



Investigating the Use of Environmental Benefits in the Policy Decision Process

A Qualitative Study Focusing on the EU Water Policy

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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](#).

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