

## Late Lessons from Early Warnings: Science, Precaution, Innovation

A discussion about the precautionary principle in environmental sciences and policy, organized by D-USYS and USYS TdLab.

Speakers: David Gee, formerly European Environment Agency, Copenhagen  
Christoph Kueffer, D-USYS, ETH Zürich  
Angelika Hilbeck, D-USYS, ETH Zürich  
Martin Scheringer, D-CHAB, ETH Zürich

**Thursday, 15 May 2014, 16:15–18:15 h, building CHN, room E 46, ETH Zentrum.**

In 2001, the European Environment Agency, EEA, released the first report on “Late Lessons from Early Warnings”. The report addressed the history of the precautionary principle through a range of case studies from asbestos to mad-cow disease and pointed out that often action was taken only long after the first indications of a problem, which then caused serious human health impacts and high costs.

Since 2001, with the development of new technologies and the potential for new impacts on human and environmental health, the precautionary principle has become even more important. In 2013, the second report on “Late Lessons from Early Warnings” was released by the European Environment Agency (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/late-lessons-2>). It covers new case studies including radiation from mobile phones or nanomaterials, and it addresses also the question of “false positives” – warnings that turned out to be false alarms – in more detail than the first report.

*David Gee* was the originator of the *Late Lessons from Early Warnings* project at the EEA and was on the editorial team of both reports. We are glad that David will join us for this event and share essential insights from this unique project with us.

David’s lecture will be followed by commentaries of three ETH scientists and a general discussion. Afterwards an Apéro will be offered.

*Christoph Kueffer* was involved in the second *Late Lessons* report as a contributing author of the chapter on invasive alien species.

*Angelika Hilbeck* will comment on the application of the precautionary principle in the context of genetically modified organisms (GMO).

*Martin Scheringer* will comment on the chemical-related case studies, in particular the one on DDT.

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