

PAYING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS NATURE PROTECTION IN ESTONIA IN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

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Numerous studies indicate that individual wealth is positively correlated with the willingness to pay for specific environmental goods. However, these studies do not relate to environmental protection in general, neither is it possible to use the willingness to pay estimates for specific environmental goods in order to make meaningful cross-country comparisons.

The main drivers for public support for environmental protection in Estonia and cross-nationally will be studied, using survey data from an Estonian Survey of Environmental Attitudes with comparisons to data on environmental attitudes of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). Support is measured as the willingness of individuals to make financial sacrifices or accept cuts to one's standard of living to protect the environment. An important issue of investigation is to find out how the environmental status influences the demand for environmental protection. It is expected that the marginal utility of an increase in environmental protection will be higher in countries having less or lower quality environmental assets. The Environmental Performance Indicator (EPI) is used as an indicator to assess country specific environmental quality. This index is based on empirical data about the environment in about 150 countries and has been developed by first identifying specific environmental targets and then measuring the distance between the target and current national achievement.

This paper will also relate to the stream of research in environmental sociology that explains cross-national differences in terms of a shift from materialist values to post-materialist values, such as free speech, liberty, and environmental protection, values which generally arise only after individuals have met their more basic materialist needs for food, shelter, and safety. In order to further investigate these issues, it is of interest to study whether there are differences between country groups with a special focus on comparing new EU member countries with other country groups available in the dataset of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP).

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