

Manual of European Environmental Policy

The following pages are a section from the Manual of European Environmental Policy written by the Institute for European Environmental Policy.

The Manual was published by Earthscan/Routledge from 2010 to 2012. It was designed as an on-line interactive reference work and annual printed versions were also produced.

This section is the text of the Manual as published in 2012. It is therefore important to note the following:

- The contents have not been updated since 2012 and no guarantee is given of the accuracy of the contents given potential subsequent developments.
- The sections include links to external websites (e.g. to legal texts). These links continue to work as long as those links are not broken by those websites.
- The sections also include the original links that enabled interactivity within the published on-line version of the Manual. These links no longer work.

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The Manual should be cited as follows:

Farmer, A.M. (2012) (Editor). Manual of European Environmental Policy. 1043pp. Routledge, London.

An introduction to EU environmental policy

Environmental policy is one of the success stories of the European Union (EU). At its founding in 1957, the European Community (EC) had no environmental dimension, but today it has some of the most progressive environmental policies in the world. EU legislation has played a vital role in improving habitat and species protection and river management, and has contributed to dramatic improvements in air and water quality and waste management. Even though significant challenges remain, it is widely acknowledged that EU policy has successfully reduced some pressures on the environment, and has stimulated investment in more sustainable economic growth, for example, through the development of ‘greener’ technologies.

There is an immense amount still to do, both to meet existing EU targets and aspirations and to agree new targets and actions that will further improve the environment and the quality of life in Europe. In addition to climate change, which is currently a top priority of both European and national policy, a number of other pressing challenges remain, including in the fields of biodiversity protection, sustainable consumption and production, waste and recycling, industrial pollution, transport and air quality.

Collective action by national governments, both within Europe and through securing agreements on global action, is needed if environmental improvements are to progress; purely national action is insufficient in many spheres. The relationship between the EU and national policy has a number of dimensions:

- With the majority of environmental policy agreed at the EU level, environmental priorities are no longer under exclusive domestic control.
- Member States must implement EU legislation or ultimately face fines for non-compliance.
- Environmental standards have been tightened in most Member States through the introduction of, for example, quality standards for air and water.
- Member States have the opportunity to influence environmental policy throughout the whole of Europe.
- Decision making at EU level is arguably more transparent than in many countries and stakeholders can seek to influence it through a variety of institutional paths.
- The requirement to meet EU standards can strengthen the negotiating position of environmental ministries in relation to other government departments within Member States.
- There are opportunities for exchanging experience between Member States, such as through IMPEL (the implementation network), and the Environmental Policy Review Group of national Environment Directors.

Initially, EU environmental policy was rather inward looking. More recently, however, the Union has embraced a growing leadership role on global environmental governance. The role of the EU in securing the ratification and entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in the face of US opposition is an example in this regard. This international dimension is reflected in the sixth Environmental Action Programme, which recognizes that its strategic objectives can only be achieved if a series of key international environmental agreements are actively

supported and properly implemented both at an EU level and worldwide. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty further strengthens the EU's global leadership ambitions with the appointment of a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the establishment of a European External Action Service (EEAS).

An understanding of EU environmental law and policy and its effects is essential for individuals and organizations concerned with environmental policy, either at the national, or international level, within or beyond the borders of the EU. However, as the body of EU legislation grows, and the nature of environmental policy evolves, it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the developments and their implications. The chapters of this manual are designed to provide a systematic and comprehensive guide to individual measures of EU environmental policy, providing the necessary background and context to understand their content and implications as well as information on the main implementation and enforcement issues across the EU Member States. In addition, the first chapter sets out the institutional context of the EU as well as the processes and instruments used in EU policy making, providing an overview of the wider framework within which EU environmental policy operates.