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# THE EU AND UN WORK ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND GREEN LIFESTYLES

Paper D: This document intends to serve as a background material for the Workshop on sustainable consumption and green lifestyles of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The aim is to provide an overview of the EU and the UN initiatives in the area. The report will serve as background for the discussion in the workshop session 5.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction .....	1
2	United Nations work on SCP .....	2
2.1	The Marrakech process .....	2
2.2	Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles of the Marrakech process .....	3
2.3	United Nation Environmental Programme .....	4
2.4	UNEP-Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on SCP .....	6
3	OECD work on SCP .....	6
4	The European Union activities on SCP .....	7
4.1	EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production .....	8
4.2	EC support of research activities on SCP through Framework Programmes .....	9
5	European Environmental Agency work on SCP .....	10
6	SCP strategies in EU Member States .....	10
7	Concluding remarks .....	11
8	References .....	11

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of sustainable consumption has entered the policy discourse in 1992 at the international conference in Rio de Janeiro and commitments were made to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. Chapter 4 of the Agenda 21 declaration specifically addresses the need to change consumption patterns, since patterns of production and consumption are seen as the main cause of unsustainable development: “The major cause of continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in the industrialised countries” (UNCED 1992). Ten years after the Rio, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation has outlined specific steps in SCP work; in particular UN member states agreed to “encourage and promote the development of a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems by addressing and, where appropriate, delinking economic growth and environmental degradation through

improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources and production processes and reducing resource degradation, pollution and waste. All countries should take action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development needs and capabilities of developing countries, through mobilization, from all sources, of financial and technical assistance and capacity-building for developing countries” (UNDESA 2003).

After the meeting in Johannesburg, many international governmental structures and other stakeholders followed up the issue of sustainable consumption. The main outputs of the key organisations, such as the UN, OECD and EU, as well as national SCP strategies of forerunning EU member states, are presented in Figure 1.

