

Structured, Science-based Environmental Policy Making: The Case of Air Pollution in Europe

Fabian Wagner

Visiting Research Scholar, the Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs; Gerhard R. Andlinger Visiting Professor in Energy and the Environment

Abstract

Even in the developed world, e.g. the EU, air pollution still has significant negative impacts on human health, ecosystems and crops. However, a reduction of these impacts through environmental legislation is not easily achieved: on the one hand, a comprehensive scientific assessment of air pollution is complex and involves a wide range of traditionally unrelated academic disciplines, such as atmospheric science, engineering, economics, health studies, and ecology. On the other hand, the decision making process itself is complex as a result of the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including EU member states, EU institutions, corporate entities, environmental interest groups, and the public at large. Further, each of these stakeholders may hold different views on legitimate objectives, appropriate measures, and the distribution of costs and benefits of new legislation. These challenges, and the structured and consultative decision making process used by the EU for new air pollution legislation, as well as the crucial role that science and scientific institutions play in this process, will be explored.