

## Evolution of Environmental Attitudes in the European Community

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The environmental problem is a complex, global and basic one which serves as a catalyser for the formation of new political preferences and value orientations. The salience of the environmental issue has continuously increased during the 1980s after a decline at the end of the 1970s and on into the early 1980s. A huge gap between personal complaint about the local environmental situation and general concern about the national and global situation has existed throughout the 1980s. With respect to the development of attitudes towards nuclear energy, a clear-cut and persistent effect of the Chernobyl accident can be identified in all countries. Environmental concern is generally above the European average in Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. It is about average in Italy and mostly below the European average in Belgium, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom as well as in the three southern countries Greece, Portugal and Spain. This article provides a descriptive overview of the evolution of environmental attitudes using indicators which are repeatedly included in the biannual Eurobarometer surveys in the member-states of the European Community.

### The Environmental Problem and Environmental Attitudes

The protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development throughout the world; it is the urgent desire of the peoples of the whole world and the duty of all governments. (Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, June 1972)

The environmental problem is a result of the modernization process, especially in Western countries after World War Two. In the Third World, problems are primarily due to underdevelopment. They are side-effects of human behaviour with a global significance. The determination of the causes of various phenomena becomes increasingly complex and difficult (e.g. Waldsterben) and effects which are individually marginal may have a tremendous cumulative effect. Environmental problems are multi-dimensional, complex and systemic because of the interdependence and interaction between the different environmental resources (water, air and soil). These environmental resources have been widely used to absorb all kinds of waste, and particularly water and air have been exploited as free

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The environmental problem is a result of the modernization process, especially in Western countries after World War Two. In the Third World, problems are primarily due to underdevelopment. They are side-effects of human behaviour with a global significance. The determination of the causes of various phenomena becomes increasingly complex and difficult (e.g. Waldsterben) and effects which are individually marginal may have a tremendous cumulative effect. Environmental problems are multi-dimensional, complex and systemic because of the interdependence and interaction between the different environmental resources (water, air and soil). These environmental resources have been widely used to absorb all kinds of waste, and particularly water and air have been exploited as free

collective goods. The resulting problems have multiple causes and produce interdependent effects on various elements of a given single system as well as on other systems. The spatial range of environmental problems can be local, regional, national, international and global (Hartkopf & Bohne 1983; Park 1986; Siebert 1986).

The evaluation of the various problems and the behavioural consequences considered to be necessary to resolve them differ in the ongoing ecological debate due to measurement problems and difficulties in providing an exact analytical determination of the causes of specific phenomena and because of different ecological value orientations. In a nutshell, the situation can be described as a conflict between the 'New Environmental Paradigm' and the 'Dominant Social Paradigm'. The former position diagnoses a basic challenge to the natural and human environment and demands that human behaviour be oriented according to ecological principles. The latter position implies a continuation of human dominance over nature and a treatment of the problems through modifications via technological progress without basic changes in the relationship between man and environment (see Catton & Dunlap 1980; O'Riordan 1981; Pepper 1984; Milbrath 1986; Fuchs & Kühnel 1990).

In terms of political sociology, environmental protection can be characterized as a valence issue. When used in electoral sociology, this term describes a political issue which is uncontroversial as a general goal among political parties. Conflicts occur only with respect to the means of reaching the goal, whereas a position issue is controversial as a goal itself (e.g. abortion) (see Butler & Stokes 1969; Kaase 1986, 299). Furthermore, environmental issues can be a mixture of personal and collective interests. In view of increasing pollution, people are directly affected by environmental problems taking the form of personal interests (for example having children with allergies caused by emissions from chemical plants, living in houses built on polluted soil, etc.). The step from personal interest to the perception of the collective interest and the general environmental problem is an easy one. However, as empirically demonstrated (see p. 133), environmental concern is largely independent of personal experience with environmental problems. It is predominantly influenced by societal communication concerning ecological problems (Luhmann 1986). Against the background of a really pressing and problematic environmental situation, specific and dramatic environmental events are emphasized by extensive media coverage. Such events exemplify the general environmental problem and influence the public and political identification of the problem. In addition to such high visibility, environmental events and environmental problems generally *threaten* 'collective goods' (Gerlach 1986) which may be an important factor for political mobilization.

Parallel to the previously described ecological side-effects of mod-

ernization and industrialization, there are effects of social change and social differentiation on the individual level bringing about changes in the relationship between individual citizens and the political system (Hofrichter 1985). These are discussed in political sociology under the labels of 'New Politics' (Hildebrandt & Dalton 1977), 'Participatory Revolution' (Barnes & Kaase 1979), 'Value Change' (Inglehart 1977, 1984), changes in the cleavage structures of Western societies (Dalton et al. 1984), the reactions of established parties (Schmitt 1987) and the rise of 'New (Green) Parties' (Müller-Rommel 1989) and 'New Social Movements' (Brand 1985; Klantardmans et al. 1988; Dalton & Kuechler 1990), and so on.

The 'greening' of West European politics is a result of a combination of the two modernization effects which helps to explain the dynamics of the ongoing processes. On the one hand, there are the objective side-effects of human activities (waste, pollution, destruction of the countryside, loss of species, etc.) which have accumulated during the process of unprecedented economic growth after World War Two. In the 1980s, the information about the state of the environment has considerably increased in quantity and quality revealing some policy success, for instance in the reduction of specific pollutants, but also increasing problems – especially in a more global perspective. On the other hand, social change and modernization lead to profound changes in patterns of social action and interaction (in occupation, education, family structures, development of the welfare state, personal and mass communication, to name but a few). It has, for instance, caused the loss of traditional linkages and has provided more individuals with more education and spare time. Against the background of and due to these changes, significant proportions of the population in the younger age groups have developed new political preferences and value orientations and have sought political representation of their interests in unconventional ways if their demands for more representation and participation in established institutions have not been fulfilled.

In contrast to the traditional political conflicts concerning (predominantly economic) interests of socio-economic groups, the new issues and preferences predominantly refer to non-economic collective goods. The resulting new types of conflict are often labelled as value conflicts. Protest against negative effects of modernization has periodically occurred, but in contrast to previous historical periods the present situation is characterized by a global threat in a twofold way: first by the global environmental problem and second by the threat of destruction of the planet by nuclear arms and the civilian use of the nuclear 'risk technology'.

What links new political preferences and ecological orientations so that the result is an institutional differentiation in, for instance, party systems? The new parties mostly use the label 'Green' to form or consolidate; the environmental movement is widely considered to be a pillar in the social

movement sector. This is due to the fact that the environmental problem, in the global extent and complexity previously described is a *new* problem. This problem is very difficult to deal with for established actors and institutions because environmental policy cuts across traditional policy fields. As Park (1986, 24) puts it, 'Environmental management is an inherently difficult area of decision making, based on complex, dynamic, multi-goal and ill-structured decision making contexts'. As a consequence, the environmental issue is a catalysing issue for 'New Politics' because of representation deficits of 'Old Politics' *and* because it is broad and unspecific enough to serve as a framework for a variety of 'New Politics' issues (for example unconventional political participation in citizen initiatives dealing with environmental issues). Environmental issues, especially because they refer to threatened collective goods, help conceptualizing fears of dangerous technologies and offer a field whereupon general personal fears resulting from conflicts and psychological stress may be projected (Fietkau 1984). In the process of interaction of the two modernization effects the actual environmental problems may lead to environmental concern or environmental issues may be used as a means to achieve other political goals.

