This chapter examines the evolution of the European Union’s (EU) environmental policy. The environment is a relatively new policy area of the EU. It was not officially created until 1973 and acquired a sound legal basis in the Treaties only with the passage of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1987. When the EU was established, environmental issues were low on the political agenda. However, they have become increasingly important at both national and European levels, and there is now a comprehensive environmental policy at the EU level and the EU has developed a reputation as an environmental leader in international environmental diplomacy, especially on climate change. The chapter first explains the main drivers for the development of the EU’s environmental policy, before discussing recent developments, and some of the major issues of current concern. It concludes by evaluating the theoretical
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leverage of the key integration theories for explaining and critiquing this policy sector.

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