrective packages would be considerably reduced. In this context, the EESC calls for a stronger focus on *ex-ante* assessments of administrative burden, digital readiness and enforcement capacity at national and regional level. Public consultations must last at least 12 weeks, be organised at a time conducive to participation, and systematically include the opinions of employers' associations, operators, environmental NGOs, trade unions and independent scientific committees. Impact assessments must be made public before the texts are adopted.

1.8. The EESC underlines that simplification efforts must be carefully designed so as not to generate new uncertainties or inconsistencies. It is crucial that information and guidance necessary for the proper implementation of legislation be provided in a timely and accessible manner, and that coherence between different legal instruments be strengthened to avoid fragmentation and divergent implementation across the Member States. Clear, consistent and early communication from the institutions is indispensable to enable all stakeholders to prepare adequately and to maintain legal certainty. Here, the EESC reiterates the importance of being consulted and issuing EU-level guidance, FAQs and implementing acts sufficiently in advance of application dates, ideally at least twelve months beforehand, in order to preserve predictability and the smooth functioning of the internal market.

1.9. Moreover, the EESC regrets that the consultation period for this initiative was launched during the summer and limited to six weeks, which restricts meaningful engagement from stakeholders. In this context, the EESC invites the Commission to consider conducting a full and comprehensive impact assessment for the omnibus proposal. Such an assessment would enhance transparency, improve the evidence base for policy choices and ensure that the views and practical experience of stakeholders are duly reflected. At the same time, the EESC believes that a robust impact assessment is essential in order to identify areas where simplification is genuinely needed and to guarantee that the proposed adjustments reinforce, rather than weaken, the effectiveness and clarity of the EU's environmental legislation. Impact assessments should systematically evaluate cumulative and cross-sectoral effects, including overlaps between environmental, chemical, product and sustainability reporting legislation including CSRD – Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and CS3D – Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, as well as the administrative feasibility of parallel implementation timelines.

1.10. The EESC also notes that, even if a part of the CSOs is opposed to them, several economic sectors and civil society organisations need future simplification measures concerning REACH, the Circular Economy Act, the Water Framework Directive, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), the Water Resilience Strategy, the Nature Restoration Regulation, the Birds and Habitats Directive, the Nitrates Directive and the Marine Strategy Directive.

1.11. While there may be scope to streamline permitting procedures, through improved coordination and cooperation or by allocating additional funding, full and comprehensive project-specific environmental assessments should be maintained. Such assessments play a key role in identifying potential environmental impacts, thereby supporting well-informed decision making and preventing unintended and costly consequences for the environment and human health. Any introduction of shortened or rigid timelines in environmental assessment and permitting procedures, unassessed extensions or modifications of projects, unlimited broadening of the concept of 'strategic sector', allowance for substantial preclusion in judicial proceedings, or adjustments to the strict protection regime, should be approached with caution. Many of these instruments were designed for clearly defined and exceptional circumstances.

1.12. Regarding the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, the EESC welcomes the proposal to suspend the application of Article 45(3) until 1 January 2035. This means that, for the duration of the suspension, Member States will be able to decide whether to require producers established in third countries to appoint, by written mandate, an authorised representative for extended producer responsibility, or alternatively to use other traceability and enforcement mechanisms. In addition, the EESC considers that, in order to deliver real simplification, implementation of the legislation and future Omnibus measures should recognise the contribution of deposit return schemes and reuse measures within the hospitality sector towards reuse targets, avoid duplicative retail infrastructure, and better align core extended producer responsibility (EPR) concepts and reporting periods with business realities.

1.13. Regarding the consideration of livestock-rearing in the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED), and in order to ensure that the Directive is implemented in a proportionate and cost-effective manner, the EESC would like to reiterate the recommendation it made in NAT/863 (2022) ⁽¹⁾ that the threshold for livestock holdings be raised based on a new comprehensive impact assessment of rearing technologies.

2. EXPLANATORY NOTES

2.1. The EESC reaffirms its support for the EU's environmental and circular-economy objectives and recognises the role of EU legislation in accelerating the just transition towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns. However, the EESC is also aware that the effectiveness of these objectives depends fundamentally on the quality, coherence and practical feasibility of the policy instruments adopted. From this perspective, the Committee wishes to offer some transversal reflections emerging from the legislative areas examined.

2.2. The EESC observes that several recent legislative files illustrate the operational consequences of insufficient ex-ante evaluation. The absence of detailed technical groundwork and the limited assessment of implementation challenges can result in obligations that, while ambitious, do not always align with the practical realities of the markets that must operationalise them. The EESC considers that strengthening the analytical foundations of the legislative process is essential to avoid structural inconsistencies that subsequently require large-scale adjustments. Future legislative initiatives should better account for interactions with existing frameworks, such as REACH, industrial permitting rules and sustainability reporting obligations, in order to avoid regulatory overlaps and contradictions.

