

Science, Precaution, Innovation: towards the integrated governance of new technologies



Conference at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research Bielefeld University
Methoden 1 33615 Bielefeld Germany 14/15 October 2019

The Precautionary Principle (PP), now 45 years old (German Clean Air Act, 1974), concerns situations where the available scientific information about possible harm from human-made innovations gives decision-makers reasonable grounds to suspect possible harm to human health, the environment or biodiversity, but where scientific certainty is lacking. The PP in such situations lawfully justifies decision makers taking precautionary measures to avoid such harm.

Although enshrined in the EU treaty and formally a pillar of EU policy, the PP is often ignored, misinterpreted or violated by the EU Commission and member states. Furthermore, corporate lobbyists and some scientific interests continuously attempt to undermine and erode the PP, mistakenly portraying it as if it was a hindrance to innovation, and even as “anti-scientific”. Their introduction in recent years of a so called “innovation principle” (which is already enshrined in the EU legislation and Action programmes) may well erode this science-based standard and prioritize particularly powerful incumbent economic interests over the high level of protection provided in the EU Treaty. Truly sustainable innovations, however, require conformity with the

PP, and a more comprehensive assessment of what (if any) social benefits, and which social needs, may be met.

In this conference we will present and critically appraise examples which illustrate the importance of the PP and discuss what is required to ensure that it will be used wisely and more frequently. Speakers will take into account the scientific, legal and social challenges and their real-life implications for the effective implementation of the PP.

Discussions will also question whether it is correct to dismiss the PP as “anti-innovation”, or whether it is more accurately seen as a stimulus to innovation and to involve the more socially deliberative “steering” of innovation. Viable paths to a reasonable confidence of no harm to public health, biodiversity and the environment will be identified and explored by reference to currently available knowledge, while acknowledging that strict proof of safety is an illusory goal. Examples including pesticide use, genetically modified crops, electromagnetic fields, endocrine disrupting compounds and nanotechnology will be presented by eminent speakers and explored by the participants.

<https://ensser.org/pp-conference>



Monday, 14th October 2019

12:30 Registration open

13:30 First plenary session: *"THE PRECAUTIONARY ("FORESIGHT") PRINCIPLE (PP) 1974-2019: USE, NEGLECT & LESSONS LEARNED?"*

Chair: Dr. Andreas Gies, Dahlem Science Berlin & (Ret.) German Environment Agency

Prof. (em.) Erik Millstone, University of Sussex, UK: *"The rhetorics and realities of 'precaution' and 'innovation': a cautionary tale."*

Prof. Nicholas De Sadeleer, University of Louvain, Belgium: *title t.b.a.*

Discussion

15:00 Coffee break

15:30 Second plenary session: *"THE PP: ITS USE AND NEGLECT IN 5 CURRENT CONTROVERSIES"*.

Chair: Dr. Emilie Gaillard, Université de Caen Normandie and Sciences Po Rennes, France

Electromagnetic fields (EMFs) - Dr. Theodore Metsis, Athens, Greece

Nanotechnology – Prof. Steffen Foss Hansen, Danish Technical University, Copenhagen.

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) – Prof. (em.) Brian Wynne, Lancaster University, UK

Pesticides – Dr. Angeliki Lysimachou, PAN Europe, Brussels.

Title: *"Failing to apply the precautionary principle in pesticide authorisation: the costly consequences for whom?"*

Endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs) – Tatiana Santos MSc, European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Brussels.

17:30 End

18:00 Dinner

19:30 - 21:30 Public Evening Event: *"BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY – PRECAUTION UNDERMINED"*.

A Round table and public discussion with introductory presentations

Co-Chairs: Dr. Angelika Hilbeck, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich, Switzerland & Prof. Neni Nicopoloulou-

Stamati, University of Athens and Secretary of Board of Directors of Mariolopoulos Kanaginis Foundation for Environmental Sciences

Member of committee 'pesticide-free Mals' (tbc): *"The fate of the pesticide ban of Mals"*

Dr. Emilie Gaillard, Associate professor in Law at Sciences, Université de Caen Normandie and Sciences Po Rennes, France:

"Precautionary Principle: Overview and prospects"

Prof. Andreas Fisahn, Bielefeld University, Germany: *"Legal challenges to the Precautionary Principle"*

Tuesday, 15th October 2019

9:00 - 10:00 Third plenary session: *"MYTHS AND THREATS TO THE PP IN EU GOVERNANCE"*.

Chair: Christine von Weizsäcker, Ecoropa, Germany

David Gee, Brunel University, London, UK: *"The Foresight (Precautionary) Principle 1974-2019: some common myths & barriers to its wise & wider use"*.

Nina Holland, Corporate Europe Observatory, Brussels, Belgium:

"Under-the-radar attempts in Brussels to undermine the Precautionary Principle and environmental and social safeguards"

Discussion

10:00 - 10:30 Coffee break

10:30 - 12:30 Parallel Workshops on current controversies

Electromagnetic fields (EMFs): Dr. Theodore Metsis, Athens, Greece & David Gee Brunel University, London, UK

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs): Dr. Angelika Hilbeck, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich, Switzerland &

Prof. (em.) Brian Wynne, Lancaster University, UK & Mareike Imken, Save our Seeds (SOS)

Pesticides: Dr. Robin Mesnage, Kings College, UK *"New scientific approaches to improve the regulatory assessment of pesticide toxicity"* & Hans Joachim Bannier Horticulturist, Bielefeld, Germany *"Genetic pauperization of apple-varieties in modern horticulture and the value of traditional varieties"*

Endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs): Tatiana Santos MSc (EEB, Brussels), Prof. George Chrousos MD, ScD, University of Athens, Greece

Nanotechnology: Prof. Steffen Foss Hansen, DTU, Denmark & Dr. Qamar Rahman, Amity University, Lucknow (t.b.c.)

12:30 - 14:00 Lunch

14:00 - 15:00 Plenary - Presentation & discussion of the outcomes of the workshops

15:00 - 16:00 Final plenary session

Chair: Prof. (em.) Brian Wynne, Lancaster University, UK

Dr. Dr. Rene von Schomberg, DG Research & Innovation, Brussels:

"The Governance of responsible innovation: towards an inter-disciplinary and inclusive approach?"

16:30 - 18:00 Reception

Wednesday, 16th October 2019

18:00 Excursion to apple orchard, led by Hans Joachim Bannier, horticulturist, Bielefeld

Registration

Regular participation fee: € 30 / Supporter fee*: € 50 / Student fee: free

*The supporter fee allows us to reduce the regular fee for those who cannot afford this. If you cannot afford the regular fee, please indicate this in your registration email.

To register for participation, please send an email to registration@ensser.org indicating which fee you will pay; & the workshop you would like to participate in on Tuesday afternoon: EMFs, GMOs, pesticides, EDCs or nanotechnology (see programme). We will send you a few questions about the topic of your preferred workshop before the conference. These questions and your answers will be used in the interactive workshop.