The representation and institutionalization of 'New Politics' preferences on the political agenda of Western Europe is largely influenced by the existence and permanent presence – or at least the chance of a quick manifestation – of a basic objective problem, the environmental problem. This problem served as a point of reference and a catalyser, especially since its establishment on the political agenda at the beginning of the 1970s (Meadows et al. 1972; United Nations 1973). The actual form of this representation and institutionalization in a given political system is dependent on a variety of social, cultural and political factors like the political opportunity structure (Kitschelt 1986), reactions of institutionalized political actors and the previous representation of environmental interests, which structure the (coalition) chances of new political actors.

The environmental problem has led to political consequences on all levels of the political systems in Western Europe and has affected polity, politics and policy. The impact of the problem is widely discussed with a variety of different theoretical and empirical approaches. They can not be referred to due to reasons of space; the focus of the article is the development of environmental attitudes, i.e. the representation of the problem at the level of the individual citizen. It is often agreed that there is considerable environmental concern which has, in fact, been demonstrated by results of national opinion polls. However, cross-national comparative data are rare. The biannual Eurobarometer surveys in the member states of the European Community help to close this gap and provide information on environmental attitudes in a cross-nationally comparative and longitudinal perspective.

'Environmental attitudes are fundamentally important, widely discussed, frequently measured and poorly understood' (Heberlein 1981, 241). A generally accepted concept of environmental concern or awareness is not available. However, environmental attitudes have turned out to be multidimensional. Cognitive and emotional dimensions of attitudes are distinguished from behavioural dispositions and actual behaviour. Another important aspect are value orientations which are related to environmental attitudes and opinions. The interrelationship of these dimensions and their internal differentiation are complex and have to be further analysed.

However, a variety of studies reviewed in the cited literature provide a basis for some preliminary empirical generalizations. With respect to the socio-structural determinants of environmental attitudes, environmental concern is higher among younger age groups and among those with higher education. Other socio-demographic variables like income, sex and occupation show weak and sometimes inconsistent relationships with environmental concern. With respect to political ideology, those on the left usually show higher levels of concern. Nevertheless, the relationships between the variables are often not very distinct and even inconsistent between different studies. They are dependent on the type of indicators used to measure environmental attitudes (see van Liere & Dunlap 1980; Heberlein 1981; Langeheine & Lehmann 1986; Urban 1986). The relationship between postmaterialist value orientations and environmental attitudes is, however, empirically widely confirmed, though the interpretation of these results is controversial (Commission 1983, 1987, 1989; Fietkau 1984; Kessel & Tischler 1984; Lowe & Rüdig 1986). In general, environmental concern has an ambiguous status as a theoretical concept and additional, in particular multivariate, analyses are considered to be necessary (Langeheine & Lehmann 1986).

The following section gives a descriptive overview on a variety of indicators measuring environmental attitudes in the twelve member countries of the European Community. In addition to the cross-national comparative aspect, a longitudinal perspective is adopted and the indicators presented have been selected because they have repeatedly been included in Eurobarometer surveys. Therefore detailed references to socio-structural and ideological determinants are not provided and analyses of the above-mentioned type have to be left to further work. A longitudinal perspective allows us to decide if environmental concern has increased or decreased and if different developmental patterns can be identified in different countries. It also allows us to neutralize somewhat possible mistakes in an individual cross-sectional survey.

Table 1, Part 1. Importance of Four Nation-Specific\* and Eight International Issues, 1988 and 1989 (percent 'very important').

BELGIUM	88	89I	89II	DENMARK	88	89I	89II
Unemployment	96	94	94	<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	94	95	97
<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	88	85	90	Unemployment	96	90	95
Stable prices	85	84	87	Stable prices	89	88	84
Personal security*	81	81	80	Balance of payment*	89	88	88
Arms limitation	72	73	75	Arms limitation	81	81	79
Immigrants*	68	65	68	Refugees*	75	76	65
1992	65	62	53	Agricult. surpluses	73	75	58
Pol. Unificat. EC	60	57	51	Tax harmonization*	69	73	73
Municipal problems*	59	56	52	Pol. Unificat. EC	57	61	52
Agricult. surpluses	56	55	55	Pension reform*	56	58	56
Abortion*	53	48	50	1992	48	47	53
EC expansion	25	22	25	EC expansion	10	8	7

  

GREECE	88	89I	89II	SPAIN	88	89I	89II
Unemployment	95	96	93	Unemployment	98	98	98
Stable prices	90	93	93	Terrorism*	94	97	95
<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	85	92	92	Stable prices	95	94	93
Education*	87	88	88	<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	93	92	94
Arms limitation	81	86	86	Arms limitation	88	90	87
Relat. to Turkey*	85	85	86	Public services*	86	83	83
Morality & politic*	76	85	85	Social consultation*	73	80	80
Agricult. surpluses	72	75	77	Agricult. surpluses	73	77	74
American bases*	68	71	73	1992	66	74	59
1992	63	70	70	Pol. Unificat. EC	63	70	63
Pol. Unificat. EC	60	63	69	Regional autonomy*	60	62	62
EC expansion	42	51	50	EC expansion	31	39	31

  

IRELAND	88	89I	89II	ITALY	88	89I	89II
Unemployment	98	99	98	Unemployment	98	97	96
Stable prices	90	94	93	<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	92	96	94
Emigration*	92	94	93	Stable prices	89	93	89
Northern Ireland*	89	92	84	Arms limitation	87	89	82
Tax reduction*	90	90	89	Tax reform*	84	84	87
<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	86	88	91	1992	74	77	74
Arms limitation	83	83	76	Strikes*	75	69	61
1992	65	71	60	South*	75	69	71
Fiscal crisis*	62	68	67	Pol. Unificat. EC	69	68	66
Agricult. surpluses	73	66	68	Immigration*	62	66	60
Pol. Unificat. EC	53	58	54	Agricult. surpluses	63	66	59
EC expansion	24	28	20	EC expansion	22	23	19

Table 1, Part 2. Importance of Four Nation-Specific\* and Eight International Issues, 1988 and 1989 (percent 'very important').

GERMANY				UNITED KINGDOM			
	88	89I	89II		88	89I	89II
<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	97	98	98	Housing/Homeless*	97	98	94
Pension security*	96	97	95	<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	88	95	93
Unemployment	95	96	95	Health service*	96	95	94
Stable prices	89	92	90	Unemployment	96	94	94
Arms limitation	88	88	89	Stable prices	90	90	86
Immigrants (east)*	70	79	74	Education*	90	89	86
Health reform*	72	75	75	Arms limitation	79	81	76
Tax reform*	70	69	70	Race relations*	75	77	82
Agricult. surpluses	67	69	62	Agricult. surpluses	72	77	67
Pol. Unificat. EC	59	52	59	1992	40	44	47
1992	53	52	54	Pol. Unificat. EC	31	35	39
EC expansion	36	30	31	EC expansion	13	13	12
FRANCE				NETHERLANDS			
	88	89I	89II		88	89I	89II
Unemployment	98	98	97	Unemployment	92	94	94
Education*	98	97	96	<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	93	93	97
Social protection*	96	96	94	Combatting crime*	94	91	94
<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	88	94	93	Arms limitation	82	83	82
Stable prices	85	89	83	Equal rights*	78	82	85
A.I.D.S.*	86	88	82	Education*	78	77	76
Arms limitation	79	82	77	Agricult. surpluses	66	76	66
1992	75	78	73	Stable prices	76	73	69
Immigrants*	68	75	68	1992	56	63	52
Agricult. surpluses	63	71	56	Income inequality*	60	56	54
Pol. Unificat. EC	56	58	47	Pol. Unificat. EC	49	53	51
EC expansion	22	25	15	EC expansion	25	15	14
LUXEMBOURG				PORTUGAL			
	88	89I	89II		88	89I	89II
<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	90	94	95	Unemployment	93	91	95
Unemployment	94	93	92	Stable prices	91	90	94
Stable prices	88	91	91	Health reform*	87	86	91
Site advantages*	81	88	81	Law of labour*	85	84	90
Pensions*	91	87	85	<b>Environmental Protec.</b>	81	82	91
Arms limitation	77	78	75	Education*	83	77	81
Immigrant workers*	60	72	60	Arms limitation	76	76	78
Agricult. surpluses	66	72	55	Agricult. surpluses	74	73	72
Pol. Unificat. EC	61	53	55	1992	65	63	58
Education*	74	62	67	Constitutional reform*	68	62	63
1992	59	55	53	Pol. Unificat. EC	59	60	52
EC expansion	25	16	18	EC expansion	39	37	31



