

Governing Shale Gas Development in the European Union: Principles, Practice and Insights

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the key factors underlying Europe's approach to shale gas governance, with a particular emphasis on how the principles and practices adopted in Europe might inform practices in the US. Although the development of shale gas operations has been marked by several transatlantic differences, both Europe and the US share several challenges of governing risks associated with shale exploration and extraction. The paper identifies four key governing principles in Europe: the precautionary principle, transparency, consultation/stakeholder buy-in' and sustainability. For each I explain the rationale for its adoption, how it is manifest in European Union's policies and practices, and the limits of its application. The paper demonstrates that adoption of such principles provides useful guidelines for policymakers, and reassurance for the public. Positive lessons from their application can be applied to the US. But each of these principles is double-edged and none provides the 'golden ticket' to effective shale governance.

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