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Former European Commission Climate Negotiator Jos Delbeke Shares Firsthand Account of Carbon Pricing Evolution in New Episode of “Environmental Insights”

Podcast a production of the Harvard Environmental Economics Program

CAMBRIDGE MA. – [Jos Delbeke](#), Professor at the European University Institute in Florence and at the KU Leuven in Belgium, recounted the evolution of carbon pricing and voiced his optimism for further international efforts to combat climate change in the newest episode of “[Environmental Insights: Discussions on Policy and Practice from the Harvard Environmental Economics Program](#).” Listen to the interview [here](#).

Hosted by [Robert N. Stavins](#), A.J. Meyer Professor of Energy and Economic Development at [Harvard Kennedy School](#) and director of the [Harvard Environmental Economics Program](#), Environmental Insights is intended to promote public discourse on important issues at the intersection of economics and environmental policy.

Delbeke served as Director-General of the European Commission’s DG Climate Action from 2010 until 2018, and was one of the primary architects of the European Union’s climate and energy targets for 2020 and 2030. He also served for several years as the European Commission’s chief negotiator at the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\) Conference of the Parties](#). An economist, Delbeke has long advocated for the use of market-based instruments and cost-benefit analysis to address environmental challenges.

Recalling his early days working on climate policy in Europe, Delbeke said that “emissions trading was an alien idea at that time” but he became convinced that taxation wasn’t the best method for creating a carbon market. “As an economist, I followed very much how the United States was developing the sulfur experiment. And that was very new and I had to teach my colleagues that you had an approach of taxation, but you could also go through cap-and-trade.”

Delbeke stated that the European Union’s emissions trading system (EU-ETS), which he helped develop, has been extraordinarily successful.

“The latest statistics show that between 2005 when we started and today...the emissions reduction is 29%, and that is for all the installations in Europe, all big installations, and the energy and the manufacturing industry. So 29% down in less than 15 years, I think is quite remarkable when we compare it to emissions from transport that are roughly 20% up,” he stated.

China is now bringing its own ETS system on line, and Delbeke claims it could be transformative in the effort to combat global warming. “Once the Chinese have their act together, I think that may serve as a source of inspiration for a lot of other nations,” he said. “The speed and the thorough nature of their preparations lately is just impressive.”

Delbeke’s interview is the fifth episode in the [Environmental Insights](#) series, and the first episode released in 2020.

“Environmental Insights is intended to inform and educate listeners about important issues relating to an economic perspective on developments in environmental policy, including the design and implementation of market-based approaches to environmental protection,” said Stavins. “We will speak with very accomplished Harvard colleagues, other academics, and practitioners who are working on solving some of the most challenging public problems we face.”

Environmental Insights is hosted on [SoundCloud](#), and is also available on [iTunes](#), [Pocket Casts](#), [Spotify](#), and [Stitcher](#).