



Institutionalizing environmental protection through self-regulation: the case of environmental standards adoption in Lithuania.

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The impacts of human activity in the environment have a global dimension, but there are no effective global governance instruments to enforce environmental standards. At the same time, many national governments lack incentives to pursue strict environmental policies. In this context, self-regulation is seen as an alternative venue to address environmental challenges. This work aims to identify factors that influence companies to engage in environmental self-regulation?

For this aim in March 2015 a survey of 482 companies was conducted. The target group were companies operating in Lithuania that hold ISO14001 certificates – one of the most prolific instruments for self-regulation. The questionnaire was designed to test assumptions developed in new institutionalist literature which claim that common practices can emerge through isomorphism.-

The results showed that the main motive for environmental self-regulation is the desire to improve company image, rather than protecting the environment per se. Another important finding was that the main source of pressure to adopt self-regulation was based less on the perceived demands but the customers. Rather the driver for the adoption was a feeling of a need no to fall behind industry leaders. Thus, normative isomorphism is the main mechanism through which environmental self-regulation proliferates. We claim for a rapid proliferation of environmental self-regulation perceived industry leaders need to be identified and they need to be persuaded that environmental standards are key for the development of the industry. However, this also raises questions of sustainability. Few industries have long standing leaders, and through successful investment and technological development new actors can arise and this may risk stalling or even reversing self-regulation.