## Saliency of the Environmental Issue, 1976–89

### *Status of 'Environmental Protection' in 1988 and 1989*

In three Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 1988 and 1989, the importance of twelve political issues was measured in the member states of the European Community. The item list included four nation-specific issues for each country and eight international issues asked identically in all countries – among them 'environmental protection'.<sup>1</sup>

As Tables 1 and 2 show, the environmental issue, together with economic problems like 'unemployment', 'stable prices' and various nation-specific topics, is among the top-ranking issues in most countries. 'Environmental protection' was considered to be a 'very important' problem by between 81 percent (Portugal in 1988) and 98 percent (Germany in both surveys in 1989) of the respondents. Based on the percentages for the weighted EC average,<sup>2</sup> it ranks second only to 'unemployment' and is above 'stable prices' in all three surveys, and its saliency even increased slightly between autumn 1988 and spring 1989 (from 91 to 94 percent).

'Environmental protection' tops the list in Germany at all three time points with 97 or 98 percent. It tops the list in Denmark (95 percent) and Luxembourg (94 percent) in both surveys in 1989 and in The Netherlands in summer 1989. Between autumn 1988 and spring 1989 the perceived saliency increased especially in countries which ranked below average in 1988 (France: +6; United Kingdom: +7; Greece: +7) and in Portugal it increased between spring and summer 1989 (+9). The environmental issue is among the top-ranking issues at the end of the 1980s in all member countries of the European Community. Due to the increase in saliency

Table 2. Importance of Environmental Protection, 1988 and 1989 (percent 'very important').

Country	Percent			Rank		
	1988	1989I	1989II	1988	1989I	1989II
Germany	97	98	98	1	1	1
Denmark	94	95	97	2	1	1
Netherlands	93	93	97	2	2	1
Italy	92	96	94	2	2	2
Spain	93	92	94	4	4	3
Luxembourg	90	94	95	3	1	1
EC average	91	94	94	2	2	2
France	88	94	93	4	4	4
United Kingdom	88	95	93	6	2	4
Belgium	88	85	90	2	2	2
Greece	85	92	92	4	3	3
Ireland	86	88	91	6	6	4
Portugal	81	82	91	6	5	3

since autumn 1988, the percentage difference between the highest and lowest saliency decreased from 16 percent (Germany 97 percent and Portugal 81 percent) in autumn 1988 to 8 percent in summer 1989 (Germany 98 percent and Belgium 90 percent) (see Table 2).

The distributions displayed in Table 1 clearly document a stable pattern with respect to the importance of the four nation-specific and eight international issues in the public of the member countries of the European Community. The results are very similar, the rank order of the issues is nearly identical. Changes occur mostly within the clusters of issues at the top, in the middle, or at the end of the lists. This is the case for all twelve countries. Significant percentage differences usually occur for only one or two items per country and hardly extend beyond 4 percent through 8 percent.

### *'Urgency' of the Environmental Problem*

In two other recent surveys (spring 1986 and spring 1988) an indicator measuring the 'urgency' of 'protection of the environment and the struggle against pollution' has been included.<sup>3</sup> The results displayed in Table 3 show a rather stable pattern at both time points and few significant developments can be identified.

Concentrating on the category 'urgent' and using the weighted European average as a point of reference for comparing and ranking the countries, the following pattern occurs (see Table 4). Five countries rank above the weighted European average, five countries rank below, and two about average in both surveys. 'Protection of the environment' is considered to be 'urgent and immediate' above the weighted European average of 72 percent and 74 percent in Italy, Luxembourg, Germany, Greece and Denmark, whereby – with the exception of Denmark in 1986 (77 percent) – the percentages range from 80 percent to 86 percent. The countries ranking

Table 3. Urgency of the Environmental Problem, 1986 and 1988\* (percentages).

Year	F	B	NL	D	I	L	DK	IR	UK	GR	E	P	EC
Urgent and Immediate Problem													
1986	56	62	63	80	85	83	77	56	67	84	72	71	72
1988	59	73	65	84	86	84	82	63	67	82	74	64	74
Future Problem													
1986	38	26	30	15	11	17	15	31	26	10	17	15	22
1988	37	17	29	11	13	13	13	27	25	13	18	16	20

\* The response category 'no problem' and missing data are not documented in the table.

Table 4. Urgency of Environmental Protection: Country Pattern 1986 and 1988 (percent saying 'urgent').

Country	1986	1988	%88-86
Italy	85	86	+1
Greece	84	82	-2
Luxembourg	83	84	+1
Germany	80	84	+4
Denmark	77	82	+5
EC average	72	74	+2
Spain	72	74	+2
Portugal	71	64	-7
United Kingdom	67	67	-/-
Netherlands	63	65	+2
Belgium	62	73	+11
Ireland	56	63	+7
France	56	59	+3

below average are France, Ireland, Belgium, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom (56 percent to 67 percent). Portugal and Spain rank about average in 1986. There are only three outstanding developments: the 'urgency' decreases in Portugal (from 71 percent to 64 percent), so that the country ranks below average in 1988. It increases in Ireland (from 56 to 63 percent) and Belgium (62 to 73 percent), and Belgium ranks about average in 1988 – changing places with Portugal.

#### *Importance of the Environmental Problem: Evolution Between 1976 and 1989*

Five Eurobarometer surveys since autumn 1976, covering a time period of 14 years up to summer 1989, provide a long-term perspective in addition to information about the saliency of the environmental issue at the end of the 1980s. In these surveys the perceived importance of a variety of political problems including the environmental issue was measured.<sup>4</sup> As Table 5 shows, it is a firmly established issue on the political agenda of the EC member states since the middle of the 1970s. In all countries, more than 80 percent and mostly more than 90 percent consider 'Protecting nature and fighting pollution' as 'very important' or 'important'. Concentrating on the category 'very important', this time series documents that the importance of the environmental issue was very high in 1976. The overall pattern of development was then a decline of importance between 1976 and 1978/1983 and a continuous increase through the mid-1980s. The decrease between 1976 and 1978 occurred in most countries with the exception of The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, whereby The Netherlands (with

Table 5. Importance of the Environmental Problem, 1976-1989 (percentages).

