Table 15.2 Suggested enablers for improving the implementation and integration of environmental policy, plans and programmes in Ireland (published in *Ireland's Environment – An Integrated Assessment 2020* report, p. 407, November 2020)

ENABLERS FOR IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION

Governance
Strong implementation structures and governance arrangements are needed to ensure that legislation and policy is implemented and plans and programmes are delivered at the appropriate levels. There is a need for coordinated and integrated approaches as the delivery of many of the targets will require cross-sectoral action

Measurable targets
Implementation improves when plans/programmes contain objectives and measures that are measurable, verifiable and reportable

Enforcement
Greater oversight and enforcement is needed to address a lack of implementation and poor compliance in a number of key environmental policy areas such as those as identified in EPA enforcement reports

Investment
Far greater investment is needed to fully implement all of Ireland's environmental legislation, policies, plans and programmes, including increased public funding for critical services, nature and community projects, monitoring, regulation and oversight and sustainable finance options to fund solutions in green technologies

ENABLERS FOR IMPROVING INTEGRATION

Overall vision
A long-term vision is needed for Ireland's environment and a coherent overarching and ambitious plan for achieving this

Collaboration
With many of the key environmental challenges requiring coordinated cross-sectoral action, greater collaboration is needed across government departments and public authorities

Development planning
The National Planning Framework and reformed governance structures should facilitate more coordinated long-term development planning. The new Office of the Planning Regulator will undertake independent reviews of all local authority statutory development plans to ensure consistency with relevant regional and national policies, including on climate action

Integrated land mapping
An integrated approach to land mapping at national and regional level would enable Ireland to plan, coordinate and deliver the various datasets and interventions needed for sustainable land use management and to tackle key environmental challenges

New data and evidence
High-quality, accessible and up-to-date environmental information is needed to inform better, more integrated plan-making action at different levels. This includes new decision support tools, mapping capabilities, etc.

Closing gaps
There are gaps in Ireland's environmental policy that need to be addressed. Notable examples include the National Clean Air Strategy, which is yet to be published, and the continuing lack of a national landscape characterisation map

Role of SEA
Promote and strengthen the role of SEA and improve the effectiveness of these assessments in influencing planning policy decisions at national, regional and local levels

ENABLERS FOR IMPROVING MONITORING AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Monitoring and reporting
Ongoing monitoring of implementation progress is essential, so that the performance of plans, policies and strategies can be tracked and measured. Performance data should be publicly available, for example by publishing annual indicators, to provide accountability and transparency around how well environmental commitments are being met

Tracking
Environmental policies, plans and programmes cut across and intersect a wide range of sectoral policies, plans and programmes across various departments and public authorities. A centralised government database (for example on the gov.ie website) would facilitate better tracking of plans and programmes and improve public information, as well as help identify synergies and gaps

Public participation
To succeed, the development and implementation of both sectoral and environmental plans and programmes requires engagement and buy-in from businesses, farming, local communities and individuals. Communities, citizens and businesses need to be supported and empowered to protect and improve the environment and to demand that development takes place in an environmentally sustainable way

Access to justice
Further improve information about citizens' rights to accessing justice in environmental matters and enable them to bring environmental challenges without facing prohibitive costs