
TOWARDS AN EU ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

Iuliana Pop*

Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 6 Piața Romană, Romania, Bucharest

(Received 25 March 2013, revised 23 April 2013)

Abstract

Climate change represents one of the major environmental challenges confronting the global community in the twenty-first century. The EU as a polity has been at the forefront of international action to combat climate change since 1990. However, combating climate change should involve not only EU governments, but the EU citizens as well. The article discusses the concept of environmental citizenship arguing that the way contemporary political liberalism conceptualises the environment as property is untenable. Conceiving the environment as ‘provider of basic needs’ and ‘subject about which there is disagreement’ lays the ground for both conception consistency and change in the behaviour of citizens. Last but not least, the paper reviews the rights and duties of the liberal environmental citizen and pleads for the need of an environmental citizenship education.

Keywords: EU, climate change, environmental citizenship, political liberalism

1. Introduction

Environment, until the 1970s, has been neglected in most of the European Communities. The concept of environmental policy was born at the beginning of the 1970s. In 1972, at a Conference in Paris, EU has realised the need for an environmental policy. The consequences were immediate: the European Parliament set up two committees on environment and consumer protection. EU has contributed to the development of two major international treaties on climate change – the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol in 1992 and 1997. In 2000 the European Commission set up the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) as the key vehicle for identifying and developing the most promising and cost-effective policies and measures that can be taken at the EU level in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

At the European Council from December, 11-12, 2008, the Member States reached a political agreement on energy – climate change package, which was followed on December 17, 2008, by the adoption of the package by the European Parliament. By having adopted the package by the Member States, the EU has enhanced its leadership in combating climate change at the global level.

* e-mail: ipop2008@gmail.com