

# BOOK REVIEW

## Climate Change Policy in the European Union: Confronting the Dilemmas of Mitigation and Adaptation?



Andrew Jordan, Dave Huitema, Harro van Asselt, Tim Rayner, Frans Berkhout, Editors  
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There is no doubt that climate change presents an exquisite dilemma to global society and our systems of governance. Either we accept our collective responsibility and adapt our energy systems, or our societies and many critical ecosystems may be swept away by climate extremes, food crises, and, eventually, rising seas. The European Union (EU) has emerged in a leading role in the international struggle to govern climate change. Climate change is an accepted part of the political agenda in the EU, so agreement on targets has been relatively easy compared to the actual implementation of policies to reduce emissions.

This book addresses in a historical context, from the late 1980s to 2010, the challenges that climate change policy has presented to the EU and how policy has been developed. The risks posed by climate change have been known for several decades. The evolution of climate change policy in the EU has occurred in parallel with extensive expansion of the EU itself, which grew from 9 member countries in the 1980s to its present 27. The EU is a relatively large emitter of greenhouse gases, and

with 27 countries, it represents a microcosm of the global community, albeit with a unique form of governance.

The 12 chapters of the book explore both the past and future challenges of climate change policy in the context of the EU system of governance. Although the chapters are written by different groups of authors, the book is clearly organized, tightly edited, and well indexed. The broad frame is the interplay between difficult policy choices and the governance dilemmas they each present. The first three chapters are an introduction and a historical overview of both governance and climate policy in the EU. These are essential for North American readers unfamiliar with the political structure of the EU.

The heart of the book is chapters 4–8, which look back at five subareas of mitigation and adaptation policy: burden sharing, renewable energy development, emissions trading, adaptation policy, and water policy issues. Chapter 9 is a valuable synthesis of the evolution of climate change policy in the EU. These central chapters have a common thematic structure and a powerful conceptual framework that will be new to many readers. They look at dilemmas that arise through the

choice of which problems to address in what sequence, how policy was enacted, the timing of action within the EU governance, what modes and instruments were used, how costs and benefits were allocated, and implementation and enforcement dilemmas. Chapters 10 and 11 look ahead to the decades 2020–2040 and revisit dilemmas for a matrix of four climate policy worlds. The two axes here are the degree of international collaboration and the relative roles of mitigation and adaptation. The context is that the 2030 climate is insensitive to current mitigation efforts; but by the end of the 21st century, the climate will depend critically on what mitigation policies are actually implemented globally in the next few decades. If, for lack of global collaboration, the EU's 2°C warming target is unattainable, how will the world deal with increasingly difficult adaptation challenges? The final chapter is an excellent overview of the very significant policy choices the EU has made and an analysis of the paradoxes inherent in the EU system of governance.

The book is valuable on several levels. It provides detailed insight into the development of EU policy in relation to climate change, and the framing in terms of the dilemmas that climate change presents to policy is profound. To quote from the final remarks, "It is only by engaging in difficult policy decisions and confronting complex governance dilemmas that societies will come to appreciate what is really at stake and take the necessary steps to govern the environment more sustainably." What an honest assessment of the difficult challenges ahead! It is tragic that the United States is unwilling to face this challenge.

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