WEBINAR SERIES:

EU Green Deal Policies and their Relevance in Asia-Pacific

Omnibus Simplification

Webinar Brief

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Context

The **EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component** and the **European Environment Bureau** held a **webinar** on the 16 July about the **EU's Omnibus Agenda: What the simplification drive means for Businesses and Consumers in the Asia-Pacific region**. It is part of a **series of webinars**, which seeks to explore the implications of EU policies related to Sustainable Consumption and Production for its partner countries, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to understand the goals of these policies, their relevance in specific contexts, and their implications for stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific, particularly concerning legislation that has emerged from EU policies. This Webinar brief aims to capture the ideas shared during the webinar but is not a comprehensive analysis of the policy. The webinar focused on clarity and diversity of views, rather than comprehensiveness.

Key Messages

The European Commission operates in election cycles of five years. The Green Deal was adopted during the 2019-2024 mandate, and the agenda of the 2024-2029 Commission has shifted following the elections in June 2024. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has been consistent in stating that the Green Deal priorities are still alive, but the deal has been complemented by a new agenda that centres on competitiveness, and with that, on regulatory simplification.

The EU's **simplification and implementation agenda** is not new per se, but it has been reignited with renewed vigour during this period. Many **stakeholders** are concerned that this agenda is leading to deregulation and an erosion of the standards that was set by the Green Deal. This is a concern for citizens as well as businesses, who depend on legislative certainty in order to plan for investments and compliance.

The first "**omnibus**" package was proposed in February 2025, and in total 12 omnibus **proposals** have been announced/presented since then, covering everything from food & feed, to chemicals, to automotive, to housing, to environmental policy.

Most Asian countries consider the EU an important trading partner and have started investing in compliance with the Green Deal. The many omnibus proposals and the lack of clarity around key pieces of legislation have caused considerable uncertainty among governments and businesses that have or are planning to invest in complying with EU market requirements, and have caused others to not act at all, though the momentum towards collecting data in its own right is continuing.

While EU regulations evolve, sustainability expectations remain driven by investors, international buyers, global standards, and an increasing wave of domestic regulations across Asia itself.

Introduction

The EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component and the European Environmental Bureau held a **webinar** on the EU's simplification agenda, to introduce the omnibus processes and the current status of the negotiations and implementation. During this event, several leading experts convened to discuss the importance of understanding the impacts and opportunities for the Asia-Pacific region for EU businesses and Asia-Pacific businesses and value chain when it comes to preparing for the legislative changes ahead.

Opening the discussion, Zinaida Fadeeva, Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component said:

"*Today's topic couldn't be more timely. Over the past year, the European Union has introduced a broad simplification agenda through the omnibus packages. While the objective is to reduce administrative burdens and strengthen competitiveness, many businesses and many governments in Asia and Pacific are asking important questions. What requirements are changing? What remains in place and how should companies navigate this evolving landscape while continuing to invest in sustainability and in reporting?*"

What is the EU's omnibus simplification agenda?

In her overview of the simplification agenda, **Eva Bille, Head of Circular Economy at the European Environmental Bureau**, introduced the concept of an omnibus: *"a legislative initiative that consolidates multiple amendments or revisions of existing texts into a single proposal*". This process still requires legislative co-decision between the Commission, Council of European Member States and European Parliament. Often this process is sped up or adopted by emergency procedure. While omnibuses have existed for a long time as a concept, the speed of their current rollout is unprecedented. At the time of writing, 12 omnibus proposals have been tabled since February 2025, five of which have completed their process and been adopted:

Omnibus I – Sustainability Reporting

- Adopted June 2025 – Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)/Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive) CSDDD delays, narrowed scope (excluding 41k companies from CSRD reporting and reducing CSDDD scope by 70%), CBAM changes

Omnibus II – Investment Simplification

- Adopted December 2025 – Simplify and optimise the use of investment programmes (InvestEU, European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), etc.)

Omnibus III – Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

- Adopted December 2025 – Flexibility on environmental requirements, less controls)

Omnibus IV – Single Market

- Adopted July 2025 - Simplify rules and reduce bureaucracy for SME and small mid-cap enterprises

Omnibus V – Defence readiness

- Published June 2025 – environmental impact assessments and compliance with environmental law must allow defence readiness (permitting, exemptions for chemicals, derogations for "overriding public interest)

Omnibus VI – Chemicals

- Adopted November 2025 – Simplifying hazardous chemicals labelling rules, cosmetic regulation and easing registration for fertilizing products

Omnibus VII – Digital

- Published November 2025 – Simplifying data, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence

Omnibus VIII – Environmental Omnibus

- Published December 2025 – simplifying Industrial Emissions Directive (IED), Waste Framework Directive (WFD), Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) authorised representatives, adapting permitting rules and changing the INSPIRE directive.

Omnibus IX - Automotive

- Published December 2025 – simplifying technical requirements and testing procedures for motor vehicles

Omnibus X – Food and feed safety

- Published December 2025 – simplifying rules and procedures across plant protection and biocidal products, to feed official controls and animal health and welfare.

