



Irish Political Studies >

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A laggard in good times and bad? The limited impact of EU membership on Ireland's climate change and environmental policy

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ABSTRACT

Ireland has remained broadly immune to pressure for convergence resulting from EU membership in the fields of climate and environmental policy. Neither the Global Financial Crisis nor the impending ecological crisis has significantly impacted its status as a 'laggard' country when it comes to implementation of EU legislation and policies in the field of climate change and environment. The reasons suggested for this are similar to those in other EU states where European environmental law has been inadequately implemented: lack of institutional capacity on accession, mismatch between national and supranational regulatory structures, significant veto players, and rapid economic growth. In the field of climate policy, Ireland repeatedly tops lists for worst performance among EU member states, though there has been some success in the field of renewable energy. While Brexit represents a new crisis for both Ireland and the EU, and

the UK's departure may well have implications for EU climate policy, we argue that it is unlikely to impact on the approach taken in Ireland. The few recent positive developments in the field of climate policy appear to be driven by increased domestic concerns about the impact of climate change, as opposed to the impact of EU membership.

KEYWORDS:

Climate change

environment

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Disclosure statement

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