

The United States versus European Community

A Report Commissioned by the Global Climate Coalition

Summary

The report examines the environmental policies and standards of the United States and the EC, as well as the real-world impacts of these efforts. In short, the study indicates that the United States is outpacing countries of the European Community (EC) in setting tough environmental standards, spending on environmental protection and achieving significant environmental improvements.

Environmental standards in the United States are in many cases more stringent than comparable standards in Europe. For example, the United States has much lower limits on automobile emissions, much more stringent testing procedures, and much stricter controls over motor vehicle fuel specifications. In addition, the United States is the only nation with federal standards for motor vehicle fuel economy.

The analysis also revealed that the United States has a more stringent and more comprehensive regulatory program governing the management of hazardous wastes.

In addition, the United States has, for a wide range of selected indicators, achieved a cleaner environment and lower levels of industrial and municipal discharges. Among the specific findings, it was determined that the United States has higher water quality levels than the EC for major river systems; the United States has achieved lower levels of sulfur dioxide emissions (linked to acid rain) than the EC; and the United States has achieved higher levels of municipal waste water treatment than EC countries.

Summary of Key Findings

The principal findings from this comparison include the following:

- **Environmental Standards:** U.S. standards are in many cases more stringent than the EC. For example:
 - The U.S. and the EC generally have comparable standards for ambient air quality and new source emissions.
 - Under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, the U.S. has a stringent, new program for regulating SO₂ and NO_x emissions from major existing sources. The EC has no comparable program.

- The U.S. has more stringent standards for automobile emissions and motor fuels.
- The U.S. has more stringent standards and a more comprehensive regulatory program for hazardous waste management.
- **Actual Environmental Performance:** For a wide range of selected indicators, the U.S. has achieved a cleaner environment and also has achieved lower levels of industrial and municipal discharges. Examples of these include:
 - The U.S. has better water quality levels than the EC in major selected river systems.
 - The U.S. has achieved lower emissions of SO₂ than the EC. This difference will become even greater with implementation of Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990.
 - The U.S. has achieved lower levels of discharges of oxidizable material into inland water bodies.
 - The U.S. has achieved higher levels of municipal waste water treatment.
- **Investments in Environmental Protection:** The U.S. is allocating a substantially greater share of its GDP to environmental protection than the EC - 1.7 percent vs. 1.2 percent - a difference of 40 percent. U.S. environmental expenditures as percent of GDP are projected to grow to at least 2.7 percent by the 2000. This estimate does not include the full cost for implementation of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and does not include the costs for any major new climate change mitigation program. The U.S. GDP projection has been adjusted to reflect the impact of the Clinton Economic Plan.
- **EC CO₂ Stabilization Plans:** Based on EC member country plans that have been submitted to the EC for review and discussion, the European Community will apparently fall short of its goal to achieve stabilization of carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000.