2.3. The EESC reflects on the integrity of the internal market. Many of the issues identified throughout this report – fragmented reporting systems, divergent interpretations, inconsistent national digital infrastructures, and asymmetrical implementation practices – point to a broader trend of regulatory fragmentation. These inconsistencies affect waste-related frameworks, extended producer responsibility schemes, shipment rules, product-passport systems, and building-renovation obligations alike. Such fragmentation undermines legal certainty, increases compliance costs and risks discouraging cross-border economic activity within the EU.

2.4. The EESC stresses that it is necessary to ensure the competitiveness and investment capacity of European industry, while at same time defending the interests of workers. Compliance with the EU Better Regulation rules on consultation impact assessment is essential. A genuinely risk-based approach should be developed that guarantees the identification, prevention and mitigation of adverse human and workers' rights impacts, including throughout the value chain. In relation to the regulations on responsible business conduct (CSRD – Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and CS3D – Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive), simplification should be understood as preventing double reporting.

2.5. In addition, the EESC highlights the fact that the European Commission's proposals on the environment do not contain any specific references to health and safety in the workplace and points out that simplification measures should not bring about any direct or indirect impacts on the health and safety of workers.

2.6. The EESC considers that, when obligations derived from EU law are implemented through diverging national procedures, the functioning of the internal market is weakened: compliance becomes less predictable, administrative costs rise unevenly across jurisdictions, and cross-border operations face unnecessary friction. The Committee therefore considers that the internal market dimension must remain a central consideration in all future environmental legislation. Ensuring greater harmonisation of reporting methodologies, interoperability of digital systems and consistency in the sequencing of implementing measures would safeguard the unity of the internal market and contribute to a more coherent application of EU law. The EESC highlights, in particular, the need for interoperable digital platforms and standardised data formats, so that digitalisation effectively replaces, rather than adds to, administrative obligations.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 443, 22.11.2022, p. 130 (point 4.5.5).

2.7. The EESC reflects on the broader notion of the level playing field. The concept is frequently invoked in EU policymaking, often to highlight fairness among operators within the Union. The Committee agrees that equal treatment and non-discrimination are essential principles; however, a strictly intra-EU interpretation risks overlooking an increasingly relevant dimension: how EU rules position European operators vis-à-vis global competitors. This risk is heightened where EU-based companies face complex compliance obligations that are not matched by equivalent requirements for operators established outside the EU.

2.8. The EESC considers that, while the Union is a large economic area capable of setting international standards, it cannot alone reshape global production patterns in the short term. For environmental regulation to be both ambitious and effective, the level playing field must therefore be understood holistically, considering competitive conditions in external markets, the realities of globalised supply chains and the asymmetry of regulatory obligations between EU-based and non-EU producers. From a legal and economic standpoint, this requires not only consistent enforcement at EU borders, but also careful reflection on transition periods, feasibility constraints and the proportionality of new requirements. Such reflection is essential to ensure that environmental ambition does not inadvertently erode the global competitiveness of European industry. Against this backdrop, simplification measures should be accompanied by effective traceability, enforcement and market-surveillance mechanisms, ensuring fair competition and preserving the credibility of EU environmental, economic and social policies.

2.9. The updated Industrial Emissions Directive (Directive 2024/1785) ⁽²⁾ contains stringent requirements that are likely to hamper investment in strengthening and establishing value chains. This, in turn, undermines the objective of promoting industrial competitiveness during the transition to a climate-neutral economy. The integrated approach to pollution prevention and control must be preserved, avoiding rigid optimisation of a parameter causing cross-media effects and greater consumption of resources, which would be contrary to the overall environmental objectives. The EESC therefore requests that the previous wording of this Article, as found in Directive 2010/75/EU ⁽³⁾, be reinstated.

2.10. The EESC considers that including environmental performance limit values (EPLVs) in Directive 2024/1785 may hinder innovation, which is crucial for the green transition. These limit values may make it difficult for companies to adopt more environmentally friendly and innovative practices, as the transition to zero pollution and increased circularity often requires more energy or greater use of resources. However, the EESC considers EPLVs to be safeguards and accepts that any temporary breaches should be prohibited, except in exceptional and well-justified cases. Existing environmental legislation already allows for effective limitation of emissions and environmental impact. Derogation may not be granted without a public assessment of its impact on health and the environment.

