Preface

The environmental policy of the European Union (EU) has made impressive progress during the last three decades. Since the early 1970s, there has been a growing expansion of regulatory activities and policy competences at the European level. Environmental policy, which started off as little more than a by-product of economic integration, has thus developed into a central area of EU policy-making.

Notwithstanding this success story, EU environmental policy is often subject to far-reaching criticism. In this context particular emphasis is placed on ineffective and long-winded decision-making processes as well as severe deficits emerging during the implementation of EU measures at the national level. Moreover, it is argued that EU environmental policy suffers from regulatory centralization, thus leaving national authorities insufficient discretion to adjust European requirements to specific domestic problem conditions.

In this book, we give a comprehensive overview of central features and developments of EU environmental policy and give explanations for the somewhat ambiguous assessments mentioned above. In particular, we focus on the following aspects: How can we explain the impressive development of environmental activities at the EU level? What are the central areas and instruments of EU environmental policy? What about the effectiveness and problem-solving capacity of the EU in the environmental field? Which factors influence the formulation and implementation of EU environmental policy?

In addressing these questions, we at the same time provide an

overview of the theoretical state of the art of political science analyses of EU environmental policy-making and EU policy making more generally. The theoretical discussion is illustrated by a broad range of empirical findings with regard to the formulation and implementation of environmental policy.

The book is structured as follows. We begin with an overview of the historical development of EU environmental policy (Chapter 1) and the central policy areas, policy instruments and regulatory approaches (Chapter 2). In a second step, our focus is on the actors, institutions, processes and interest constellations which shape the process of environmental policy-making at the European level (Chapters 3–6). The third part, consisting of Chapters 7–9, takes a closer look at the implementation stage, illuminating central problems of enforcement and compliance underlying EU environmental policy both from a theoretical and an empirical perspective. In the concluding Chapters, 10 and 11, we provide an overall assessment of the problem-solving capacity of EU environmental policy. In doing so, we place particular emphasis on potential effects of recent and future enlargements of the Union.

This book is a rigorously revised and updated version of an introduction to EU environmental policy published by Christoph Knill in 2003 in German (Knill, C. 2003, *Europäische Umweltpolitik. Steuerungsprobleme und Regulierungsmuster im Mehrebenensystem*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich). Even though, after all, the book was almost entirely rewritten, we would like to thank Leske und Budrich for allowing us to use the German book as a starting point for this project. We very much appreciated the pleasant collaboration with Lucy Nicholson and Tony Mason at Manchester University Press, as well as the very helpful comments on our first draft by Mikael Skou Andersen and an anonymous reviewer. In addition to that, we gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by the research programme ‘Governance and Places’ and the Department of Political Sciences of the Environment at Radboud University Nijmegen. Finally, we are grateful to Michael Dobbins for translating parts of the original German book and to Helen Foerster for preparing the final manuscript. It goes without saying that we alone are responsible for any remaining errors.

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