



## Summer Programme on International and European Environmental Law: *The Future We Choose*

24 - 28 August  
2015  
The Hague

Programme update: *Professor Nicolas de Sadeleer will discuss “Science, uncertainties and expertise in environmental cases in courts”*

In a nutshell, precaution epitomises a paradigmatic shift. Whereas, under a preventive approach the decision-maker intervenes provided that the threats to the environment are tangible, pursuant to the precautionary principle authorities are prepared to tackle risks for which there is no definitive proof that there is a link of causation between the suspected activity and the harm or whether the suspected damage will materialise. In other words, precaution means that the absence of scientific certainty – or conversely the scientific uncertainty - as to the existence or the extent of a risk should henceforward no longer delay the adoption of preventative measures to protect the environment. Put it simply, the principle can be understood as the expression of a philosophy of anticipated action, not requiring that the entire corpus of scientific proof be collated in order for a public authority to be able to adopt a preventive measure.

The lecturer will illustrate the success and the failure of precaution as a device tailored for grasping scientific uncertainty. He will provide illustrations drawn from both international case law and agreements.

### A short biography:

Nicolas de Sadeleer is professor of law at Saint Louis University, Brussels, and guest professor at UCL. Being based in Brussels, he plays an active part in debates on EU legal and institutional issues. Author of *Environmental Principles* (OUP, 2002) and *EU Environmental Law and the Internal Market* (OUP, 2014), he held from 2004 to 2005 a EU Marie Curie chair on risk assessment and risk management at the law faculty of the University of Oslo.



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