2.11. The EESC considers that co-incineration is already strictly regulated under the IED and that the provision does not bring any clear environmental benefits, so it should be removed. Furthermore, the provision is not aligned with the BAT definition under the 'Sevilla process', which develops best practices for co-incineration for each sector. The provision also makes no sense in relation to co-incineration within cement kilns, because specific emissions are effectively avoided within cement kilns. The provision is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement in cement kilns due to technological limitations.

2.12. Regarding the Waste Directive (2018/851 amending Directive 2008/98/EC) ⁽⁴⁾, the EESC points out that European companies face divergent national requirements on waste. These market barriers entail additional operational costs and burdens for companies. As a result, circular products derived from waste face a competitive disadvantage compared to

⁽²⁾ Directive (EU) 2024/1785 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 amending Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) and Council Directive 1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste (OJ L, 2024/1785, 15.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1785/oj>).

⁽³⁾ Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) (OJ L 334, 17.12.2010, p. 17, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2010/75/oj>).

⁽⁴⁾ Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste (OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/851/oj>).

fossil-based alternatives, particularly in terms of market access and regulatory clarity. This regulatory fragmentation creates significant uncertainty for investors and hinders the scalability of circular economy solutions across the EU. The end-of-waste criteria must guarantee non-toxicity, effective recyclability and no impact on health or the environment. No reclassification may be granted for waste containing hazardous or non-recyclable substances.

2.13. Therefore, the EESC proposes amending the Directive in this regard to include the following measures: a) the establishment of mutual recognition of end-of-waste (EoW) status between Member States. When a Member State grants EoW status in full compliance with the criteria set out in Article 6 of Directive 2008/98/EC ⁽⁵⁾ on waste, that decision should be binding on other Member States; b) accelerating the development of harmonised end-of-waste criteria across the EU to avoid market distortions, supporting the widespread adoption of circular economy practices and reducing regulatory fragmentation; c) the time and administrative burden involved in obtaining end-of-waste status should be reduced. In addition, it is proposed to develop proportionate governance of extended producer responsibility (EPR): Risk-based audits and interoperability between different individual or collective producer responsibility organisations (PROs) to avoid double burdens.

2.14. The EESC highlights that the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation places reuse obligations for beverages largely on final distributors, despite the fact that Member States and operators are already investing heavily in deposit return schemes (DRS) and long-established reuse schemes in the hospitality sector that deliver high collection and reuse rates. The objective of strengthening reuse is shared; however, targets and obligations should remain realistic, proportionate and adaptable to the specific structures of each sector and Member State. As currently designed, Article 29 may lead to the creation of parallel, store-based reuse systems that are costly, operationally complex and difficult to align with existing DRS, potentially without proportionate environmental benefits. A more flexible approach, including clear and workable exemption mechanisms where justified, would help avoid duplication and ensure that reuse systems are environmentally effective and economically sustainable. More broadly, while the PPWR aims to harmonise rules and support the circular economy, its implementation could create additional administrative burden through fragmented EPR definitions and misaligned timelines, particularly where obligations start mid-year and clash with calendar-year reporting cycles. Regarding single-use packaging, reducing unnecessary single-use plastics is a shared objective. However, any bans or mandatory phase-outs should be based on robust impact assessments, take into account food safety and waste prevention considerations, and ensure that viable reusable alternatives are available at scale before restrictions are introduced.

3. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Amendment 1

linked to recommendation 2.9

Amendment to Article 2 of the proposal COM(2025) 986 final

[Remark: This EESC amendment proposes the insertion of a new paragraph (2), which would mean that the numbering of the subsequent paragraphs would need to be adapted.]

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
Directive 2010/75/EU is amended as follows:	Directive 2010/75/EU is amended as follows:
(1) [...]	(1) [...]

⁽⁵⁾ Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives (OJ L 312, 22.11.2008, p. 3, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/98/oj>).

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
	(2) <i>Article 15, the paragraphs after point (b) are amended as follows:</i> 3. [...] <i>Where the emission limit values are set in accordance with point (b), the competent authority shall, at least annually, assess the results of emission monitoring in order to ensure that emissions under normal operating conditions have not exceeded the BAT-AELs.</i> <i>In particular, where emission limit values are set in accordance with point (b), expressed in mass load instead of concentration, it shall be ensured that the same level of environmental protection is ensured.</i> <i>This shall not lead to dilution of emissions or an increase in pollutant concentrations beyond the levels achievable through the application of BAT.</i> <i>General binding rules referred to in Article 6 may be applied while setting relevant emission limit values in accordance with this Article.</i> <i>If general binding rules are adopted, the strictest achievable emission limit values by applying BAT shall be set for categories of installations having similar characteristics that are relevant in determining the lowest emission levels achievable, considering the entire range of the BAT-AELs. The general binding rules shall be established by the Member State, based on the information in the BAT conclusions, analysing the feasibility of meeting the strictest end of the BAT-AEL range and demonstrating the best performance that those categories of installations can achieve by applying BAT as described in BAT conclusions.</i> 4. [...]

