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Development and Pollution in the Middle East and North Africa: Democracy Matters

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Abstract

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries are among the world's top emitters of CO₂ and SO₂ in per capita terms. The objective of this paper is to analyze whether investing in the democratic development of these countries is an effective tool to make the economic development in this region more environmentally compatible. Using panel data on the income-emission-democracy nexus in 17 MENA countries from 1980-2005, we find evidence that improvements in the democratic development of the MENA countries help to mitigate environmental problems. Our results clearly show that the quality of democratic institutions has a greater influence on local environmental problems than on global environmental issues in the MENA region.

Keywords: democratic development, political institutions, environmental quality, MENA

JEL classification: Q56, Q58, P48

1. Introduction

The Middle East and North African (MENA) countries have had high pollution records since 1965, exceeding the world average from 1995 onwards (WDI, 2014). The MENA region has

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