	Protecting nature and fighting pollution												EC**	EC 10		
	F	B	NL	D	I	L	DK	IR	UK	GR	E	P				
VERY Important	70.6	65.4	67.4	63.7	67.3	74.5	74.2	49.4	47.6	—	—	—	—	—	62.7	—
	1978II	60.5	54.3	54.8	62.0	42.3	64.1	46.8	47.6	—	—	—	—	—	56.9	—
	1983II	53.0	46.1	53.2	63.5	66.1	79.4	37.4	48.4	67.7	—	—	—	—	56.1	—
	1987II	56.0	56.8	61.3	69.1	67.9	85.4	49.0	52.5	66.6	57.9	53.3	—	—	61.3	62.0
	1989	68.4	75.9	82.5	82.6	84.7	88.8	71.5	75.0	71.1	74.4	78.6	—	—	77.6	78.0
Important	1976II	26.3	28.5	28.5	29.5	28.3	21.5	39.0	41.9	—	—	—	—	—	31.1	—
	1978II	34.7	31.8	25.7	31.2	33.3	29.2	43.3	42.9	—	—	—	—	—	34.6	—
	1983II	39.2	40.1	38.5	29.6	38.3	31.2	17.0	42.1	25.8	—	—	—	—	36.5	—
	1987II	39.6	29.4	31.3	27.1	29.6	12.3	34.5	37.5	22.2	29.0	35.6	—	—	31.9	32.1
	1989	27.4	20.5	16.8	15.7	14.7	10.5	25.5	21.3	22.2	22.7	12.8	—	—	19.6	19.4
OF LITTLE Importance	1976II	2.1	2.1	1.8	4.8	2.4	1.6	6.4	6.8	—	—	—	—	—	3.9	—
	1978II	3.8	3.0	1.6	9.1	2.6	1.9	5.6	5.9	—	—	—	—	—	5.2	—
	1983II	6.3	8.5	5.1	2.6	2.3	1.5	10.1	7.2	1.4	—	—	—	—	4.6	—
	1987II	2.8	8.0	3.1	1.4	1.4	0.7	12.3	5.3	5.3	5.1	2.8	—	—	3.3	3.1
	1989	1.8	1.2	0.4	0.9	0.3	0.4	0.8	1.4	2.9	0.7	0.0	—	—	1.0	1.1
NOT AT ALL Important	1976II	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.0	2.1	1.7	—	—	—	—	—	0.6	—
	1978II	0.3	1.2	1.2	0.9	0.2	3.4	0.0	2.6	1.1	—	—	—	—	0.7	—
	1983II	0.9	0.7	1.5	0.2	0.3	0.0	1.6	0.5	0.7	—	—	—	—	0.5	—
	1987II	0.5	2.0	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	1.9	1.4	0.4	1.3	0.0	—	—	0.8	0.7
	1989	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.9	0.1	0.2	0.2	—	—	0.3	0.3
DONT KNOW	1976II	0.7	3.4	2.0	1.8	1.8	2.7	3.1	2.0	—	—	—	—	—	1.7	—
	1978II	0.6	9.7	2.0	4.0	1.8	4.9	1.8	2.6	—	—	—	—	—	2.7	—
	1983II	0.6	4.5	1.8	4.2	1.3	2.0	3.5	1.9	4.4	—	—	—	—	2.2	—
	1987II	1.0	3.9	4.0	1.6	1.2	1.5	2.3	3.4	5.5	6.6	8.3	—	—	2.8	2.1
	1989	2.5	2.2	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.3	1.9	1.3	3.7	2.0	8.4	—	—	1.5	1.2

\* 1976II indicates that the data base is the Eurobarometer conducted in Autumn 1976; 1976I would indicate that the surveys in Spring 1976 are the data base. The sources of the table are the autumn Eurobarometers 6, 10, 20, 28, and most recently EB 31 A which is an additional survey after EB 31 (spring 89) and where the fieldwork was done in summer of 1989.

\*\* 1976 and 1978 weighted average of EC 9; 1983 EC 10; 1987 and 1989 EC 12.

Table 6. Importance of Environmental Protection: Country Pattern, 1983–1987–1989 (percent 'very important').

Country	1983	1987	1989	%89 – %87
Denmark	79	85	89	+4
Luxembourg	66	73	78	+5
Germany	64	69	83	+14
Italy	58	68	85	+17
Greece	68	67	71	+4
EC average	56	61	78	+17
Netherlands	53	61	83	+22
France	53	56	68	+12
Belgium	46	57	76	+19
United Kingdom	48	53	75	+22
Ireland	37	49	72	+23
Spain	—	58	74	+16
Portugal	—	53	79	+26

67 percent and 70 percent) ranked above the European average (of 63 percent and 57 percent) and the United Kingdom substantially below (with 48 percent). Between 1978 and 1983, a further decline took place in France and Belgium and to a lesser extent in Italy, and these three countries witnessed a steady decline between 1976 and 1983. A considerable decrease between 1978 and 1983 occurred in The Netherlands and Ireland, whereas importance increased in Denmark, Luxembourg and Germany.

Between 1983 and 1987, there is an increase in all countries (except Greece), so that in most countries the level of importance shown in 1976 is again reached or excelled (in Denmark and Germany) in 1987. Actually, the level of 1976 is not reached in France, Belgium and The Netherlands.

In 1989, the trend of increasing importance in the 1980s continues distinctively. In all countries with the exception of France, the saliency of the issue is by far the highest for the whole time period covered by this indicator. This is highlighted by the percentage differences between the 1989 and 1987 results in Table 6.

The country pattern for the three time points in the 1980s is similar to the results of the previously presented question on 'urgency'. The same countries mentioned previously rank below and above the European average in 1983 and 1987. Importance is above average in Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Italy and Greece; it is below average in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Ireland and The Netherlands (only 1983).

After the considerable increase in most countries between 1987 and 1989, this grouping of countries is nearly the same with two exceptions: The Netherlands has moved back into the group above average, where it was already located in the 1970s; and Greece ranks below average in summer

1989. Portugal and Spain moved from a position below average to about average between 1987 and 1989. Issue saliency was lowest in the United Kingdom and Ireland in all four surveys from 1976 to 1987. Though they have witnessed an increase of 22 and 23 percentage points between 1987 and 1989, the two countries still rank below average. France is the country where the importance of the environmental issue is lowest in 1989 (68 percent).

Comparing the importance of the environmental issue with the importance of the other issues included in the lists of problems reveals that it is always placed among the most important issues over the whole period. On the European average, it consistently ranks second and close to economic issues like 'unemployment'. However, there is variation between countries and problems like 'fighting terrorism' are, for instance, rated as more important as the environmental issue in some countries.

#### *Ranking of the Environmental Issue in the 1980s*

A more thorough measure of the saliency of the environmental issue than the results of rating presented above is a ranking of the issue. Cross-national comparative information on the choice of the environmental issue as one of the three most important political problems is available for four time points in the 1980s. In two surveys in spring 1983<sup>5</sup> and spring 1986,<sup>6</sup> the issue was included in lists of seven and then ten problems. The twelve items on the list previously referred to (see Table 1) were also ranked in the two surveys in spring and summer 1989.<sup>7</sup>

In spring 1983, the environment generally ranks second or third after the economic items 'stimulate the economy' and 'fight rising prices'. In 1986, the list comprised three additional problems. Thus, the percentages are not comparable between the two time points, and the environmental issue ranks somewhat lower in various countries due mostly to the terrorism item. The grouping of the countries in comparison to the weighted EC average results in a similar pattern as in the previously described indicators and nearly the same countries belong to the groups with saliency above and below average (see Table 7). The four countries ranking below average in 1983, i.e. France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Ireland, also rank below average in 1986, together with the two recent member states Spain and Portugal as well as Greece after a considerable decline. Saliency is clearly above average in Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands and Luxembourg, and is above average in Italy at both time points. In contrast to the 'urgency' indicator and the surveys in 1983 and 1987 in the time series, issue saliency is far above average in The Netherlands in the indicators of ranking. With respect to the Danish result in 1983, some contextual information must be provided. In 1983, the question about issue

Table 7. Environmental Protection as One of the Three Most Important Problems, 1983 and 1986 (percent mentioned and rank)

1983			1986		
Country	%	Rank	Country	%	Rank
Denmark	38	1	Denmark	61	1
Netherlands	64	2	Germany	54	1
Germany	63	2	Netherlands	49	3
Luxembourg	55	3	Luxembourg	44	3
Greece	52	3			
Italy	51	3	Italy	38	3
EC average	49	3	EC average	35	4
France	42	3	Belgium	32	4
Belgium	41	3	Portugal	26	5
United Kingdom	34	4	United Kingdom	26	5
Ireland	30	5	France	24	4
			Spain	24	5
			Ireland	24	4
			Greece	21	5

saliency was asked immediately subsequent to asking if political decisions about the respective problems should be taken by each country separately or by the EC member countries acting together. The percentages for all seven issues included in the list are substantially lower in Denmark than in the other countries. This reflects the generally more critical attitudes towards the European Community in a substantial proportion of the Danish

Table 8. Environmental Protection as Most, Second Most and Third Most Important Problem in 1989 (percent).