Reason

In certain cases, such as industrial wastewater discharges, water reuse can increase the concentration of pollutants in the discharge without increasing the total pollutant load to the receiving environment.

The exclusive application of concentration-based ELVs may discourage water reuse, creating a negative cross-media effect: it incentivises the use of fresh water and higher discharge volumes, rather than efficiency and circular economy practices. Allowing this to be replaced by mass load-based ELVs, under proper control and environmental equivalence, promotes reuse, resource efficiency, and alignment with circular economy objectives and comprehensive environmental protection.

Amendment 2

linked to recommendation 2.9

Amendment to Article 2 of COM(2025) 986 final

[Remark: This EESC amendment proposes the insertion of a new paragraph (2), which would mean that the numbering of the subsequent paragraphs would need to be adapted.]

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
Directive 2010/75/EU is amended as follows:	Directive 2010/75/EU is amended as follows:
(1) [...]	(1) [...]
	(2) Article 15 is amended as follows:
	In paragraph 3, the second sentence is deleted.
	(2) Article 15(3) first paragraph is amended as follows:
	3. The competent authority shall set the strictest achievable emission limit values by applying BAT in the installation, considering the entire range of the emission levels associated with the best available techniques ('BAT-AELs') to ensure that, under normal operating conditions, emissions do not exceed the BAT-AELs as laid down in the decisions on BAT conclusions referred to in Article 13(5). The emission limit values shall be set through either of the following:
	[...]

Reason

Emission levels associated with the best available techniques (BAT-AELs), expressed in the form of ranges, are intended to reflect the differences that exist between installations within the same sector, resulting from factors such as operating conditions, raw materials used, design, age or maintenance of the installations, even where the same technique is applied, as well as from specific local circumstances. In this context, the automatic setting of the lower end of the AEL range in permits, combined with the requirement for feasibility assessments by the operator, may prove ineffective and constitute an excessive administrative burden, as in many cases such levels are not technically or operationally achievable under normal operating conditions. The systematic setting of AELs at the lower end of the range would require installations to maintain emission levels well below those that are technically achievable for the sector as a whole, without due consideration of real operating conditions, potentially leading to legal uncertainty and non-compliance due to the difficulty of identifying levels at the lower end of the range that do not result in pollution transfer between different media (cross-media effects). Allowing flexibility within the established ranges in permits would not undermine environmental objectives or reduce the level of environmental protection; on the contrary, it would enable those objectives to be achieved more effectively by preserving the integrated approach.

The present BAT-AELs are the result of evidence-based deliberations within the Technical Working Groups (TWG) in Seville, and any work on the BAT-AELs or the ranges of the BAT-AELs should continue to be done in the TWG. The exercise of setting legally binding BAT-AELs should continue to follow the BREF Guidance (based on the data collection exercise, knowledge of the conditions in different sectors and verified by the Member States). The range of (some) BAT-AELs is caused by differences in operation, raw materials used, maintenance, design, or age of the plant, even when the same technique is used. BAT-AELs are based on real data collected by plants and verified by authorities.

It is not possible to evaluate the impact on the environment without considering the specifics of the installation at stake and the local situation. Setting by default the lower end of the AELs range in the permit would go against the integrated approach principle: to avoid pollution transfer in different media (cross-media effects) and considerations on resource efficiency (increased energy/water consumption). It is not because permits allow for a flexibility in the ranges that the EU cannot use these conclusions constructively.

The setting of mixed limit values should be taken into account. This applies in particular to surface treatment operations that are classified under a single Annex I activity but are further differentiated with regard to different products in Annex VII and for which different BAT AELs for the same pollutant have been established in the BAT conclusions.

Amendment 3

linked to recommendation 2.10

Amendment to *Article 4* of COM(2025) 986 final

Text proposed by the European Commission	EESC amendment
In Directive (EU) 2024/1785, Article 3 is deleted.	(1) <i>In Directive (EU) 2024/1785, in Article 1, paragraph (36) is deleted.</i> (2) In Directive (EU) 2024/1785, Article 3 is deleted.

Reason

Co-incineration is already strictly regulated under the IED and this provision does not bring any clear environmental benefits, so it should be removed. Furthermore, the provision is not aligned with the BAT definition under the ‘Sevilla process’, which develops best practices for co-incineration for each sector. The provision also makes no sense in relation to co-incineration within cement kilns, because specific emissions are effectively avoided within cement kilns. The provision is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement in cement kilns due to technological limitations.

Brussels, 18 March 2026.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Séamus BOLAND