

Report on Trade, Environment, and Public Health

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Concerted Action on Trade and Environment - *sponsored by the European Commission, Research Directorate-General, under Contract No. EVK2-CT-2002-20017 CAT&E*

The Concerted Action on Trade and Environment (CAT&E) is designed to provide an opportunity for the large and growing community of European researchers working on trade and environment issues to meet regularly, to discuss research hypotheses and methods, to review results, and to develop new lines of co-operative research.

... Most articles on trade, environment and public health do not discuss the meaning of these three terms, nor the variety of links that might exist between them. There are two possible reasons for this. Many research papers are interested in trade agreement exemptions that are designed to protect health and the environment. Trading involves an agreement to trade products and services, and a specific product could pose a threat to public health. Another group of papers deals with the impact of environment on health, and, in these cases, trade not only means an agreement, but also the notion of 'growth of trade'.

... The notion of public health is wide-ranging: it includes a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, as well as the absence of disease or infirmity. This World Health Organization (WHO) definition expresses an ideal, which should be the goal of all health development activities.

... Public health covers all social, political and organizational efforts, which are aimed at improving the health of groups or of a whole population.

... A health policy has to deal with numerous health determinants: gender, age, income, neighborhood, occupational environment, quality of life, diet.

... From a public health point of view, particularly when health determinants are taken into consideration, the notion of environment also includes individual environments. Public health policies also include the household environment: lead exposure, indoor pollution, bad food habits or consumption habits that lead to dependence and risks such as addictive substances abuse (alcohol, tobacco and others). In health matters, the environment must be considered globally: it involves everything that affects well-being.

... The literature on trade, environment and public health covers a very wide field and many papers combine methodological approaches or go in for rigorous analysis (**scientific or legal**) coupled with a partisan position and, yet, manage not to sound like a paper published by a stakeholder. **Papers published by stakeholders are those that offer the most security insofar as their position is clear, and the reader does not need to detect any defense of hidden interests behind the scientific or legal arguments.**

...Legal Analysis

Every World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement considers this subject and few dispute resolution processes have addressed the balance between trade promotion and environmental and health protection. Thus, the heading legal analysis covers a wide range of trade, environmental and public health issues... Legal articles dealing with the impact of trade agreements on public health offer a partial approach.

...Public Health Analysis

Articles in the public health analysis group may adopt various methodological approaches depending on the author's background: medicine, science, sociology, or politics...Most papers in this domain deal with globalization and its impact on health...[M]ost papers dealing with public health do not directly address the question of trade and leave it in the background. Papers on the environment and health emphasize the idea of a causal link between the development of trade and environmental degradation.

...Stakeholder Papers

Stakeholder papers offer the advantage of explaining their point of view (Médecins du monde, 2003; Paris Appeal, 2004) and they shed light on what is at stake and the interest of authors as the people who condemn problems (CSIS, 2001; NFTC, 2003; 2004). By displaying the actors' position after an in-depth analysis of a problem, **stakeholder papers turn out to be useful for working on both normative and reflective hypotheses.**

Above all, these papers enable us to follow procedures that are under way like the discussions within the European Union relating to the REACH project (Registration Evaluation Authorization of Chemicals). They explain how the project came into being, outline ongoing controversies and, of course, they present the proposals of the stakeholder publishing the document.

Bibliography

National Foreign Trade Council (2003). *EU regulation, Standardization and the Precautionary Principle: the Art of Crafting a Three-Dimensional Trade Strategy that ignores Sound Science.*

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