



EEAcademy-CEU Summer School Course description

Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle



27 June–3 July 2019
Central European University
Budapest, Hungary



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The Summer School in brief

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| Summer School title | Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle |
| Academic discipline(s) | Environmental Sciences, Environmental Governance, Science and Technology Studies, Transition Studies |
| Dates | 27 June-3 July 2019 |
| Target audience | Researchers (advanced PhD students, postdocs) and practitioners from policy making institutions, NGOs, business and international organisations |
| Level of the course | Postgraduate |
| Course directors | Sybille van den Hove, Anton Shkaruba, David Stanners |
| Institutions | Central European University, Budapest, Hungary European Environment Agency |
| Contact information | eeacademy@eea.europa.eu; anton@mespom.eu; Sybille@b4sd.eu |
| Course summary | <p>Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle</p> <p>The purpose of this Course is to look backwards and understand from history and look forwards to how the world can move towards sustainability. It will explore a range of knowledge challenges and innovation pathways including the possible ways forward for the effective and appropriate application of the precautionary principle in sustainability governance. It will bring together a solid and diverse group of scholars and practitioners with expertise on earth systems research, risk assessment and management, business transformation, innovation governance, innovations in sustainability governance, and on exploring pathways for long term transitions to sustainability.</p> |

For quick access to further **info** and **registration**,
[please follow this link.](#)



Faculty

We are delighted to introduce the following scholars and practitioners with expertise on earth systems research, risk assessment and management, business transformation, innovation governance, innovations in sustainability governance, and in exploring pathways for long term transitions to sustainability.

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|------------------------------|--|
| Hans Bruyninckx | Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA). |
| David Gee | Former Senior Advisor, Science, Policy, Emerging Issues & Late lessons from early warnings project leader, European Environment Agency, Denmark. |
| Sarah Cornell | Researcher at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University |
| Jacques de Gerlache | Co-founder and manager of NGO GreenFacts |
| Philippe Grandjean | Professor, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark & Adjunct Professor of Environmental Health, Harvard University, USA. |
| Steffen Foss Hansen | Associate Professor, Technical University of Denmark, Denmark. |
| Sybille van den Hove | Executive Director, Bridging for Sustainability, Belgium. |
| Anton Shkaruba | Research affiliate, visiting lecturer, Environmental Sciences and Policy Dept. Central European University, Hungary & Director, Erda RTE, the Netherlands. |
| David Stanners | Former Head of International Cooperation, European Environment Agency, Denmark. |
| Constança Belchior | Challenge facilitator, THINK Lisbon, Portugal. |
| Mike Asquith | Sustainability Transitions Expert, European Environment Agency, Denmark. |
| Kenisha Garnett | Lecturer in Decision Science, Centre for Environment and Agricultural Informatics, Cranfield University, United Kingdom. |
| Owen McIntyre | Professor and Director of Research at the School of Law, University College Cork, Ireland. |
| Hans-Peter Nachtnebel | Professor, Institute of Water Management, University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU), Hydrology and Hydraulic Engineering, Austria. |
| Luis Pinto | Organisational Learning and Knowledge Innovation Expert, European Environment Agency, Denmark. |



The EEAcademy-CEU Summer School

The EEAcademy organises the Summer School 2019 in cooperation with the Central European University. The EEA is an agency of the European Union. Our aim is to support sustainable development and to help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and reliable information to policymaking agents and the public. To achieve these goals, the EEA undertakes, in close cooperation with the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet), a comprehensive range of Integrated Environmental Assessments (IEA) to support environmental policy and decision-making in Europe. These include five-yearly reports on the state and outlook of the environment, thematic and sectoral assessments, analyses of the effectiveness of policy measures, forward-looking studies, and studies on the impacts of change on Europe's environment and resources.

Our improved understanding of **the systemic nature of environmental challenges creates a need for new forms of knowledge around and within the science-policy interface.**

The EEAcademy is designed and established to encompass capacity-building and educational activities in knowledge areas where policy needs are evolving and where the EEA/Eionet experience and competences need further development to meet new challenges. The EEAcademy focuses on three key knowledge development areas: (1) assessing *systemic challenges*, (2) supporting *sustainability transitions* and (3) improving *integrated environmental assessment* methods. At its core, the EEAcademy seeks to preserve and nurture a unique body of existing knowledge as well as **experiment with new learning and knowledge production approaches.**

The **EEAcademy-CEU Summer School on Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle** is part of this effort to **strengthen the current knowledge base**, establishing a common, foundational understanding of key theories, concepts, approaches and practices. It is designed to enhance critical reflection and develop key competences within a vibrant and collaborative community of thinkers and practitioners.