Country	89I most imp.	89II	89I 2nd imp.	89II	89I 3rd imp.	89II	89I not cited	89II
Netherlands	34	38	23	21	16	17	27	24
Denmark	23	23	16	20	20	20	41	37
Germany	18	24	18	18	20	18	44	40
Luxembourg	16	21	15	20	19	21	50	39
Belgium	13	15	14	14	16	24	57	47
Italy	12	10	14	15	19	23	55	53
EC average	12	13	12	12	16	17	61	57
U. Kingdom	12	13	8	10	9	10	71	68
Spain	4	5	7	8	18	28	71	59
Greece	6	6	10	10	14	16	71	69
France	5	4	8	7	12	12	75	77
Portugal	2	3	5	9	8	14	85	75
Ireland	2	2	4	5	8	12	87	81

public. In 1983, however, the saliency of the environmental issue is highest of all issues (rank 1) in Denmark only; and the lower percentage (38 percent) is probably due to a context effect in the questionnaire.

The most recent (spring and summer 1989) ranking of environmental protection as one of the twelve political issues listed in Table 1 is much in line with the results of the previously described indicators (see Table 8). The group of countries with the highest saliency again includes The Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Luxembourg. Italy together with Belgium also ranks above average whereas all other countries rank below average. Environmental protection is the most important of the twelve issues in The Netherlands, and only one out of four respondents does not mention it at all. In the other countries with saliency above average it ranks second to 'unemployment', whereas in the countries below average 'stable prices' and various nation-specific issues are perceived as more important than environmental protection.

## The Gap Between Personal Complaint and General Concern, 1982–86–88

A familiar phenomenon in attitude research is the discrepancy between the perception of the personal situation and the general situation, for example a positive assessment of the personal economic situation in contrast to a rather pessimistic evaluation of the overall national economic situation. A similar effect occurs with respect to environmental problems.

In three surveys in the 1980s, complaint above a variety of aspects of the personal environmental situation was measured. At the same time, the perception of different aspects of the national environmental situation and the world-wide situation was recorded.<sup>8</sup> The list of problems included 'the quality of the drinking water', 'noise', 'air pollution', 'lack of access to open space and countryside', 'loss of good farmland' and 'deterioration of the landscape' on the local level. The list of issues with respect to the national situation comprised 'pollution of rivers and lakes', 'damage caused to sea life and beaches', 'air pollution', and 'disposal of industrial waste'. The global issues were: 'the extinction in the world of plants or animal species', 'the loss of natural resources in the world', and 'the possible atmosphere damages affecting the world's weather brought about by the gas (carbon dioxide) emitted from burning coal and oil products'.

In order to obtain summarizing indicators, the average concern across the six 'personal' (local) as well as the seven 'general' (i.e. national and world-wide) problems has been computed. The resulting percentages of personal complaint and general concern combine the respective issues (asked in all three surveys) by summarizing the percentages of those saying



Table 9. Complaint about the Situation of the Personal Environment and General Concern about the National and Global Situation (combined percentages).

Survey	F	B	NL	D	I	L	DK	IR	UK	GR	E	P	EC*
Personal Complaint													
1982II	16.6	20.4	10.4	24.3	24.3	6.7	5.6	8.4	9.9	25.0	—	—	18.5
1986I	10.7	18.0	9.1	18.9	26.2	16.7	7.3	7.6	7.6	31.8	29.0	22.7	17.7
1988I	13.3	15.3	10.5	23.7	28.6	10.6	7.5	7.2	6.7	37.2	30.8	26.8	19.8
General Concern													
1982II	77.8	66.4	86.4	85.9	82.2	82.0	77.1	66.2	75.6	79.9	—	—	80.1
1986I	79.6	61.2	87.2	85.1	94.6	83.0	82.3	70.5	81.4	74.5	88.8	80.2	84.3
1988I	82.2	69.9	91.9	87.5	93.9	82.6	85.7	74.7	80.6†	85.4	90.2	81.2	85.6

\* 1982 EC10; 1986 and 1988 EC12

† 1988 GB without NIRL

'a great deal' and 'a fair amount' and dividing the sum by the number of items included.

The results displayed in Table 9 show a tremendous gap between personal complaint and general concern about the situation of the environment in all countries at all three time points. About 18 percent to 20 percent of the population of the European Community register some complaint about their local environment whereas 80 to 86 percent (1988) are worried about the national and global situation.

There are substantial differences between countries with respect to levels of personal complaint. It is highest in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Germany (about 20 to 30 percent) and lowest in Denmark, Ireland and The United Kingdom (mostly below 10 percent). The level of personal complaint remains rather stable in most countries and the various developments occurring in some countries (for example a continuous increase in Italy and Greece, and a decrease in Belgium) do not substantially change the location of a country in comparison with the European average.

In view of the groups of countries with saliency levels above and below average, there is hardly evidence for a systematic effect of the perceived situation of the local environment on saliency of the environmental issue. Countries with saliency above average (i.e. Denmark, Luxembourg and The Netherlands) have very low levels of personal complaint, and the three recent southern members where saliency was lower show comparatively high levels of personal complaint. However, in Ireland and the United Kingdom, and also in France, personal complaint is below the European average and these countries belong to the group of countries with a lower level of issue saliency.

General concern is highest in The Netherlands, Germany and Italy (three

countries with saliency mostly above the EC average), as well as in Spain. In the other two countries with consistently higher saliency levels (Denmark and Luxembourg), general concern is about average. It is substantially below the European average in Belgium and Ireland only, while it is somewhat below average in France, the United Kingdom and Portugal. These five countries, in which general concern is below average, belong to the group of countries with issue saliency mostly below average. In this respect, the grouping of countries according to their levels of general concern is basically in line with the differences in saliency levels.

The gap between personal complaint and general concern in the 1980s demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of people do not feel personally threatened by the environmental situation in their everyday lives and nevertheless critically evaluate the national and world-wide problem situation.

Personal complaint is predominantly influenced by the size of the locality and the type of housing the respondent lives in. It is highest in bigger cities and among people living in apartment houses. General concern is predominantly influenced by the value orientation and the political ideology of the respondents. It is higher among those with post-materialist value orientation and left political orientations, which confirms the generalizations mentioned earlier. This also holds true for other socio-demographic variables. There are no strong effects with respect to sex and age of the respondents, whereas personal complaint – and much more distinct general concern – increases with education (see Commission 1983, 1987, 1989).

