



## **OPTIONAL COURSE**

### **GOVERNING THE GREEN TRANSITION: EU ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE POLICY**

#### **I. Course Objectives:**

The European Union has developed one of the world's most stringent sets of environmental policies. A complex framework of regulatory standards aiming to improve the state of the environment is in force in all major areas of environmental policy, including water, air, biodiversity and climate change. These policies are shaped, adopted and implemented through a complex governance system including various actors, different legal procedures and political practices, and multiple levels of governance. They have undoubtedly contributed to an improved state of the environment in Europe, but they simultaneously leave the EU with major challenges in the longer term.

The course aims to introduce to students the state of play of the EU's environmental and climate policies. It discusses the development and the driving forces of the EU's environmental policy, the main political dynamics in the policy cycle, the EU's policy instruments and activities in the traditional and the 'new' environmental subdomains, and the role of the EU in global environmental politics.

Approaching the EU's environmental and climate policies from the perspective of the debates on sustainability and transition governance, as emphasized in the context of the European Green Deal, the course emphasizes the horizontal and cross-sectoral nature of environmental and climate policies. Consequently, the interactions with other policy domains (such as transport, energy or agriculture) are also examined.

#### **II. Course Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students are able to:

- understand the EU's environmental and climate policies and the way they are politically shaped;
- analyse the key drivers and barriers of the governance of the green transition in the EU;
- reflect on the historical and societal context in which the EU's environmental and climate policies are developed, both at the EU level and at the international level;
- present a critical assessment and analysis of an environmental policy field, both in oral and written form.

### **III. Course Structure**

#### **1. Evolution and driving forces of EU environmental policy**

- ❖ Stage 1: environment-related measures serving the common market
- ❖ Stage 2: expansion of environmental legislation
- ❖ Stage 3: legal basis, supranational decision-making and 1992 impetus
- ❖ Stage 4: legal, institutional and legislative consolidation
- ❖ Stage 5: green economy, better implementation of a mature policy area
- ❖ Stage 6: European Green Deal and post-Green Deal developments

#### **2. EU environmental policy in a global and societal context**

- ❖ The global context
- ❖ Environmental policy, science and risk
- ❖ Environmental policy and governance
- ❖ Environmental policy and ethics
- ❖ Environmental policy and geography

#### **3. Legal basis and principles**

- ❖ Principles
- ❖ Competences and legal basis

#### **4. Actors and policy-making**

- ❖ EU institutions: Commission, Parliament, Council, European Council, Court of Justice, agencies
- ❖ Interest groups
- ❖ Policy-making
- ❖ Implementation and compliance

#### **5. Environmental policy instruments**

- ❖ A mix of environmental policy instruments
- ❖ Regulatory instruments
- ❖ Market-based instruments
- ❖ Informational instruments
- ❖ Planning instruments

#### **6. Traditional sectors of environmental policy**

- ❖ Air policy
- ❖ Water policy
- ❖ Nature and biodiversity policy
- ❖ Chemicals policy
- ❖ Circular economy and waste policy

#### **7. Climate change policy**

- ❖ Origins and development
- ❖ Targets
- ❖ Main policy instruments
- ❖ Achievements and challenges
- ❖ Continuity and change

#### **8. Environmental policy integration and the challenge of 'greening' other policy areas**

- ❖ Environmental policy integration

- ❖ Systemic challenges
- ❖ Applications: the greening of EU energy, agriculture, transport, budget & finance, and building & renovation policies

## 9. EU external environmental policy

- ❖ EU as actor in global environmental politics
- ❖ Venues for EU leadership: enlargement; unilateral policies with extraterritorial effects; bilateral; multilateral
- ❖ Opening the black box of the EU

## IV. Teaching Methods

The course will be taught by means of **lectures** with active participation of the students. One or two **guest lectures** will probably be scheduled (depending on availability of guest lecturers).

Students are expected to **give a presentation (flipped classroom)** on

- either a traditional environmental policy field (in the context of chapter 6)
- or environmental policy integration in a non-environmental policy field (in the context of chapter 8).

Students have to **discuss each other's work (peer review)**.

Students have to **write a paper** on the topic of the presentation.

