

# **Voluntary instruments for environmental protection**

## **Abstract**

This diploma thesis focuses on voluntary instruments for environmental protection. The main aim is to provide a comprehensive overview of the most significant voluntary instruments, characterize them, demonstrate their practical applications, and analyse their legal regulation at the national, European, or international level. To adequately introduce the topic, the first part of this thesis is dedicated to environmental protection instruments in general. The second part delves into a group of voluntary instruments, providing a detailed description and historical context of their emergence within environmental policy. Subsequent sections of this thesis focus on selected voluntary instruments, categorized according to their assessed legal and practical relevance, for closer examination. The third part initially addresses voluntary environmental agreements (also known as agreements on protective conditions), which represent a relatively well-known legal concept in the national context and are regulated to varying extents by Law No. 114/1992 Coll., on Nature and Landscape Protection, as amended. The fourth part subsequently analyses two formalized environmental management systems, specifically EMS implemented according to the international standard ISO 14001 and the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), both renowned for their significant practical impacts. The fifth part describes all three distinguished types of environmental labelling, with a special emphasis on ecolabelling, which demonstrates the greatest legal relevance. The sixth part of this thesis, collectively titled "Other Voluntary Instruments", encompasses the remaining set of well-known voluntary instruments. These include various tools complementing environmental management, as well as the life cycle assessment method, ecodesign, cleaner production assessment, unilateral commitments, and some less conventional voluntary approaches like responsible public administration and organic farming. These other instruments are not examined in the same detail as those contained in the previous sections due to a lack of identified significant legal implications. Overall, this diploma thesis can be considered a thorough analysis of voluntary instruments, supplemented by a comprehensive reflection on the relevant issues and legal aspects, which often lack sufficient attention for further development in the academic literature.

## **Keywords:**

voluntary instruments for environmental protection, voluntary agreements, EMAS, environmental labelling