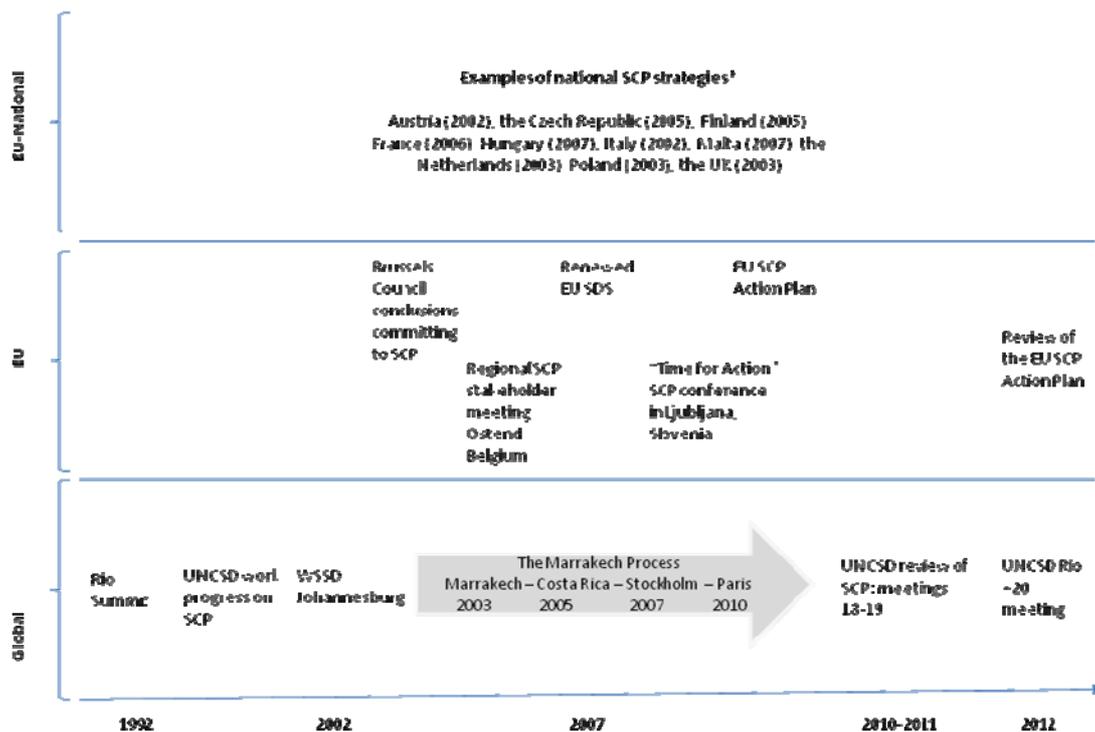


FIGURE 1 MAJOR SCP INITIATIVES AT GLOBAL, EU AND EU MEMBER STATE LEVEL, UPDATED FROM (EEA 2007)

## 2 UNITED NATIONS WORK ON SCP

The United Nations (UN) has several structures and units that are involved in the sustainable consumption debate.

### 2.1 THE MARRAKECH PROCESS

Recognising the problems associated with consumption, the increasing globalisation and the need for international co-operation to address SCP related issues, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg called for the “development of international programmes to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns that will promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems” (UN 2003). One of such programmes is the so-called Marrakech Process (presented in this section), the other one is the United Nations Environmental Programme, described in section 2.3.

The Marrakech process is a global multi-stakeholder process launched in 2003 to support the development of “10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production” (10YFP on SCP) that is to be in force in the period of 2012-2022. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) are acting as the Secretariat to coordinate this process.

The framework outlined actions to identify and priorities specific SCP activities, tools, policies, measures; to adopt and implement policies and measures aimed at promoting SCP patterns; to develop awareness-raising programmes on the importance of SPC patterns; and finally to increase efficiency of capacity building and technology transfer.

To facilitate the implementation of the 10-year framework, UNEP and UN DESA engaged in organising consultations on strategies, programmes and projects on the regional, national and local levels, as well as monitoring and evaluating progress and exchanging information and experience at the international level. Thus inputs to the 10YFP are provided in a participatory and bottom-up manner. The work is facilitated by programmes carried out by UNEP, UN DESA and bilateral, regional and other international organisations which take shape of 1) regional consultations, programmes and implementation mechanisms to promote awareness and identify priorities and needs for SCP; 2) concrete projects and programmes on the regional, national and local levels to develop and/or improve SCP tools and methodologies, with the Task Forces being the main mechanism; 3) evaluation progress, information exchange and international cooperation, through the international review meetings, and 4) securing and incorporating multi-stakeholder inputs on the elaboration of a 10YFP.

So far, seven Marrakech Task Forces have been created that support the development of SCP tools, capacity building and the implementation of SCP projects on the following specific SCP related issues: sustainable products (UK), sustainable lifestyles (Sweden), sustainable public procurement (Switzerland), sustainable tourism (France), sustainable buildings and construction (Finland), cooperation with Africa (Germany), and education for sustainable consumption (Italy). Most of the Task Forces support the implementation of demonstration projects and the collection of best practices. Specific outcomes include a Toolkit on Sustainable Public Procurement, a project on ecolabelling for Africa, an awareness-raising campaign for tourists, a Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles, guidelines for education on sustainable consumption, and a study on the contribution of sustainable buildings and construction to climate change mitigation.

All this broad range of on-going work contributes to the discussion of the proposal for the 10YFP on SCP, that has to be presented as the outcome of the Marrakech process is May 2011, when the Commission for Sustainable Development 19<sup>th</sup> meeting will make policy decisions on practical measures for implementing SCP, together with waste, transport, chemicals and mining issues.

## 2.2 TASK FORCE ON SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES OF THE MARRAKECH PROCESS

For the purposes of this workshop, the work of the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles is especially interesting. It was lead by Sweden from 2005 to 2009 and focused on *“exploring opportunities for the development of practices and choices that enable individuals to meet their needs and aspirations with a sense of responsibility towards the present and future generations, taking into account their environmental and social impacts”* (TFSL 2010: 2). Many of the projects initiated during the TFSL will continue under auspices of the newly established Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living (PERL 2010).