## V. Assessment

### • Topic and objective

- In groups of two students (or in case of an odd number of students: one group of three students), students have to write a paper and to give a presentation in the context of either chapter 6 of the course ('traditional sectors of environmental policy') or chapter 8 ('environmental policy integration and the challenge of "greening" other policy areas'). The paper and the presentation are on the same topic.
- The presentation should be based upon a draft paper. The presentation has a twofold objective. First, it gives the students the opportunity to present their work-in-progress and to receive feedback on their draft paper, which can inform the final version of the paper. Second, the presentations serve a 'flipped classroom' objective: students teach their fellow students about either the traditional sectors of environmental policy or the greening of a non-environmental policy field.
- All students of each group will receive the same grade for the presentation and the same grade for the paper.
- There are ten topics that students can choose from:
  - five topics that are part of chapter 6 ('traditional sectors of environmental policy'):
    1. air policy
    2. water policy
    3. biodiversity and nature policy
    4. chemicals
    5. circular economy and waste
  - five topics that are part of chapter 8 ('environmental policy integration and the challenge of "greening" other policy areas'):

- 6. the greening of energy policy
  - 7. the greening of agriculture policy
  - 8. the greening of transport policy
  - 9. the greening of budget and finance policy
  - 10. the greening of building and renovation policy
- Students working on topics 1-5 should address the following questions in their presentation and paper:
  - o What are the main environmental challenges in the chosen policy field? Why is it important to regulate the chosen policy field?
  - o What is the main policy architecture in the chosen policy field?
  - o What are objectives of the EU in the chosen policy field and through which instruments does the EU aim to achieve these objectives? (Avoid describing one directive/regulation after the other, but rather discuss and analyse the main ideas and approaches behind the policies.)
  - o What are the main achievements and failures of the EU in the chosen policy field? How can these achievements and failures be explained? What are the main challenges the EU is facing?
  - o What are the main current, ongoing policy developments and debates in the chosen policy field?
- Students working on topics 6-10 should address the following questions in their presentation and paper:
  - o What are the main environmental challenges in the chosen policy field? Why is environmental policy integration in the chosen policy field important?
  - o What are the main initiatives and policy instruments that the EU has adopted in order to 'green' the chosen policy field?
  - o What are the main achievements and failures in the 'greening' of the chosen policy field? How can these achievements and failures be explained? What are the main challenges the EU is facing?
  - o What are the main current, ongoing policy developments and debates regarding the 'greening' of the chosen policy field?
- **Presentation/flipped classroom (15% of the final grade).**
  - Each group has 20 minutes to give an oral presentation on their topic. The calendar of presentations will be communicated by the academic assistant after the first session of the course.
  - A clever use of slides is encouraged.
  - Each presentation will be followed by an intervention by two discussants (see below) and by a Q&A session with the course participants, moderated by the presenting students. The feedback received from the discussants and during the Q&A session can be used by the students for finalizing their paper.
  - At least 72 hours before their presentation, students are required to send their draft paper to the discussants and to [tanguy.balcon@coleurope.eu](mailto:tanguy.balcon@coleurope.eu).
  - At least 24 hours before their presentation, students are required to send an outline of their presentation to [tanguy.balcon@coleurope.eu](mailto:tanguy.balcon@coleurope.eu).
- **Discussion/peer review (10% of the final grade).**
  - Each student will be assigned the role of discussant for one presentation (two discussants per presentation).
  - Each discussant reviews the work from another group, based on the draft paper (sent beforehand) and the presentation. The discussant should, in an intervention of about 5 minutes,
    - o mention the strong and weak points of the work in progress;
    - o make a few suggestions on how the draft paper can be improved;
    - o ask 2-3 questions.

- **Paper (25% of the final grade).**
  - Each group writes a paper of 3000 to 4000 words.
  - The paper should address the questions outlined above.
  - The paper should include a cover page, with the word count clearly indicated on the cover page.
  - Papers, saved in Word format, have to be submitted by 24/04/2026 at 12h00 to [tanguy.balcon@coleurope.eu](mailto:tanguy.balcon@coleurope.eu).
  - Please refer to the Guide for Referencing with regard to the required referencing style.
  - Concerning late submission, word count and plagiarism, the rules outlined at the end of this document apply.
- The **final written examination (50% of the final grade)** will take place in May or June with questions on any subject covered in the course. It will be a written, closed-book exam.
- During the **second examination session** the course is assessed 100% on the basis of a written resit exam.

## VI. Supervision of Master thesis

Professor Delreux	I am available for thesis supervision	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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## VII. Biographical Note

Tom Delreux is professor of political science at the 'Institut de sciences politiques Louvain-Europe' (ISPOLE) at the UCLouvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium). He is also the Chair of the UCLouvain's School of European Studies and he is a visiting professor at Sciences Po Paris.

His research interests include the EU's external relations, EU environmental policy, inter- and intra-institutional relations in the EU, international environmental politics, principal-agent modeling, and comparative research methods. His work has appeared in several academic journals, including Journal of European Public Policy, Journal of Common Market Studies, International Environmental Agreements, Environmental Policy and Governance, Perspectives on European Politics and Society, and Journal of European Integration.

