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Application of Remote Sensing Technologies in environmental monitoring: legal framework, limitations and potential in the European Union

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Remote sensing technologies, such as satellite and drone imagery, have been proven over the years- due to their constant development- to be extremely useful for environmental monitoring. They may collect and provide data pertaining to natural disasters, state of oceans, atmosphere, land, vegetation, food, public health etc, which are further essential for the effective decision making of public authorities. At the same time such data may facilitate the right for access to environmental information to the public. They also consist valuable tools for environmental law enforcement by allowing to detect for example planning breaches, illegal dumping of waste, illegal logging or illegal oil spills, on which inspections could then focus.

The article briefly presents the legal framework regarding the application of Remote Sensing Technologies in environmental monitoring in the European Union. It also outlines certain limitations of such technologies, such as the need for data verification and the need for data procession according to privacy and personal data law requirements. Important ECtHR and CJEU case law on the issue is approached, while it is examined under what legal circumstances a wider application of Remote Sensing Technologies in environmental monitoring could be envisaged. Finally, Greek legislation on the subject is as a “case study” analyzed.

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