The starting point for the TFSL was the belief that *“sustainable lifestyles require a strong shift in behaviors and collaboration between individuals and communities. They also involve the development of alternative infrastructures, concrete workable solutions respectful of socio-cultural realities, and efficient messages to support them”* (TFSL 2010: 2). The projects that were initiated by the TFSL are outlined in Table 1.

**TABLE 1 DESCRIPTION OF PROJECTS INITIATED AND SUPPORTED BY THE TASK FORCE ON SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES IN 2005-2009**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Description</b>
Smart Start Up: Introducing sustainable lifestyles and sustainable entrepreneurship	An education program run by universities in Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Mauritius that combines sustainable lifestyle education with business development skills

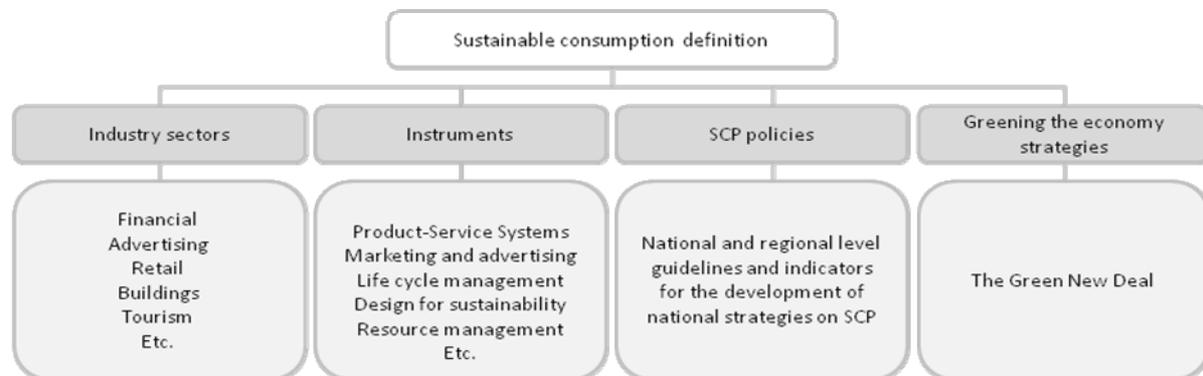
into African universities and colleges	
Communicating Sustainability: How to produce effective public campaigns	This guide is for national and local governments to produce effective public communications campaigns to accompany policy initiatives
Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles	The project collected inspiring cases in India, China, Brazil and South Africa, where people are coming together and forming 'creative communities' to solve everyday problems
Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles	The survey presented scenarios of sustainable lifestyles and gathered responses from young people in 20 countries
Intercultural Sister Classrooms	Teaching methods were tested in schools in the USA, Mexico, Costa Rica and Brazil combining life-cycle analysis with global citizenship
Literature Review on Sustainable Lifestyles and Recommendations for Further Research	A literature review covering the broad area of sustainable lifestyles has identified research gaps and provided further recommendations
Making the Business Case for Sustainable Lifestyles	This series of seven guidebooks covers the business opportunities and new business models that are required for businesses to meet the challenge of encouraging more sustainable lifestyles
Toolkit for Advertising and Marketing Courses	The toolkit is for professors and students and is aimed at changing the courses being taught to better educate new communications professionals
YouthXchange	A youth engagement project across 22 countries in Latin America, West Asia and the Philippines. The YouthXchange materials have been adapted using local languages, images and examples

The Task Force has finalised its work in 2009 and provided the following recommendations for the future work aiming at fostering the shift to more sustainable lifestyles: "The challenge of development and poverty alleviation is the key area for future work. Therefore 'sustainable lifestyles' should not be misunderstood as a rich nation choice. The desire to enjoy western living standards is profound also in developing countries. However, developing countries also have sustainable solutions to offer. Therefore, better understanding of sustainable lifestyles, as well as more innovation in the design for sustainable solutions in different parts of the world, is crucial for achieving sustainability. Sustainable lifestyles require a strong shift in behaviours and collaboration between individuals and communities. They also involve the development of alternative infrastructures, concrete workable solutions for socio-cultural realities, and efficient messages to support them. While some work is underway, more is needed. Networks between innovative groups of people in different places and countries must be encouraged. More cooperation and action is needed to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable lifestyles, explore new perspectives and development paths, motivate policymakers, civil society organisations, scientists, the business sector and individuals" (TFSL 2010).

## 2.3 UNITED NATION ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

The UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) is one of the most active inter-governmental organisations promoting sustainable consumption. In 1998, UNEP started a new Sustainable Consumption Program (SCP) created within the Division of Technology, Industry and Environment (DTIE), Production and Consumption Unit. The objective of the programme was to complement DTIE's supply-side activities, such as cleaner production, eco-efficiency and dematerialisation, with demand-side activities, such as green procurement and changing patterns of consumption. Within this programme, UNEP targets different stakeholder groups, including businesses, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The contents of the programme is derived from the UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection and builds upon the results of ongoing UNEP programmes and projects in sustainable consumption area. These include UNEP/SETAC Life Cycle Initiative,

UNEP Advertising and Communication Forum, UNEP Sustainable Consumption Opportunities for Europe project, UNEP’s Environmentally and Socially Responsible Procurement (ERSP) and the UNEP/CDG (Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft) initiative on Eco-design for small and medium-sized companies in developing countries.



**FIGURE 2 UNEP’S SUSTIANABLE CONSUMPTION ACTIVITIES IN THE LAST DECADE**

In 2001 UNEP’s report “Consumption Opportunities” elaborated on the meaning of sustainable consumption emphasising resource efficiency, changing patterns of consumption and improving quality of life (UNEP 2001). Besides the emphasis on the eco-efficiency, later initiatives focused on facilitating business innovations for shifting from products to services, using e.g. Product-Service Systems framework (UNEP 2002). Later the work on alternative business models, resulted in a Manual for designing and redesigning products (UNEP 2008).

One of the UNEP contributions to the national level SCP policies is its “Guidelines and Indicators for the Development of National Strategies on Sustainable Consumption and Production” (UNEP 2006) that provide outline of the main steps and success factors for developing a national SCP strategy and action plan.

UNEP has also been active in developing educational and communication tools for SCP, including marketing and advertising for sustainability (UNEP 2005), life cycle management (UNEP 2007), design for sustainability (UNEP 2008) and resource management (UNEP 2009; UNEP 2010).

UNEP has also been active in initiating dialogue with businesses and as part of it launched a number of sector initiatives to promote SCP in different industries, for example building sector (UNEP 2003), financial sector (UNEP 2001; UNEP 2007), retail industry (UNEP 2005; UNEP 2006) and tourism (UNEP and UN-WTO 2008).

Finally, in the light of the recent economic crisis, UNEP has been active in developing strategies for greening economy and propagating green growth through a number of initiatives, notably the Green New Deal (UNEP 2009).

The main strategic recommendations from the UNEP work for different actors are:

- *for governments:* to ensure sustainable government procurement policies by enforcing regulations and economic and social instruments and by sectoral policies, especially in land use, transport, water energy and housing. The importance of education and information programmes for consumers on environmental impacts of consumer choice and behaviour, efficient use of materials, energy and water and recycling was also among the most important recommendations (UNEP 2003).
- *for businesses:* to focus on life cycle thinking, technological innovations to improve practising eco-efficiency; consumer information regarding the consequences of their choices, and creation of market conditions for sustainable products and services (UNEP 2001; UNEP 2003).

- *for consumers and communities*: to focus on ensuring intergenerational equity, consumer education (for consumer organisations), and increasing overall consciousness of the environmental and social impact of their consumption patterns (UNEP/CI 2004).

## 2.4 UNEP-WUPPERTAL INSTITUTE COLLABORATING CENTRE ON SCP

The UNEP / Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP) was jointly founded by the Wuppertal Institute and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2005 to establish an internationally visible institution for scientific research, outreach and transfer activities on sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The Centre contributes to the Plan of Implementation agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production (SCP).

The CSCP works in the areas of 'Sustainable Consumption and Production for National and Local Development', 'Changing Individual and Institutional Patterns of Consumption' and 'Encouraging Responsible Industrial Development'.

Since its foundation, the CSCP has organised a number of stakeholder dialogues addressing a range of players, including the conference "Time for Action - Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production in Europe" held in 2007 in Ljubljana, Slovenia together with the European Environmental Agency (EEA) and the Slovenian government; and the Marrakech Task Force meeting and the SCORE! Launch conference (both in 2006).

CSCP is currently coordinating two FP7 funded projects (CSOContribution2SCP and DelibProcessSCP). In the DelibProcessSCP project CSCP has facilitated dialogue between civil society organisations and other stakeholders, among other things by organising interactive conferences and setting up online platforms.

"Action Town – Research and Action for SCP" (CSOContribution2SCP) focuses on knowledge exchange between civil society organisations and researchers and the establishment of partnerships between both groups to help CSOs to develop more effective strategies and develop more effective actions towards SCP.

The SPREAD project is going to address the challenge of reducing current levels of energy, transport and resource use and at the same time improving health and quality of life of the ageing European society by establishing a social platform for exchange of experiences among societal stakeholders and for the development of the structures of analysis of the current best practices of sustainable ways of living, moving, and consuming.

## 3 OECD WORK ON SCP

The OECD has been working on Sustainable Consumption since 1994, which started with a seminar,<sup>1</sup> where it was acknowledged that OECD includes countries with about 20% of the global population consuming almost 80% of world's resources. In 1995 OECD established a Work Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The main activity area of the programme was related to linking resource efficiency and technological change and environmental improvements without affecting economic growth.

The programme explicitly concentrated on specific household consumption areas, such as consumption of food, energy, water, waste generation and tourism-related travel. By bringing together different elements of household consumption the purpose of this work was to better understand consumption trends and to identify the best policy options towards sustainable consumption. These include data on household consumption trends and drivers, environmental impacts, policy responses and policy recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> See URL: <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/consume/mit.html>

The main outputs from the programme were frameworks and objectives of governmental policies and analysis of the effectiveness of different types of policy instruments (regulatory, economic, and social) in influencing consumer decision-making. The results of this work were presented in a number of publications (OECD 1997; OECD 2002; OECD 2002; OECD 2002).

The OECD Annual Meeting of Sustainable Development Experts (AMSDE), held in Paris, in 2007, discussed how promoting sustainable consumption and production, implementing reviews of national sustainable development strategies and ensuring sustainable and coherent development policies can be supported. Two studies commissioned by the OECD “Promoting sustainable consumption. Good practices in OECD countries” (OECD 2008) and “Household Behaviour and the Environment. Reviewing the Evidence” (OECD 2008) served as a contribution to the discussion. The studies draws on work being done within various OECD Committees (including the Environment Policy Committee, Committee on Consumer Policy, and Trade Committee), and the seven Marrakech Task Forces led by OECD countries.

OECD has also co-organised the third dialogue session of the UN Inter-Agency Network that took form of the OECD-DAC/ENVIRONET - UNEP workshop “Sustainable Consumption and Production for Development: Building Cooperation and Synergies Towards Rio +20, Supporting Poverty Reduction and Green Growth” and that took place in Paris in June 2010. The main goals of the workshop were to explore synergies between SCP and green economy, creation of jobs and other the Millennium Development Goals (OECD-UNEP 2010).

## 4 THE EUROPEAN UNION ACTIVITIES ON SCP

At the EU level, the European Commission, Parliament and Council have all played key roles in promoting SCP, through development and negotiation of, and response to, strategies, communications, action plans and Directives which have relevance to this horizontal theme area. There is also a clear consensus that sustainable consumption needs better institutional integration at the international (EU) and national levels.

The Lisbon Strategy (European Commission 2000), the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy (Commission of the European Communities 2005) and the Sixth Environmental Action Programme 2002-2012 (including its thematic strategies) have provided the broad policy framework for promoting SCP. SCP is recognised as one of the 10 key objectives of the Community Lisbon Programme 2008-2010. A major milestone in the evolution of SCP in the EU policy arena was the launch of the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) in June 2006. It identified sustainable consumption and production as one of seven key challenges to be tackled by implementation action.

The EU Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan launched in 2008 set out a policy framework for implementation and is currently under review (see section 4.1). Lately, in the light of the economic crisis SCP patterns have been linked to the European Union’s goal to create a “Single Market for Research and Innovation” and the goals of the European Employment Strategy to create more and better jobs, goals which are taken up in the new Europe 2020 Strategy by highlighting a new growth perspective. The Europe 2020 Strategy puts forward three priorities: smart growth stemming from developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; sustainable growth based on a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy; and inclusive growth that fosters a high-employment economy of social and territorial cohesion (European Commission 2010). It also sets five measurable EU targets for employment; research and innovation; climate change and energy; education and for combating poverty.

Some other strategies and policies relevant to SCP are outlined in Table 2. Due to the cross-cutting nature of SCP, strategies and policies of Directorate Generals other than DG Environment also influence consumption and production and, vice versa.

**TABLE 2 SOME ADDITIONAL EU POLICIES AND COMMUNICATIONS RELEVANT TO SCP**

	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Year</b>
Cardiff Process	DG TREN; DG Enterprise & Industry; DG Agriculture etc.	1999
Communication on Integrated Product Policy	DG Env	2003
Environmental Technologies Action Plan	DG Env; DG RTD	2004
EU Consumer Strategy	DG SANCO	
Communication on Corporate Social Responsibility	DG Enterprise & Industry	2002
Green Paper on Market Based Instruments	DG Tax and customs; DG Env	2007
Communication on Innovation	DG Enterprise & Industry	2006

The challenges for operationalising and implementing these policy strategies reveal the unprecedented scale of change that the society has to undergo on the path to sustainability. As demonstrated, shifting towards sustainable consumption and lifestyles cannot be realised by a single actor or by merely top-down processes. Therefore the EU policy increasingly recognises the need for more participatory policies. For example, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) and Aarhus Convention stipulate societal involvement in decision making on environmental and sustainability matters as one of the guiding policy principles (European Commission 2006). The active involvement, commitment and empowerment of all relevant stakeholders is needed for a transition towards a more sustainable society, in which high quality of life is achieved through low-carbon lifestyles that are equally encouraged, supported and enabled across cultures and contexts.

Finally, the European Commission has a role in gathering data and providing funding for research into SCP, through its own data and research facilities (EUROSTAT, JRC) and through the research framework programmes (more on that is presented in section 4.2).

#### 4.1 EU ACTION PLAN ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

As a consequence of the EU SDS, the EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and on Sustainable Industrial Policy (SIP) was developed in July 2008 as an attempt to develop a concrete programme, or umbrella policy, specifically aimed at sustainable consumption.<sup>2</sup> The EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production actions encompasses the following building blocks (European Commission 2008): eco-design requirements for more products; reinforced energy and environmental labelling; incentives and public procurement for highly performing products; green public procurement practices; consistent product data and methodologies; work with retailers and consumers; supporting resource efficiency, eco-innovation and enhancing the environmental potential of industry; and promoting sustainable production and consumption internationally.

Despite the seemingly comprehensive scope, the level of ambition of the EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production has been heavily criticised by non-governmental organisations and academic community for failure to provide a coherent rather than piecemeal policy umbrella and for lack or rather absence of measurable targets, manageable goals and clear timeframes. The European Environmental Bureau claimed that the Plan “lacks vision, clarity and ambition” and that “the proposals generally represent a watering down of the Integrated Product Policy (IPP) Communication from the Commission in 2003”(EEB 2008). Now, two years after the critique, the commission is considering revising the EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production to address some of the raised issues.

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<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/507&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Last but not least, environmental legislation and regulation and to some extent market-based instruments are the cornerstone of the EU bottom-up approach in the broader SCP field. Relevant examples in this respect include the EU waste regime with a range of producer responsibility directives, the Energy-using Products Directive (EuP), Green Public Procurement (GPP), the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and the European Eco-label Scheme as well as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

## 4.2 EC SUPPORT OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ON SCP THROUGH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMMES

As part of the efforts to engage different stakeholders into developing ideas about sustainable society, the European Commission has been funding and supporting the work of technical platforms. Based on the idea that economic growth, competitiveness and sustainable development largely depend on sound research and development activities these platforms aim to create visions, propose concrete research agendas and implement research strategies. Their work has been and still remains crucial for advancing research policy on sustainable consumption. A large number and variety of stakeholders engaged in these platforms provide necessary expertise, insights and foresights that help identify future technical, economic and societal challenges. The success of the technological platforms has paved the way for the recent efforts of the European Commission on establishing and supporting socio-technical platforms and societal networks, which have been set up in recent years to address the question of how sustainable consumption and lifestyles can be encouraged and enabled in contemporary society.

For example, the 6<sup>th</sup> EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development funded several EU-wide projects that aim at addressing consumption-related problems. The HOMESERVICE project investigated a wide variety of services that are currently provided to households and aimed to estimate their dematerialisation potential. MOSES – Mobility Services for Urban Sustainability was a project that analysed possibilities of replacing car ownership with car sharing. FESCOLA – Feasibility and Scope of Life-Cycle Approaches to Sustainable Consumption – aimed to outline how life cycle assessment (LCA) and similar approaches, such as environmental input-output analysis, could be used to advance the sustainable consumption agenda. TOOLSUST evaluated the environmental situation in five European cities and suggested ways for households to contribute to improving the current situation. It also developed tools for addressing sustainable consumption in close collaboration with stakeholders. EMUDE – Emerging Users Demands for Sustainable Solutions – mapped out emerging sustainable users' demands and devised a set of qualitative scenarios on how these demands and specific products and services could co-evolve. A European project Sustainable Consumption Policies Effectiveness Evaluation (SCOPE2) made an inventory and analysed the effectiveness of policy instruments, voluntary business initiatives for sustainable consumption and production and more systemic approaches to realise SCP. Finally, ASCEE - Assessing the potential of various instruments for sustainable consumption practices and greening of the market - was a project that aimed to contribute to policy development by identifying promising innovative approaches and tools to foster sustainable consumption. It presented some strategic recommendations on how to progress in this arena.

The 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development funded several EU-wide projects on various consumption-related issues. For example, DelibSCP project (2008-2009) aimed to identify research needs and design elements of deliberative processes on sustainable consumption and production in the domains of food, housing and mobility and to discuss conclusions for future research agenda from the perspective of civil society's needs.

These include the DelibProcessSCP project (FP7); Changing Behaviour (FP7); Human cities, Sustainable Urban Design (EC Action programme "Culture" (2007-2013). Two new social platforms have been created on "Cities and Social Cohesion" and "Research for Families and Family Policies".

Enhancing connectivity between research and policy-making in sustainable consumption (CORPUS) is another project on sustainable consumption funded by the FP7. The project aims to improve knowledge transfer at the

interface of policy-making and research on sustainable development through application of web platforms with in-built incentives attracting and matching researchers' and policy-makers' interests in knowledge exchange and through the development and testing of interactive tools of knowledge brokerage within different dialogue-oriented formats, such as scenario workshops and mapping exercises.

## 5 EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY WORK ON SCP

The European Environmental Agency has been actively working with consumption issues in the past decade in various forms. One of the most known reports the Agency published on consumption provided quantitative and qualitative overview of household consumption trends in Europe (EEA 2005).

In 2008 the European Environmental Agency issued a call for establishing European Topic Centre of Sustainable Consumption and Production. ETC /SCP is a consortium of eight partner organisations from environmental authorities and research institutions in Europe that collaborate together on providing research support, facilitate the provision of data and information from the countries and deliver reports and other services to the EEA and Eionet on sustainable consumption and production, including resource management and waste management issues.<sup>3</sup>

The ETC/SCP and EEA have produced a number of studies on environmental impacts of households and environmental Pressures from European consumption and production (ETC/SCP 2009), on recycling issues and economic instruments for addressing sustainable consumption and production. A recently finalised study analysed the role of retailers in promoting sustainable consumption patterns (ETC/SCP 2010). Another study investigated factors that shape unsustainable consumption behaviour and what measures could be undertaken by policy makers to reduced the identified barriers to more sustainable consumption patterns (ETC/SCP 2010).

## 6 SCP STRATEGIES IN EU MEMBER STATES

Two supranational sustainability strategies with EU relevance, namely the Nordic Strategy of Sustainable Development (2004) and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (2005), also integrate SCP as a key component. In the case of the former, SCP is defined as one of the horizontal action areas. In the latter case, one of the four main objectives of the strategy is to “change unsustainable production and consumption patterns and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources”.

Few individual states appear to have a more developed strategy than the EU. UK has produced a document outlining the main principles and policy instruments for dealing with sustainable consumption challenges (DEFRA and DTI 2003), but so far there seem to have been more debate than action. Sweden also developed a national strategy for sustainable consumption (Regeringens skrivelse 2006), but it has not been followed up with an implementation plan. Finland is also among the few European countries that have developed their national SCP programme, called “Getting more from less” (KULTU Committee 2005). The evaluation of the Finnish programme reveals the risk of “politics of lowest common denominator”: in order to reach consensus the text of the programme had to be watered down so that it currently provides little support to the government in the implementation work (Berg 2007).

A study of existing in 2007 strategies for SCP in different European member states provides certain insights into how far various countries proceeded in addressing sustainable consumption and production issues (EEA 2007). In 2007, ten countries had developed dedicated SCP strategies or included SCP as part of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. The study analysed in details 5 countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France and the UK. The analysis of these documents led to the following insights on the state of the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://scp.eionet.europa.eu/>

art on sustainable consumption and production in EU Member States. The analysed strategies included both elements that set out general policy directions and elements that set concrete targets and discuss ways of their implementation, such as action plans. The level of novelty differed significantly among the strategies, with all strategies containing description of ongoing activities and some of them setting plans for several new activities. The study identified some common tools and instruments employed in the strategies and concluded that all strategies represented some sort of list of building blocks of instruments or activities, e.g. ecolabelling, GPP, etc., with some more holistic elements, e.g. fostering structural changes or identifying new modes of fulfilling societal needs.

## 7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

One of the main criticisms of the work on sustainable consumption and production so far is the failure of most of the involved actors to address the issue of consumption levels and not only consumption patterns. There is still the belief in strategies of decoupling the standards of living from environmental load by increasing production efficiency and a rather weak acknowledgement that reducing the levels of consumption and changing lifestyles must be discussed. This issue of consumption levels has been carefully avoided by for example, the head of UNEP DTIE who emphasised that “sustainable consumption is not about consuming less, it is about consuming differently, consuming efficiently, and having an improved quality of life” (UNEP 1999).

Another problem is that strategies and policy instruments on sustainable consumption and production seem to rely mostly on technological innovation, largely missing the need for and understanding of the importance of social innovation in reaching sustainable society.

Additional limitation of the current efforts at all levels, both national and international, is the over-reliance on voluntary measures with almost total lack of regulatory and relatively few economic instruments to address the consumption side.

Furthermore, consumers are seen as the main actor responsible for reducing consumption related impacts, since governments are reluctant to engage with sovereign consumers, while businesses employ the sustainability rhetoric for boosting sales of both traditional and green products, thereby leading to increased aggregate environmental and social impacts and increased uses of virgin resources.

The overview of activities of UN and EU organisations, as well as of national SCP strategies, demonstrates that the SCP work is still in its initial phases. Clear understanding of the direction towards systematic, coherent and effective SCP strategies, set and measurable targets in SCP area and practical implementation steps is largely missing.

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