He is also the author of four academic books: The EU as International Environmental Negotiator (Ashgate, 2011), which studies internal EU decision-making processes in the context of multilateral environmental negotiations; Environmental Policy and Politics in the European Union (coauthored with Sander Happaerts, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), which provides a state-of-the-art analysis of EU environmental policy and the political dynamics that shape it; The Principal Agent Model and the European Union (co-edited with Johan Adriaensen, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), which assesses the use and limitations of the principal-agent model for studying the increasingly complex political system of the European Union; and The Foreign Policy of the European Union (3rd edition) (co-authored with Stephan Keukeleire, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), which presents a comprehensive analysis of the foreign policy of the EU.

## VIII. Bibliography<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Evolution and driving forces of EU environmental policy

#### Compulsory reading

Delreux T., Happaerts S. (2016), *Environmental Policy and Politics in the European Union*, London, Palgrave Macmillan [chapter 1: The Evolution of EU Environmental Policy, p. 12-42].

Schunz S. (2022), 'The "European Green Deal" – a paradigm shift? Transformations in the European Union's sustainability meta-discourse' in *Political Research Exchange*, 4(1): p. 1-23.

Biedenkopf K., Delreux T. (2023), 'European Integration, the Environment and Climate Change' in Segers M., Van Hecke S. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the European Union*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 418-441.

Tosun J. (2023), 'The European Union's Climate and Environmental Policy in Times of Geopolitical Crisis' in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 61(S1): p. 147-156.

#### Optional reading

Benson D., Jordan A. (2010), 'European Union environmental policy after the Lisbon Treaty: plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?' in *Environmental Politics*, 19(3): p. 468-474.

Burns C., Eckersley P., Tobin P. (2020), 'EU environmental policy in times of crisis' in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(1): p. 1-19.

Dupont C., Oberthür S., von Homeyer I. (2020), 'The Covid-19 crisis: a critical juncture for EU climate policy development?' in *Journal of European Integration*, 42(8): p. 1095-1110.

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Zito A., Burns C., Lenschow A. (2019), 'Is the trajectory of European Union environmental policy less certain?' in *Environmental Politics*, 28(2): p. 187-207.

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<sup>1</sup> This bibliography has been put together by the Professor. The formatting of the references does not necessarily correspond to the referencing rules applicable in the Department.

## **2. EU environmental policy in a global and societal context**

### **Compulsory reading**

Delreux T., Happaerts S. (2016), *Environmental Policy and Politics in the European Union*, London, Palgrave Macmillan [chapter 2: The Global Context, p. 43-57].

Kingston S., Heyvaert V., Čavoški A. (2017), *European Environmental Law*, New York, Cambridge University Press [chapter 1: The Foundations of EU Environmental Law: History, Aims and Context, read p. 25-47].

### **Optional reading**

Kohler-Koch B., Rittberger B. (2006), 'Review Article: The «Governance Turn» in EU Studies' in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(s1): p. 27-49.

Soroos M. (2011), 'Global Institutions and the Environment: An Evolutionary Perspective' in Axelrod R., VanDeveer S., Downie D. (eds.), *The Global Environment: Institutions, Law, and Policy*, Washington, CQ Press, pp. 24-47.

Skjærseth J., Wettestad J. (2007), 'Is EU enlargement bad for environmental policy? Confronting gloomy expectations with evidence' in *International Environmental Agreements*, 7(3): p. 263-280.

## **3. Legal basis and principles**

### **Compulsory reading**

Kingston S., Heyvaert V., Čavoški A. (2017), *European Environmental Law*, New York, Cambridge University Press [chapter 3: Principles in EU Environmental Law, read p. 90-105].

### **Optional reading**

Lee M. (2014), *EU Environmental Law, Governance and Decision-Making*. Second Edition, Portland, Hart Publishing. [chapter 1: The Treaties and the Environment, read p. 1-27].

## **4. Actors and policy-making**

### **Compulsory reading**

Bürgin A. (2021), 'The European Commission' in Jordan A., Gravey V. (eds.), *Environmental Policy in the EU: Environmental Policy in the EU. Actors, Institutions and Processes (Fourth Edition)*, Abingdon, Routledge, p. 93-109.

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## 5. Environmental policy instruments

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## 6. Traditional sectors of environmental policy

## 7. Climate change policy

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## **8. Environmental policy integration and the challenge of 'greening' other policy areas**

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## 9. EU external environmental policy

### Compulsory reading

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Kelemen D. (2010), 'Globalizing European Union environmental policy' in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(3): p. 335-349.

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Afionis S. (2017), *The European Union in International Climate Change Negotiations*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Bäckstrand K., Elgström O. (2013), 'The EU's role in climate change negotiations: from leader to "leadiator"' in *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(10): p. 1369-1386.

Delreux T. (2011), *The EU as International Environmental Negotiator*, Surrey, Ashgate.

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Oberthür S. (2016), 'Where to go from Paris? The European Union in climate geopolitics' in *Global Affairs*, 2(2): p. 119-130.

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