Omnibus XI – Taxation

- Published June 2026 – simplifying EU tax rules, reduce reporting and compliance burdens

Omnibus XII – Energy product legislation

- Published June 2026 – simplifying energy and tyre labelling rules

Other initiatives to simplify have been adopted in parallel with the omnibus agenda, including on cars, deforestation, climate target flexibilities, emissions trading, and others. Further initiatives are planned, including regarding citizens, housing, stress testing the environmental acquis, chemicals and climate. Ms. Bille highlighted that from a civil society perspective, the volume of omnibus proposals and other initiatives is a cause for significant uncertainty and concern. The level of consultation across proposals has been uneven, with sometimes very short deadlines and not always very clear instructions or awareness among affected communities, including those in Asia. The level of impact assessment before proposals has also been inconsistent and to a very large degree focused on the administrative burdens for businesses without very thorough assessment of the benefits for businesses, people and the environment in keeping these laws as they are. Of course, the speed of several procedures running in parallel makes it hard to follow, and the rate at which amendments, not related to simplification per se, are being introduced is very concerning.

Ewa Malz, Head of Unit at the European Commission, DG Environment explained that the vision behind the simplification agenda is a drive towards competitiveness, resilience, and agility. She referenced the pareto principle, which states that roughly 80% of outcomes come from 20% of causes. With streamlined information, she noted, more actors can implement the legislation, leading to higher impact overall. She also dived deeper into the 8th omnibus (environmental omnibus), which is within her purview, and noted that it has been "*extremely consulted, through a questionnaire as well as separate stakeholder conversations*". However, she added, there is no objective truth, and that different stakeholders will interpret the changes differently.

The view of European businesses

Diving into what this has meant for European (and global) businesses, **Matt Feehily, ESG partner, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP,** said that from his experience with the first omnibus on CSRD, CSDDD and the taxonomy, working with businesses that had started implementing the laws before the omnibus went into effect, "*actors who had taken steps to comply may feel that their efforts have been wasted*". He noted that most of them still see value in the exercise they have done, which leads to valuable data being collected, helping them with their risk management. So, most of the companies that carried out the exercise (even if not in scope of the legislation) still found it to be a worthwhile exercise. However, legislation would provide much stronger guarantees that the work would get done. He noted that many companies are experiencing challenges with thin margins and stretched budgets, and the absence of mandatory requirements dissuades them to spend in that area. He underlined that the initial proposal for CSRD was very complex in its nature, with many data points, which led to some companies doing the minimum to "tick the box" on regulation rather than engaging in a meaningful way. In his experience a balance therefore needs to be found between collecting data and using it meaningfully.

Risks and opportunities for the Asia-Pacific context

Martin Brisson, Executive Director at the European Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia gave insights into the context in the country where he is based. From his perspective, Cambodia feels far away from the discussions in Brussels, and very few of the companies he interacts with talk about the simplification agenda very much. When asked specifically on the first omnibus on CSRD, companies welcome the added flexibility of not being in scope, but in reality "*for them, it was simply something that didn't happen*". Nothing changes, since the law was not enacted, and they had not done anything to prepare. Companies that remain in scope are ready to comply, and are also likely to have capacity to manage changes and absorb shocks better than SMEs.

Vir Mehta from Solidaridad noted that from his perspective, there are several regrettable consequences for supply chain actors in India. For the regulatory pioneers, many of them invested heavily for example in risk management software, "*but now that the goal posts have shifted, initial investments in sustainable technology are left to the wayside*". Given that these companies operate on extremely thin profit margins, it matters a lot what their buyers are going to ask for, and there is therefore a risk that removing requirements will reward the laggards rather than the frontrunners. Specifically on the CSDDD, he noted that one of the main objectives was to avoid that major international suppliers "cut and run", but that some have taken advantage of the moment of uncertainty brought by the simplification agenda to do just that. There is, he noted, a gap between what is written in law and what filters down to suppliers – training is not enough. The advice he and his team at Solidaridad give now, is that it is important to focus on the fundamentals rather than the format of compliance.

Conclusion

Eva Bille noted that from a civil society perspective, good simplification is about making rules easier to implement, including through streamlined formats, not about making them easier to ignore. It means involving citizens and businesses in decision-making and building on one common EU rulebook instead of 27 different legal systems. Omnibus proposals must therefore be used with caution, to ensure simplification does not come at the expense of fundamental environmental and health safeguards.

Ewa Malz added that from her perspective, in spite of the rather volatile global context, her sensation is that Europe is still showing the way, standing beyond the temporary storms and showing a growth agenda that is good for Europe and good for the planet, and a positive agenda to focus on. In her view, frontrunners in any case want to be sustainable as part of their branding, and the legislation is taking them along while making requirements workable. She explained for example that we do not want to have 10,000 IT systems to introduce product information.

Zinaida Fadeeva concluded that while today's discussion has focused on the EU's Omnibus agenda, sustainability expectations are also being driven by investors, multinational buyers, international standards and emerging regulations across Asia itself.

Speakers

- **Ewa MALZ**, Head of Unit, Strategy, Digitilization, Better Regulation and Economic Analysis, DG Environment
- **Eva Bille**, Head of Circular Economy, European Environmental Bureau
- **Vir MEHTA**, Decent Work and PMEL, Solidaridad
- **Martin BRISSON**, Executive Director, EuroCham Cambodia
- **Matt FEEHILY**, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP

References

- EU simplification agenda **website**
- IEEP deregulation **tracker**
- Corporate Europe Observatory **deregulation watch**

Watch the recording here.