

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 4

Environmental policy

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

CONTEXTUAL ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Brief historical development of E.U.
environment policy;
2. The theoretical perspective
3. E.U. environment policy within the context of
the defining characteristics and underlying
principles of E.U. social policy

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

1. The historical development of E.U. environment policy

- change in political views at Council of
Ministers meeting, Paris, Oct. 1972

- 1973 EEC Environment and Consumer
Protection Service set up

 - attached to Industrial Policy
Directorate-General

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- 1973 first E.C. Environmental Action Plan adopted
 - but no clear legal basis for E.C. action on environment
 - no strategy or coordinated policy programme

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

Three significant changes in 1980s:

A) 1981 – reorganisation of European Commission – environmental responsibilities transferred to new Directorate-General responsible for environment, nuclear safety and civil protection

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

B) 1982 – Third Environmental Action

Programme (EAP) (1982-1986) – emphasised
need to take **PREVENTIVE ACTION** to
protect environment

- instead of just **RE-ACTING** to problems

+ EAP stated that environmental
concerns should be **INTEGRATED**
into all E.C. policies

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

C) 1985 European Court of Justice
decision argued that environmental
protection was “one of the European
Community’s *ESSENTIAL*
objectives”

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U. Lecture 4

Single European Act, 1986

- gave E.C. legal competence in environmental matters
- stated that the European Community's goals were to include the preservation and protection of the environment

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

Maastricht Treaty, 1993

- Article 2 – fundamental goal of the E.U. “the sustainable and non-inflationary growth respecting the environment”
- stressed importance of ‘precautionary principle’ (E.U. should take action if suspicion of environmental harm)

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

1985 – creation of CORINE

(Coordinating Information on the
Environment)

1994 – foundation of European

Environment Agency (EEA), based
in Copenhagen (not policy maker or
implementor, but generates and provides
data)

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

April 1986 – Chernobyl nuclear power
station accident/disaster

- gave impetus to E.C. Environment
policy development
- Demonstrated that environmental
problems didn't respect national
boundaries, therefore transnational
policy responses necessary

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

2. The theoretical perspective

- E.U. uniquely placed to deal with environmental problems at transnational level
- after 1986 became clear at several levels that a transnational response required to environmental problems

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- A) Many problems – such as air and water pollution – are not limited by national frontiers;
- B) Individual country responses might incur costs undermining economic competitiveness;
- C) Costs of taking environmental action offset by across-E.U. economic benefits

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- D) Richer E.U. countries could help poorer countries address environmental problems through funding assistance and by sharing technical knowledge;
- plus, over longer term, benefit to richer E.U. countries as fewer factories and businesses likely to move to E.U. states with lower environmental standards

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- demonstrates ‘spillover’ functional process in operation between E.U. environment policy and economic policy, and the operation of the E.U. market
- latest E.U. Environment Action Plan – ‘Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice’ states “Economic, social and environment policies are closely integrated”.

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- environmental policy and E.U. integration
closely linked
- European integration has been good for the
environment, and environmental protection
- E.U. environmental policy now driven more by
the needs and effects of European integration
than by the priorities of the individual
Member states

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

3. Environmental policy and the characteristics and principles of E.U. social policy

- environment policy is area that
most requires greatest degree of
harmonisation and convergence?

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

‘Goals’ of E.U. environmental policy in
various treaties and the 6 EAPs are broad:

- a) the improvement of the quality of the environment;
- b) the protection of human health;
- c) the prudent use of natural resources;
- d) increased environmental efficiency (i.e. improvements in efficiency of resource use, so that consumption is reduced

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- e) the promotion of measures at the international level to deal with regional or global environmental problems
- In general, E.U. environment policy has predominantly focused on problems that are better dealt with jointly (harmonised?) than nationally

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- and these have been in areas where
 - ‘harmonisation’ is more easily achieved, i.e.
- a) the control of chemicals in the environment;
- b) the reduction of air and water pollution;
- c) the management of waste;
- d) fisheries conservation;
- e) control of pesticides

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

E.U. has also been active, in terms of policy harmonisation, in areas not normally defined at the national level as ‘environmental’, i.e.

- noise pollution control
- control of genetically modified organisms

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

E.U. tended to take 'mutual recognition' approach on environment policy on issues with more 'local' or 'regional' basis, i.e.

- a) protection of eco-systems (at local level);
- b) protection of natural habitats (wild life);
- c) the management of natural resources, such as forests and soil;
- d) the promotion of energy conservation and alternative sources of energy

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

Underlying principles of E.U. environment policy:

- a) *Sustainable development* – renewable natural resources such as air, water and forests should be used in such a way as to ensure their continued availability for future generations;
- b) *Integration* – environmental protection **must** be a component of all E.U. policies that might have an environmental impact

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- c) *Prevention* – action to prevent the emergence of environmental problems, rather than just responding to problems as they arise;
- d) *Subsidiarity* – the E.U. restricts itself to issues that are best dealt with jointly;
- e) *Derogation* – Member states that are unable to bear economic burden of environmental protection given longer deadlines, lower targets, financial assistance

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

SUMMARY:

1. By early 1980s E.C. had switched to focus on environmental management as basis of economic and social development;
2. Environmental factors actively considered in other policy areas from mid-1980s, e.g. agriculture, industry, energy, transport
- environmental factors no longer subordinate to goal of building single market

Political Issues and Social Policy in the E.U.

Lecture 4

- and in 1990s E.U. adopted the principle of sustainable development
i.e. agreed that no economic development should take place without careful consideration of its potential impact on the environment
- 3. E.U. approaches to environment policy
provides illustrations of forces operating in process of European integration