



# The Precautionary Principle in the European Environmental, Health and Food Safety Policy

## Project

## Duration

Nov 2002 - Mar 2004

The precautionary principle is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union governing policies related to the environment, health and food safety. To achieve a better understanding of the application of the precautionary principle in European policy Ecologic advised the Institut du développement durable et des relations internationales (IDDRI) in the framework of the project "European Precautionary practice".

Article 174 (2) of the European Community Treaty provides that all Community policy on the environment shall be based on the precautionary principle. Following the European Council's adoption of the Nice Declaration on the future of the European Union in December 2000, the principle's operational field has been extended also to health and safety policy. The characteristic feature of the precautionary principle is risk prevention in the face of scientific uncertainty. The precautionary principle aims to prevent harm before a hazard has come into existence.

However, European Law does not give any concrete definition of its content and consequences. To provide guidance to ensure a common understanding, the European Commission has formulated a Communication about the meaning of the principle in the European context. Nevertheless, understanding and approaches to the implementation of the precautionary principle still vary to a great extent among the different member states of the EU.

In the course of the project Ecologic elaborated a background paper entitled "The future Directive on Environmental Liability - A tool to implement the precautionary principle?".

## Funding

[Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations](#) (IDDRI), France

## Partner

[Ecologic Institute](#), Germany

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