Clamour for action to bolster Union scientists' credibility

Wallstrom pushes ahead with 'polluter pays' plan

The European Commission is set to propose a plan to make polluters pay for the damage they cause, as part of a wider strategy to tackle environmental problems.

The proposal, which is expected to be unveiled in the coming weeks, would introduce a system of charges on polluting activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels or the discharge of waste into the environment.

The plan is seen as a key element of the Commission's efforts to implement the EU's environmental agenda, which includes targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air and water quality.

The 'polluter pays' principle is already widely applied in other areas, such as waste disposal or the use of finite resources, but the Commission wants to expand its application to a broader range of activities.

The proposal is expected to face opposition from some member states, particularly those with large industries that rely on fossil fuels or other polluting practices.

However, the Commission is confident that it can persuade the European Parliament and the Council of the Union to support the plan, which it argues is necessary to protect public health and the environment.

The move comes as the European Union is facing growing pressure to take action on climate change and other environmental issues. In recent years, there have been numerous reports of pollution and environmental degradation across the continent, leading to widespread concern among citizens.

The Commission's plan is likely to be a significant development in the fight against pollution and environmental damage, and it is expected to have far-reaching implications for industries and businesses across the EU.
Washroom Business Ahead

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Nestlé gets TV documentary halted

A German television company has suspended transmission of a documentary which accuses the multinational food company Nestlé of unethical practices.

The move by ZDF, one of Germany’s largest networks, follows representations by a senior executive of the Switzerland-based company.

Allegations made by a former Nestlé employee, Syed Aamir Raza, formed the basis of the programme, which was due to be broadcast on 8 January.

Mr Aamir Raza, who worked for Nestlé in Pakistan for almost three years until 1995, claims that the company provided gifts to doctors and had direct contact with mothers.

He also says that Nestlé’s pay to doctors in Pakistan was linked to local sales of its products.

All these activities would be contrary to the World Health Organization’s international code of marketing of breast milk substitutes, which Nestlé endorses.

However, Nestlé’s head of corporate communications, Proncess Perraud, said: “We emphatically deny these allegations.”

Mr Perraud added: “Nestlé has always been open about this matter, and it has offered to discuss the issues with the programme’s producers.”

He said that Mr Aamir Raza was “guilty of an attempt at blackmailing the corporation and of having gained employment by presenting a false dossier.”

Mr Perraud said that Nestlé possessed a tape recording which proved its allegations of blackmail and which it planned to make public at an unspecified date.

A spokesman for ZDF, which is funding the programme by a combination of public subsidy and advertising revenues, said: “There was some new information and we couldn’t publish it before the planned broadcast.”

Mr Perraud stressed that it had not yet been decided to scrap the report altogether.

Mr Perraud said that he had been interviewed for the programme early last week in Berlin.

The impression was very clear that the particular person interviewing me was not receptive to the information we could provide,” he said.

He had therefore decided to speak to “other people” in ZDF: “My main focus is to speak to other people in ZDF,” he said. “As a French company, we do not have a direct line of communication with Nestlé.”

Mr Perraud added: “I have no intention of telling any company how it spends its money or with whom I spoke.”

But he confirmed that his communications had been “elsewhere in Germany.”

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LIFE OR DEATH

Nestlé's message in a bottle to the Third World