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 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.

Foreword for Manual

Over the last forty years European Environmental policy has grown from its origin in a small number of technical measures to become one of the most busy and best known aspects of the EU. It now covers the whole spectrum of environmental issues. The need for environmental measures to be tackled in a cross-border way is self-evident. As a British MEP I endured many difficult meetings where those present attacked the EU for trying to do too much. But even these hardened crusaders quietly agreed that a cross-border EU policy for the environment makes sense.

For several years the policy concentrated on dealing with problems as they arose. Now we are taking a longer view, and trying to find acceptable ways of meeting the demands of climate change and sustainability. The pace of EU law making was probably at its most furious in the 1990s. Now recession may have dampened enthusiasm for those policies which are expensive. At the same time the expansion of the EU can sometimes make it more difficult to agree on new measures.

Against this background the Manual is simply unique. It gives a complete overview of what the EU has done and is doing on the environment and outlines how the Member States are working to incorporate EU law into their national arrangements.

Three problems continue to haunt EU environment policy, and the Manual can only touch on these. One is the increasing importance, as Europe becomes more sensitive to the cost of legislation, of impact assessments, which enable legislators to appraise before they agree to them, how much new EU proposals will cost them. Secondly, compliance remains a pressing issue. The EU's lack of competence to undertake on-the-spot checks in most areas of EU case law means that the Commission – the "guardian of the Treaties" – simply often does not know in any detail what each Member State is doing to implement EU environmental law. Yet we know there is a problem, because environment attracts more complaints to the Commission from the public about poor implementation than any other EU policy.

Finally there is the problem of the "secrecy" of the ordinary legislative procedure. How exactly are these laws finalised, in the conciliation committee, or, even more privately, in the second reading "trialogue"? This may be rich territory for future Ph.D. students, but it does not say much for open democratic debate that we can only know through reports, since none of these vital meetings take place in public.

Understanding EU environment policy is a challenging business. We at IEEP are proud that the Manual can help here by leading the reader through the labyrinth, and pointing out the right paths to take to a fuller understanding of what on earth is going on.

I salute all those whose hard work contributed to the success of this valuable document.

Caroline Jackson

Chairman IEEP Board of Trustees, Chairman of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, 1999-2004.
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