Course rationale

Multiple warnings from science (on climate change¹; on the ongoing sixth mass biological extinction²; on expanding and multigenerational health impacts of chemicals pollution³ and on many other threats to humans and ecosystems) point to increasingly urgent need for ambitious transformative actions to avoid widespread and potentially catastrophic harm. The multiple challenges require systemic solutions. These include transformations in the systems of production and consumption most contributing to harm – e.g. energy, food, mobility, chemicals. Such challenges bring many additional challenges if the world is to achieve sustainability and enable 10 billion people to live within ecological limits and thrive in socially just societies by mid-century.

These challenges also point to two important realities. First, the systems of governance make societies and the environment subordinate to the economy — essentially serving as sources of human and natural capital. Second, the scale, interconnectedness and sheer complexity of feedbacks between nature and human interventions. This calls for exploring **alternative governance approaches and tools** to strengthen society's capacity to understand, recognise and respond to the complex challenges of this century. **The precautionary principle** appears as a key governance principle to navigate complexity.

¹ e.g. IPCC's 2018 special report on Global warming of 1.5°C – <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/> (accessed January 2019).

² e.g. Ceballos et al., 2017. Biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signalled by vertebrate population losses and declines. PNAS 114 (30).

³ Grandjean, P., 2013. Only one chance: how environmental pollution impairs brain development—and how to protect the brains of the next generation. New York: Oxford University Press.



Why the precautionary principle

The precautionary principle features prominently in many international environmental policy processes, texts and treaties and in national strategies and laws of many countries. It is one of the four environment principles in the Treaty of the European Union, in which article 191,§2 states that Union policy on the environment *'shall be based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay.'* Together these 4 principles – **precaution, prevention, polluter-pays** and **rectification of damage at source** – are central to managing risk to the environment, human health and wellbeing.

The most problematic of these principles is without doubt the precautionary principle. The precautionary principle poses challenges to both environmental science and environmental governance because it applies to *'situations of scientific complexity, uncertainty and ignorance, where there may be a need to act in order to avoid, or reduce, potentially serious or irreversible threats to health and/or the environment, using an appropriate strength of scientific evidence, and taking into account the pros and cons of action and inaction and their distribution'* (EEA 2013, p. 681). As a tool to **manage risks, uncertainties** and **ignorance** in complex social ecological systems, it is a core element of governance for a **transition towards sustainability**.

As shown by the seminal work of the European Environment Agency in the two 'Late lessons from early warnings' reports (EEA 2001, 2013) there are still many open and pressing questions around the precautionary principle and its application, ways of doing research, science-policy-society interfaces, the governance of innovations and risk governance in the framework of sustainability transitions. And, in the current political context, notably in the European Union, there is **a need for intellectual rigour around the concept**, both from a research and a praxis point of view.



Course objectives

The purpose of this course is to **look backwards** and understand from history and **look forwards** to how the world can **move towards sustainability**. It will explore a range of **knowledge challenges** and **innovation pathways** including the possible ways forward for the effective and appropriate application of the precautionary principle in sustainability governance.

The School is designed as a **strategic knowledge** and **experience sharing** course. It will provide intensive research training, but also allow for policy discussions in a variety of sector and contexts, and help to identify and find solutions to course-related issues in the participants' research, policy or business application fields.

Three core objectives

1. Facilitate **co-construction** and **transfer of knowledge** on an important research area and cross-cutting issues of sustainability science and praxis;
2. **Build capacity for high quality sustainability research** that is adequate, efficient and oriented towards the international research community; building on interdisciplinary approaches and concepts, most recent findings and state-of-art and policy relevant research objectives and praxis;
3. **Build capacity in both the research** and **the praxis community** on issues related to the Summer School subject.