In an interesting analysis of these questions in Eurobarometer 18 in spring 1982, Rohrschneider (1988) concludes that environmental issues are predominantly perceived and evaluated as national issues. Actual problems in the personal environmental situation result in a stronger general concern but do not necessarily lead directly to behavioural dispositions or even environmental behaviour (Rohrschneider 1988, 363; see also Urban 1986, 376). In his analysis Rohrschneider used the level of personal complaint and the national concern as well as post-materialist value orientations as theoretical frameworks for the specification of models to explain a specific aspect of environmental attitudes, i.e. giving priority to ecological rather than economic considerations. He argues that the higher environmental concern of those with post-materialist value orientations is due to their changed value priorities **and** their worries about the environmental problems. 'Public beliefs on ecological issues are rooted in a general concern about the environment or in postmaterial value priorities. These attitudes are reinforced by personal experiences with pollution problems' (Rohrschneider 1988, 364). These results confirm the conceptualization of the two interacting processes of modernization.

## Attitudes Towards Nuclear Energy: Chernobyl Shifted the Balance – Persistently

Environmental protection is a valence issue. With respect to attitudes towards nuclear power, it could be stated that this is a conflict over means of achieving the widely accepted goal of ensuring energy supplies. The controversy about the use of nuclear energy and the construction of nuclear plants, however, has been one of the most intensive political conflicts since the mid-1970s in various West European countries and can be considered to be a position issue.

In the literature about 'New Social Movements' and 'New Parties', the anti-nuclear movement is referred to as part of the social-movement sector and green parties are usually opposed to nuclear power. In some countries, for instance in Germany, major conflicts over nuclear sites have been catalysing issues and events for the emergence and/or consolidation of environmental movements and environmental parties. Thus, attitudes towards nuclear energy can be considered to be an important facet of environmental attitudes.

The Eurobarometer surveys actually include a time series about the development of attitudes towards nuclear energy with six time points from 1978 to 1989. A question about the general evaluation of nuclear power plants was asked at three time points before the Chernobyl accident, which occurred during the night of 26 April 1986, as well as in three surveys after the event.<sup>9</sup> With the help of this question, three groups of respondents can be distinguished: supporters (choosing the worthwhile option), opponents (risks not acceptable), and indifferents (no interest, no answer).

Table 10 shows the 'Chernobyl effect' in the member countries and the European Community as a whole and the persistence of this effect over time. With respect to the EC average, a rather stable pattern of the three groups occurred at all three time points before Chernobyl. Supporters were a relative majority, opponents a strong minority. In autumn 1986 (five months after the accident), a dramatic Chernobyl effect emerges. The supporters lose their majority and become a minority (from 43 percent to 27 percent), the opponents get the absolute majority (from 38 percent to 55 percent). One and a half years later (in autumn 1987) as well as about three years later (summer 1989) the effect is somewhat reduced (from 55 percent in 1986 to 50 percent in 1987 and 51 percent in 1989) but it is clearly persistent. Since Chernobyl, slightly more than half of the population of the European Community is consistently opposed to the further development of nuclear energy as compared with about 36 percent to 38 percent before the event. This indicates a considerable and lasting attitude change.

There are outstanding differences between the countries, and three

Table 10. Attitudes Towards Nuclear Energy 1978-89 (percentages).

		Development of nuclear plants													
		F	B	NL	D	I	L	DK	IR	UK	GR	E	P	EC*	EC 10
Worthwhile	1978II*	40.3	29.1	28.0	34.4	53.3	34.8	37.3	44.8	56.7	—	—	—	44.2	—
	1982I	52.1	27.0	34.1	38.1	34.5	32.4	24.9	13.0	39.5	14.5	—	—	38.5	—
	1984II	55.5	37.1	37.3	44.6	41.5	28.1	22.4	13.0	40.9	16.7	—	—	42.9	—
	1986II	40.1	28.7	28.5	30.5	15.9	12.6	11.9	7.4	32.4	12.3	20.7	18.1	27.2	28.4
	1987II	45.1	36.6	27.5	31.9	22.1	15.6	17.5	7.5	40.3	16.6	21.6	12.2	31.2	33.1
1989	42.3	28.4	28.7	29.9	19.9	16.6	21.1	9.6	34.8	14.7	17.5	6.7	28.1	30.2	
Of no Interest/	1978II	17.9	31.8	18.0	20.4	17.4	33.9	28.4	20.3	18.4	—	—	—	19.3	—
1982I	19.2	35.8	17.5	33.1	23.4	18.6	26.2	40.3	23.9	23.9	36.9	—	—	25.8	—
1984II	15.0	17.9	15.8	25.0	15.9	25.8	29.9	25.4	22.3	13.4	—	—	—	19.5	—
1986II	15.8	20.9	15.0	15.3	10.1	7.6	24.1	23.0	18.5	13.5	31.6	41.1	—	18.0	15.4
1987II	13.5	21.4	18.7	16.9	10.0	10.6	16.6	21.8	19.0	18.8	32.6	49.0	—	18.5	15.7
1989	9.9	29.2	13.5	21.6	14.6	11.0	14.7	27.2	20.8	25.4	35.7	50.2	—	20.6	17.7
Risks are Unacceptable	1978II	41.8	39.2	54.0	45.2	29.3	31.2	34.2	35.0	24.8	—	—	—	36.5	—
1982I	28.7	37.2	48.3	28.8	42.0	49.1	49.0	49.0	46.8	36.6	48.6	—	—	35.7	—
1984II	29.5	45.0	46.9	30.4	42.7	46.1	47.7	47.7	61.6	36.8	69.9	—	—	37.6	—
1986II	44.1	50.3	56.5	54.2	74.0	79.7	64.0	69.6	49.0	49.0	74.2	47.7	40.8	54.8	56.2
1987II	41.3	42.0	53.8	51.2	67.8	73.8	65.8	70.6	40.6	40.6	64.6	45.8	38.8	50.3	51.3
1989	47.8	42.4	57.7	48.5	65.5	72.4	64.3	63.2	44.4	44.4	60.0	46.8	43.1	51.3	52.2

\* 1978II indicates that the data base is the Eurobarometer conducted in Autumn 1978; 1978I would indicate that the surveys in spring 1978 are the data base. The data for 1989 are from EB 31A, which is an additional survey after EB 31 of spring 1989 and where the fieldwork was done in summer of 1989.

\*\* 1978 weighted average of EC 9; 1982 and 1984 of EC 10; 1986, 1987 and 1989 of EC 12.

groups can be distinguished (excluding Spain and Portugal, where the question was not asked before the accident):

- (1) Countries where the opponents already (in spring 1982 at the latest) had constituted the majority before Chernobyl: Ireland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Greece (countries without nuclear plants), The Netherlands and Belgium (few plants).
- (2) Countries where the supporters constituted a majority: France and Germany, whereby a continuous increase in support occurred in both countries between 1978 and 1984.
- (3) Countries where supporters and opponents were of about equal numerical strength: Italy and the United Kingdom.

As Table 10 documents, the 'Chernobyl effect' on the three groups of countries can be described as follows:

- (1) The relative majority of the opponents becomes an absolute majority. (The absolute majority in Ireland and Greece increases.)
- (2) The supporters lose their majority.
- (3) The opponents win a majority.

With respect to the persistence of the 'Chernobyl effect', its impact is somewhat reduced in some countries of the first group in 1987 and/or 1989 (i.e. Ireland, Luxembourg and Greece) or remains on the same level (Denmark and The Netherlands). But the effect is generally very persistent and Belgium is the only country in this group where the supporters lost the absolute majority in 1987 and 1989.

