

# Ostend NGO Statement towards Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

EU Stakeholder Meeting 24.-26.11.2004

To "improve the quality of life for everyone within the Earth's carrying capacity" is the core interest of Agenda 21 and all those who care for sustainability. Given the insight that only limited resources are available to fulfil this goal, it is necessary to develop economies which are less consumptive via different and more effective production and consumption patterns. **To reach this goal is not only a question of scientific or technical improvement; it is foremost a question which values drive societal development and of political will to make the necessary changes.** This means developing a wider vision of welfare, where satisfaction of **needs**, rather than consumption per se, is the aim. Consuming sustainable depends on accepting the responsibility to live in harmony with the greater community of life. It also means that responsible politicians need to move from commitments to action.

## Responsibility of European Policy

As demanded in Agenda 21 the developed countries - and thus the EU at the regional level - have to show leadership in changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns. An international work plan was initiated in Oslo in 1994 already and states have been calling for action for more than a decade now. Thus the "European Stakeholder Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production" needs to implement those commitments and actions into institutional frameworks as well as specific initiatives. Recognising that first steps have been taken - as reported in the EU Inventory - it is obvious that actual developments of consumption and production still do not lead into a sustainable direction.

Thus ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability, ECO-Forum, the European Environmental Citizens Organisations, the European Environmental Bureau as well as further NGO's call the European Commission, the National Governments of the member states as well as Governments all over Europe to identify the gaps in existing policies, and elaborate policies for all sectors, while taking into account the external dimensions of these policies.

## Key Elements

To reach less consumptive economies requires a broad-based approach. Key elements within that are:

**Ecological fiscal reform** containing (i) removal of all perverse subsidies; (ii) use of eco-taxes to internalise external costs; (iii) price mechanisms to support policy integration; (iv) selective use of positive incentives; (v) development of new measures of progress accounting more fully for environmental impacts within the current system of accounts.

**Clean and eco-effective production** supported by (i) green investment; (ii) eco-innovation; (iii) eco - design; (iv) appropriate products standards and labelling programmes; (v) increasing market access for environmental goods and services; (vi) environmentally sound public procurement rules and practices.

**Education for sustainable consumption and production** via (i) integrating knowledge of relevant consumption behaviour into curricula from pre-school to universities and in the concepts of life long learning; (ii) providing data for reliable information; (iii) report on indicators to shape consumption behaviour that can make a difference.

**Corporate responsibility and accountability** as legally binding framework including (i) by creating full transparency about the sustainability performance of business; (ii) dialogue between enterprises and the communities in which they operate; (iii) financial institutions to incorporate sustainable development considerations into their decision - making processes; workplace.

**Information and public participation for sustainable consumption and production** including (i) a broader right to know; (ii) involvement of stakeholders into decision making or at least consultative structures; (iii) support and financing of participation structures; (iv) develop and provide effective transparent and verifiable consumer information tools relating to sustainable consumption and production.

## Member State Policies

The same requirements as referred to for the European Union apply for **national policies**: the key elements necessary to achieve Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns as outlined above have to be integrated into national sustainability strategies as well as national sectoral policies.

## Next steps.<sup>1</sup>

The **Spring Summit 2005** should introduce an action plan how to implement instruments towards Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns instead of calling for action only.

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<sup>1</sup> More detailed proposals can be found in the "EEB comments towards EU action on the 10 year FWK of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production"

As a starting point **sustainable consumption and production must become a chapter unto itself with a clear objective and action plan in the revised version of the European Sustainable Development Strategy.**

Also, by merging and harmonising objectives of the Lisbon and the SDS strategy and the integration of the key elements towards Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns, the European Union will be able to reaffirm Europe's sustainable development leadership role both within Europe and in its external relations.

Additionally, it is necessary to **integrate** the requirements of Sustainable Consumption and Production **into other relevant policy areas** e.g. to develop a European Sustainable Consumption and Production Research Platform within the 7. Research Framework; and a Framework for Consumer Policy within DG SANCO.

**ANPED Eco Forum and EEB call the European Union, its member states and other European governments to agree on the following**

1. To establish a **European Expert Group on Sustainable Consumption and Production** based on national government representatives and relevant stakeholders. Participants should be mandated to work on concrete strategy building on regional level and serve as focal points in the national contexts.
2. To develop **process related** as well as **content related targets, timetables and benchmarking procedures.** A regional/EU framework how to integrate Sustainable Consumption and Production into EU policymaking should be presented at the Marrakech II conference in Costa Rica. It has to be build on **content** related targets and timetables for measures towards better quality of life and indicators to evaluate the material and physical success of these activities.
3. To enable **information** for better use of the potential on the demand side for sustainability **and public participation** via active inclusion of civil society into decision making, clear and transparent structures, open communication and funding for the input of civil society.

### **Supporting Activities and Cooperation**

Further on, ANPED, Eco Forum and EEB call to support the following processes and activities.

- (i) The elements of sustainable consumption and production should be included into the framework of the «**Environment for Europe**» work as pan-European regional strategy to phase out unsustainable production and consumption patterns. A Regional European Strategy for Sustainable Production and Consumption should be formally incorporated into the ECE agenda for the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Belgrade 2007.
- (ii) Education on sustainable consumption should be embedded into the efforts of the **UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development** mobilising and empowering the public for the protection of nature, environmental policies, and sustainable development. Highlighting the specific importance of sustainable consumption and production patterns to reach sustainability could be the European contribution to the ESD Decade that will start in 2005.
- (iii) The **European Environmental Agency** has enabled adequate environmental communication through solid data research on consumption and productions patterns and its environmental effects. EEA work on sustainable consumption and productions should be strengthened, set on a permanent basis, and made available for practical use in the different member states.
- (iv) In a broad and participatory process **UN DESA** developed a set of **indicators** allowing a reasonable and understandable monitoring of developments in sustainable consumption and production. developments. As a starting point these indicators should be used to report on national and regional level.
- (v) The **UNEP SCOPE** program initiated national round tables on sustainable consumption and production in several Eastern European countries. This instrument to support national activities and to integrate stakeholder participation should be strengthen and extended to Western European countries.

### **Role of civil society**

ANPED, Eco Forum and EEB as well as further national and international NGO's are prepared to cooperate as **partners in concrete** national and international **projects** towards sustainable consumption and production. Further on, they will provide reliable **public information** and **education** but also **ensure accountability** of those with the power to make policy and the rules for society and to **guarantee transparency** about successes and failures on the way to improve the quality of life for everyone.

Beside broad consultation this paper is influenced by:

ANPED, 1999, From Consumer Society to Sustainable Society, Sosterburg, <http://anped.org/PDF/4spacsb99.pdf>

ANPED, 2001, Eliminating Barriers to Sustainable Production and Consumption, <http://anped.org/PDF/SPAC%20Issue%20paper.pdf>

Eco-Forum, 2003, Making Kyiv a historical step forward for Europe's environment – Letter to Ministers, <http://www.eco-forum.org/Towards/letter-to-ministers-eng.htm>

Eco-Forum, 2003, Final messages from the European Eco-Forum to the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Kyiv, <http://www.eco-forum.org/Kyiv03/finalmes-e.htm>

Germanwatch/Worldwatch, 2004, Planning Workshop on Sustainable Consumption – briefing book for workshop participants, internal paper

The Green Eight (joint document), 2004, What happened to the 80 commitments? - Green Eight Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy,