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# Environmental policy implementation during the economic crisis: an analysis of European member state 'leader-laggard' dynamics

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'leaders' maintain patterns of strong implementation, the improved implementation

performance of some 'laggards' reflects a shift in their implementation patterns amid a period of intense political and economic controversies.

#### KEYWORDS:

Economic crisis   EU environmental policy   leaders and laggards   implementation performance  
policy outputs and outcomes

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes on contributors

Michail Melidis is an Associate Lecturer at the University of Exeter. His work and research interests are focused on the analysis and implementation of environmental policies in EU, Greece, and the UK.

Duncan Russell is a Professor of Environmental Policy at the University of Exeter. His work researches the implementation of environmental policy through international processes and the environmental impact of policy.

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# Notes

1 The UK in many studies is regarded both leader and in-betweener interchangeably.

2 The former as a small country which exercised leadership in certain stages of EU policy making, the latter as a larger state that provided leadership throughout all decision-making stages. Both of them introduced environmental policy innovations and exhibited high levels of ambitions and standards in different timings. In addition to this, another factor is the six-month rotating Council Presidency that permits Member states to hold the grip and wield great influence to the EU (Lieberink & Wurzel, [2017](#), p. 956).

3 Environmental infringements relate to the violation of Community environmental law. The EU Commission may take legal action and initiate a formal infringement procedure (of several stages each ending with a formal decision as laid out in the EU treaties) if an EU country fails to transpose the provisions of directives and implement EU law. Similarly, it may refer the issue to the Court of Justice which in some cases (of persistent non-compliance) results in the imposition of financial penalties. A telling example is the referral of Greece by the Commission to the European Court of Justice over poor waste water treatment presenting a risk to public health (26/02/2015) (IP/15/4491).

4 For more information on the Commission's monitoring and enforcement activities and the Court's rulings on environmental law, see the Commission's website on environmental law.

5 The Pillar of Environmental Law is a formal mechanism for the Commission to address violations of EU law.



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