In France and Germany, countries in which supporters were in the majority before the accident, the development is different. France is one of the two countries (the other is the United Kingdom with 49 percent) where the opponents did not get an absolute majority after the Chernobyl accident in 1986 and the supporters (40 percent) were still nearly as numerous as the opponents (44 percent). In 1987, France is the only country in the European Community where the supporters regained a majority (45 percent supporters versus 41 percent opponents). In 1989, the relationship again changed, and the opponents became the majority (48 percent versus 42 percent) as is the case in all other countries. France, however, still shows by far the highest level of support for nuclear energy in the European Community. In Germany, the 'Chernobyl effect' caused the supporters to lose their majority and they persistently remain a minority of about 30 percent. Opposition has slightly decreased but the opponents still have nearly the absolute majority in 1989 (49 percent versus 30 percent).

Italy and the United Kingdom, where the groups of supporters and opponents have been of roughly equal strength, witness similar developments as in the two countries just discussed. In Italy support dropped

from 42 percent in 1984 to 16 percent in 1986 and remained stable on a low level of about 20 percent in 1987 and 1989. Opposition increased tremendously from 43 percent in 1984 to 74 percent in 1986. Though it decreased somewhat, two out of three Italians are opponents of nuclear energy at the end of the 1980s. In the United Kingdom, a development comparable to the situation in France can be observed. The loss of support due to the 'Chernobyl effect' was completely made up a year later (from 41 percent in 1984 to 32 percent in 1986, and back to 40 percent in 1987). In 1989, however, support dropped again (from 40 percent in 1987 to 35 percent in 1989) and the opponents now are the majority (44 percent versus 35 percent of supporters).

In view of the grouping of the countries, the attitudes towards nuclear energy also fit the previously identified pattern. In France, the United Kingdom and Belgium, the opponents regained considerable strength after the 'Chernobyl effect' and the opponents did not reach or keep (Belgium) an absolute majority. These countries belong to the group with saliency of the environmental issue below average. In Ireland – also belonging to this group – support for nuclear energy dropped from 45 percent in 1978 to 13 percent in 1982 and remained at this very low level. This dramatic development is most probably due to the politicization of the nuclear issue in a referendum in 1980 and the opposition of all Irish political groups against the United Kingdom's policy on Sellafield/Windscale (Baker 1989). In Luxembourg, Denmark, The Netherlands, Italy and Germany, the countries where saliency of the environmental issue is above or about (Italy) average, the opponents are in a huge majority (Italy, Luxembourg, Denmark – also in Greece) or at least an absolute majority (The Netherlands, Germany).

## Summary and Conclusion: Environmental Attitudes in Perspective

The saliency of the environmental issue has increased since the early 1980s in the member countries of the European Community. The environment has, however, been widely perceived as an important political problem since the middle of the 1970s. After a decline at the end of the 1970s and in some countries at the beginning of the 1980s, it has reached the highest level of public attention by end of the decade. In summer 1989, it is uniformly considered as a very important political issue by 90 to 98 percent of the population of all member countries of the European Community. Nevertheless, this impression is differentiated by the results of various questions asked several times and measuring the perception of the 'urgency' of the problem and its importance – especially when ranking of the issues is applied in contrast to rating. These indicators consistently identify groups

of countries with higher or lower saliency of the issue and reveal specific developments in various countries in a longitudinal perspective.

The group of countries with saliency levels above the weighted European average always include Denmark, Germany and Luxembourg. The Netherlands and Greece are characterized by contrasting patterns, and saliency actually varies with the types of indicator in the 1980s in both countries. In The Netherlands, saliency is below average with respect to the 'urgency' of the problem in 1986 and 1988, and importance is below average in the time series in 1983 and average in 1987, whereas Greece ranks above average in these four surveys. The Netherlands is always located far above average when ranking of the issue was applied in 1983, 1986 and, especially, in 1989, whereas Greece ranks far below in 1986 and 1989.

The group of countries with lower than average saliency of the environmental issue generally comprises the British and Irish islands as well as France and Belgium up to mid-1980s. Saliency is usually far below average in Ireland and in the United Kingdom in all indicators. The United Kingdom, however, witnessed an increase at the end of the 1980s and ranges about average in the 1989 ranking. Importance declines in France and Belgium from above the European average in 1976 to a level considerably below average. Whereas France remains in its position, an increase of environmental concern takes place in all indicators in Belgium during the second half of the 1980s and the country moves to a position of about average and even above average in the 1989 ranking.

With respect to the remaining countries, issue saliency in Italy is about or somewhat above average. The two youngest member countries, Portugal and Spain, are about or below average regarding 'urgency' and the importance rating in the time series – but they are below average when ranking is applied.

The varying results when using different indicators confirm the previously mentioned problems in the conceptualization of environmental attitudes. On the aggregate level, the position of countries varies considerably (e.g. The Netherlands). On the individual level, the determining influence of background variables also varies, as the diagnosis of the generally not very distinct relationship between environmental attitudes and most of the background variables in the reviews of the literature indicates. Another aspect is that the environmental problems are complex and environmental attitudes are influenced by different factors like value orientations and/or the perception of the actual problems. These factors may be interacting in different ways regarding different aspects of the environmental problem and type and format of survey questions. A perceived threat to the personal environmental situation is not a necessary precondition for general environmental concern. As demonstrated in the third section, throughout the 1980s there exists a consistent and huge gap between complaints about the

situation of various aspects in the personal environment and general concern about the national and world-wide state of the environment in all countries.

The distributions of personal complaint in the countries do not fit the country pattern, but the results for general concern are largely in line with it. This is also the case with respect to attitudes towards nuclear energy. The supporters of nuclear energy regained their strength in 1987 after a decrease arising from the Chernobyl effect in three countries—France, United Kingdom and Belgium. The loss of support for nuclear energy two years later in the United Kingdom and Belgium is in line with the previously described rise of environmental concern at the end of the 1980s in these countries. Support for nuclear energy is, however, still the highest in France and in the United Kingdom; it is lowest in Ireland because of a specific political development (a referendum in 1980 and opposition to British Sellafield/Windscale). The opposition to nuclear energy is highest in Denmark, Luxembourg, Italy, Ireland, The Netherlands and Germany. With the exception of the Irish case and Italy (usually about average), these are the countries with higher levels of environmental concern.

The country pattern – higher concern in the economically more advanced Northern and Central European countries of Denmark, The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany, and lower concern in the less advanced southern countries of Portugal, Spain and Greece and in Ireland – gives hints on a relationship between the level of economic development and

Table 11. Level of Economic Development and Environmental Concern.

GDP per head at market prices in 1987 in ECU (Current price and purchasing power parities)		Grouping of countries according to level of saliency in the ranking indicators 1986 and 1989	
Luxembourg	18,313	Luxembourg	
Denmark	16,606	Denmark	above EC average
Germany	16,580	Germany	
France	15,951	Netherlands	
United Kingdom	15,383		
Netherlands	15,258		
Italy	15,242	Italy	about EC average
Belgium	14,712	Belgium	
<b>EC average</b>	<b>14,605</b>	United Kingdom	
		France	
Spain	10,807	Spain	below EC average
Ireland	9,381	Greece	
Greece	7,928	Portugal	
Portugal	7,838	Ireland	

Source: Eurostat, 26th edition 1989.



environmental concern. However, most of the time the more advanced countries like France and the United Kingdom have a similar saliency level as the less advanced countries, so that it could be stated that lower levels of economic development seem to lead to lower levels of environmental concern, whereas this is not automatically the same the other way round. As Table 11 shows, the four countries with the lowest GDP are countries with low saliency levels. But the lower concern in France and the United Kingdom during most of the observed period indicates that the level of economic development is only one factor in a bundle or set of factors determining the actual problem as well as the societal communication and individual perception of environmental problems.

Which social, political and cultural factors influence the perception and political representation of the environmental issue is subject to ongoing debates. Thereby, different elements and levels of the political system have to be taken into consideration and different explanatory problems can be distinguished. At the individual level, the socio-structural and ideological background and the structure of environmental attitudes are addressed as well as their impact in terms of political orientation and behaviour. On an aggregate level of comparing nations, the factors influencing the emergence and strength of 'New (green) Parties', ecological movements and environmental policy styles etc. are discussed.

The environmental problem has been characterized as a complex, global and basic problem which serves as a point of reference and a catalyser for the formation and orientation of new political preferences and value orientations. The dynamic of these ongoing processes in dealignment of political bonds and the emergence of 'New Social Movements' and 'New Politics' parties is mainly due to the interaction of two effects of the modernization process. On the one hand, there are the accumulated environmental problems which have been underestimated by the established actors and institutions, which actually have difficulties in coping successfully with the problems. On the other hand, a significant part of the better educated younger cohorts has developed new value orientations and political preferences. These grounds have mainly influenced the establishment of the environmental problem on the political agenda, thereby blaming the established institutions for their failure and promoting 'New Politics' issues and new forms of political participation.

The environmental problem will remain on the political agenda due to the objective problems and the necessity of their political solution. It has caused the rise of environmental concern among the broader public (not only among smaller segments of the population) and has led to an increasing institutional response in polity, politics and policy (environmental policies, environmental ministries and agencies, new environmental parties and interest groups, etc). Its persisting effect on party systems has

again been demonstrated by the results of the recent third direct election to the European Parliament.

European elections are, together with local or regional ones, second-order elections within the respective national contexts (Reif 1984). In European elections no governmental power directly affecting the citizens is allocated. This increases the chances of small and new parties in comparison to big and established parties. To vote for a small or new party – as an expression of dissatisfaction with the established and bigger parties – is 'easier' in European elections because it does not effect the national distribution of power. In addition, small parties generally can more easily mobilize their normally more homogeneous and better motivated constituency and have the media attention during the campaigns (Niedermeyer 1989).

Green and other small parties have been very successful in the third direct election in June 1989, as was already the case in the second direct election in 1984 (not in France and the United Kingdom). There was the outstanding success of the formerly marginal British Green party, which gained 14.5 percent of the vote, i.e. the highest share a Green party ever reached at a European election. However, due to the British electoral system the party is not represented in the European Parliament. The Greens in France reached 10.6 percent and in Belgium 13 percent. Generally speaking, the Green parties could increase their share of votes in all countries except Germany compared to the last national election as well as compared to the last European election. The gain was greatest in countries with formerly lower levels of concern whereas Germany was the only country where the Greens could not remarkably increase their share of the vote (see Niedermeyer 1989 for the documentation of the detailed results). This development is not least due to the character of the environmental problem and the dynamic interaction of the two effects of modernization and is monitored by the distribution of environmental attitudes among the public in the member states of the European Community.

#### NOTES

1. The three surveys are: EB 30 (autumn 88); EB 31 (spring 89); EB 31A (summer 89; EB 31A is an additional study as compared to the usual autumn and spring pattern of the series of Eurobarometer surveys.)

*Question wording:* 'I should like to hear your views on some issues and problems. Could you please tell me for each issue or problem whether you consider it to be very important or not very important.' (For list of issues see Table 1.)

The results of this question have been made available by the European Election Study 1989 (EES '89). EES '89 is an international research project directed by a group of five researchers: Ronald Cayrol, Paris; Cees van der Eijk, Amsterdam; Mark Franklin, Strathclyde; Manfred Kuechler, New York; and Herman Schmitt, Mannheim. The three independent cross-section studies have been included in the Eurobarometer surveys in autumn 88, spring and summer 89 and were co-ordinated by Hermann Schmitt at the Zentrum für Europäische Umfrageanalysen und Studien (ZEUS) at the

- University of Mannheim. The first two waves of EES '89 have predominantly been financed by a European consortium of media, the post-election study has been financed by the British Economic Research Council (ESRC).
2. The percentages for the European average are weighted to adjust national samples (about 300 in Luxembourg and Northern Ireland, and about 1,000 in all other countries) according to the proportion of each national population on the total population of the Community.
  3. The surveys are: EB 25 (spring 1986), and EB 29 (spring 1988).  
*Question wording:* 'Many people are concerned about the protection of the environment and the struggle against pollution. Would you say that, in your opinion, this is an urgent and immediate problem, more a problem for the future, or not really a problem at all?'
  4. The five surveys are: EB 6 (autumn 76); EB 10 (autumn 78); EB 20 (autumn 83); EB 28 (autumn 87); and EB 31A (summer 1989).  
*Question wording:* (EB 5 to EB 28) 'Here is a list of problems that people in (your country) are more or less interested in. Could you please tell me for each one whether you personally consider it is a very important problem, important problem, or of little importance, or not important at all?'  
Among the nine to eleven issues (seven issues in EB 31A) included in the lists (covering regional differences, energy supply, fighting unemployment, increasing defence efforts, Third World aid, foreign policy, etc.) the environmental issue was 'Protecting nature and fighting pollution'. In EB 31A, the wording was: 'Here is a list of problems. I would like you to tell me for each one if you personally consider it very important, important, of little importance, or not important at all?' The environmental issue was 'The protection of nature and the struggle against pollution'.
  5. *Question wording:* (EB 19, spring 1983) 'Here is a list of present day problems. Of these problems, which 3 would you consider the most important?'  
The seven problems included in the list were: reducing regional differences, stimulate the economy to fight unemployment, fight against inflation, fight against crime, guarantee energy supplies, national defence, Third World aid, and the environmental issue was worded 'protect the environment and fight pollution'.
  6. *Question wording:* (EB 25, spring 1986): 'Here are a certain number of problems which have been debated in the European Parliament. Looking at this list, can you tell me which are the three that appear to you to be the most important at the present time?' In addition to the seven problems in the list in spring 1983 (see note 5), three issues concerning 'the development of scientific research', 'fighting terrorism and crime', and 'consumer protection' were included.
  7. After the question documented in note 2, the respondents were asked: 'Which issue or problem do you consider the most important?'; 'And which issue or problem do you consider the second most important?'; 'And finally, which issue or problem do you consider the third most important?'
  8. The three surveys are: EB 18 (autumn 1982); EB 25 (spring 1986); EB 29 (spring 1988).  
*Question wording* (local complaint): 'Where you live now, do you have reasons to complain about the following things: a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all. If you have no reason to complain, please don't hesitate to say so.'  
National concern: 'Now, about this country as a whole, I would like to find out how worried or concerned you are about a number of problems I am going to mention: a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all.'  
General concern: 'Finally, more generally, how concerned or worried are you about the following: a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or not at all.'
  9. The surveys are: EB 10A (autumn 1978); EB 17 (spring 1982); EB 22 (autumn 1984); EB 26 (autumn 1986); EB 28 (autumn 1987); EB 31A (summer 1989).  
*Question wording:* 'All new developments in the industrial field imply effort, time and money, it may also involve risk. Here are three opinions about the development of nuclear power stations, which use atomic energy for the production of electricity. Which of these three statements comes closest to your own opinion on the development of nuclear power?'

- (1) It is worthwhile
- (2) No particular interest
- (3) The risks involved are unacceptable.'

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