

Investigating the Use of Environmental Benefits in the Policy Decision Process

A Qualitative Study Focusing on the EU Water Policy

Publication

[Article](#)

Citation

Thomas Thaler et al. 2013: "Investigating the Use of Environmental Benefits in the Policy Decision Process: A Qualitative Study Focusing on the EU Water Policy". Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, Vol. 57, No. 10, 1515-1530.

European Union (EU) legislation, such as the Water Framework Directive (WFD), as well as international, national, and regional environmental policies and strategies explicitly acknowledge the importance of environmental costs and benefits and the need to integrate them into the policy-making process. However, the application of valuation studies to policy often involves a trade-off between the accuracy of the required analysis and the necessity to include all costs and benefits associated with the different policy options. Thus, there is no accepted EU-wide approach on how to deal with environmental benefits in the policy process. Given the need for accurate information to design and implement policies in light of widely recognized challenges, Ecologic Institute's Benjamin Boteler and Manuel Lago, along with their co-authors, investigated the use of environmental benefits in the policy-making processes of nine European countries.

The paper shows that there is no clear preference for a specific approach and that use of environmental benefits to advise policy makers differs across selected European countries. Environmental benefits are used at different stages of the policy cycle and for different purposes. In many cases they are not used to inform high level decision making but to stimulate public debate or to develop more targeted legislative proposals.

Obstacles to the use of environmental benefits in environmental policies include the need to improve methodological techniques, and the associated uncertainties (i.e. data and outcomes) as well as a lack of clear guidelines for assessment, financial and human (i.e. knowledge) resources, experience and time to conduct the assessment. However, the study highlighted that it is mainly a country's tradition, such as socio-cultural and historical aspects, of policy making that affects how environmental benefits are presented and used in the policy decision making process.

The paper [Investigating the use of Environmental benefits in the policy decision process: a qualitative study focusing on the EU water policy](#) can be downloaded from the [publisher's website](#).

Language

English

Authorship

Benjamin Boteler

[Dr. Manuel Lago](#)

[Thomas Thaler](#) (Flood Hazard Research Center, Middlesex University; Fresh-Thoughts Consulting)

[Thomas Dworak](#) (Fresh-Thoughts Consulting)

Silje Holen (Norwegian Institute for Water Research - NIVA)

Published in

Publication Website: [Journal of Environmental Planning and Management](#), Vol.57 | No.10

Published by

[Routledge](#), International

Year

2013

Dimension

16 pp.

ISSN

print: 0964-0568, online: 1360-0559

DOI

[10.1080/09640568.2013.816271](https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2013.816271)

Table of contents

1. Introduction
2. Evaluation and impact assessment in water policy discussion
3. Methods and data
 - 3.1. Policy analysis
 - 3.2. Semi-structured interviews
4. Results
 - 4.1. Environmental benefits in policy discussion
 - 4.2. Assessment methods
 - 4.3. Guidelines for the assessment of environmental benefits in the policy discussion
 - 4.4. Drivers of economic valuation in the European water policy discussion
 - 4.5. The use of environmental benefits in the policy cycle
 - 4.6. Overview of types of assessment methods covered in the water policy discussion
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion

Keywords

[Evaluation](#)

[Water](#)

economic assessment, environmental benefits, water policy, ecosystem services

Source URL: <https://www.ecologic.eu/9503>