This course is the fifth edition of a series of summer school on the precautionary principle. It remains particularly timely given the current intensity of political, policy and scientific discussion around the precautionary principle, in particular in Europe. The course will promote the values of **open society** and **self-reflective critical thinking** through developing capacity for the **creation of new knowledge** in transdisciplinary **environmental research** and **sustainability governance**, and through the search for better ways to convert scientific knowledge to useful practical knowledge, and policy questions to research questions.



Participation in the Summer School

This Summer School is designed to support practitioners, experts and researchers with a direct involvement or a keen interest in Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle, seeking to gain a broader understanding of current challenges and methodological advances.

The Summer School aims to achieve a good mixture of participants with different views, backgrounds and approaches including both researchers and practitioners from public bodies, NGOs and business in order to allow knowledge sharing and co-creation.

Pre-requisites for the School

Participants shall meet the following criteria:

- Hold a position at universities, research institutions, consultancies, businesses, relevant public bodies and administrations (including the European Institutions) or a research oriented NGOs;
- Have an MSc or PhD degree or equivalent and at least two years of research or professional experience and/or teaching at graduate level;
- Be fluent in English;
- Have demonstrable achievements in research or in praxis;
- Demonstrate good communication skills;
- Demonstrate originality and motivation in their application letter.

Contribution during the School

During the course, participants will work in groups, building on their individual experience and learning, and share their progress and findings with other groups and members of faculty throughout the week.

Progress with the group works will be discussed during the course and in scheduled tutoring sessions as appropriate. Group works will be presented to everyone on the last day.



Background readings

- EEA (2001). Late lessons from early warnings: the precautionary principle 1896–2000. European Environment Agency Environmental issue report No. 22, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. ([link](#))
- EEA (2013). Late lessons from early warnings: science, precaution, innovation. EEA Report N°1/13. ([link](#))

The course builds directly on the two landmark reports on the precautionary principle produced by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in 2001 and 2013. These reports contain a collection of chapters on and around the precautionary principle. The two volumes have been prepared by EEA in collaboration with a broad range of external authors and peer reviewers. Many of the faculty are contributing authors in these reports.

Together, the bibliographic references of the two volumes constitute an academic gold mine of references on the precautionary principle, in particular the references of chapters 27 and 28 of volume 2.

As the two 'Late lessons' volumes are extensive and dense, participants will be directed to a series of specific chapters which will constitute mandatory background reading and will be furthermore asked to select a number of additional chapters, depending on their interest.

Some faculty members may require additional pre-reading, this will be communicated to participants in due time.



Programme and learning approach

The Summer School comprises a **7-day programme in Budapest**. Core content sessions are articulated with networking opportunities to get to know other participants for mutual learning.

The programme has been developed as an exercise of **mutual learning**, where participants can experience and compare different approaches to Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle. **A combination of learning methods** is used – from lectures to case-study analyses and practical exercises. Participants are called upon to make use of their creative potential, in a critical and reflexive attitude towards their own personal and organisational experience.

A diverse group of participants is expected. **The learning path approach enables the course to link to participants' specific contexts and background. Particular attention is devoted to knowledge transferability into working realities.**

The faculty consists of **experts in the field** of Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle complemented by the **Summer School team** who will guide the hands-on training sessions and support the development of competencies and transferability of knowledge.



Venue and practical information

27 June–3 July 2019 (7 days)
Central European University
Budapest, Hungary

The Course will comprise a total of 48 credit hours (50 min sessions). This will include 5 hours of tutoring sessions between faculty members and individual or small groups of participants.

Annex 1 provides a preliminary course schedule for the Summer School 2019. We expect that the overall structure and the key speakers will remain. The final schedule will be available in April 2019.

In order to ensure a broad geographical distribution and mixture of different backgrounds, potential participants are asked to provide information on their **experience** and personal **learning goals** in their application.

If you want to attend the Summer School 2019 on Sustainability Transitions and the Precautionary Principle, please fill in **the Summer School application form**. **The deadline for applications is end of March 2019**. You will be contacted after the deadline if your application is successful.

If you have any questions regarding the 2019 Summer School, please feel free to contact us at anton@mespom.eu / Sybille@b4sd.eu.

The Summer School team

Sybille van den Hove, Anton Shkaruba, Luis Pinto, Constança Belchior, David Stanners