

# BLUEPRINT FOR EUROPEAN SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION:

Finding the path of transition to a sustainable society



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This document is a result of collaboration between environmental and social organisations and the research community working on issues specific or closely related to sustainable consumption and production.

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## Foreword

Since the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, it has been recognised by the governments of this world that unsustainable consumption and production patterns, in particular those of industrialised countries, form the biggest threat to the Earth's capacity to satisfy human needs. Yet, despite this recognition, the situation has considerably worsened since that time. The Ecological Footprint measurements have shown that global resource use became unsustainable (using more than the planet provides) in the mid-1980s and continues to grow without slowing. The 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment highlighted what such behaviour meant for ecosystems – over 75% of them are deteriorating. In the EU, our levels of consumption of natural resources are, relatively speaking, much more unsustainable than the global average. If the world had our consumption patterns, almost three planets would be necessary to feed current needs.

We have become aware of the problem and started to act. We have had some successes, or at least beginnings, in fighting certain types of pollution and degradation. Fighting climate change leads to less problematic production and increased energy efficiency. Even resource efficiency has received some attention, even though it sometimes competes with the climate agenda.

However, population growth in combination with increasing productivity and the global penetration of western consumerism is driving up total resource and energy use and nothing seems to be able to stop it until it collapses, or, as the authors of this Blueprint say “crashes against the Earth”. The piecemeal approach we have now towards more efficiency, compromised in the political process and often poorly implemented, does not reduce overall resource consumption because of the “rebound effect”: if you save money with increased efficiency, you will use the surplus for additional resource consuming activities.

Many people know this and are convinced we need a more radical approach. But there are many hurdles to cross in order to achieve this action. Amongst these is the awareness that you cannot, and to a certain extent should not, force people to reduce their material prosperity. Another one is that it remains a guessing game about what are precisely the right measures and how you, if you are a politician, get re-elected after you have put a real sustainable consumption policy into motion.

The authors of this Blueprint are opening this debate at the EU level. They criticise the limited scope of the Commission's Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and sketch what more is needed. They are not rejecting the policies proposed or the processes put into motion - they simply say it is not nearly enough. They explicitly demand that sustainable consumption patterns are seen as patterns that everyone on the planet can share and that policy measures should tackle over-consumption, but they also want to open the debate about the link between consumption and happiness: research shows that after a certain level of material consumption, other things become more important to feel fine, including thinking again in terms of societies and social networks rather than in terms of individuals is becoming important. They believe that technological innovation is important, but social innovation even more so. They also plead for sustainable consumption and production to become key elements of wider sustainable development strategies, bringing in issues of fairness, solidarity and prosperity for all (both inside the EU and globally).

For the record: this publication does not represent an EEB position. It is a discussion document. I hope this Blueprint will trigger the debate that it is meant to, a debate that will provide us with more answers, point us toward more good examples of specific actions already taking place and find a real solution for the dilemma we face of wanting to dramatically reduce our footprint while providing a growing population with wellbeing and prosperity over the long term.

**John Hontelez**  
*Secretary General EEB*



## Summary

This *Blueprint for European Sustainable Consumption and Production* is a result of a common effort made by representatives from environmental and social organisations and the research community. It brings together cutting-edge analysis, technical expertise, and civil society representation to communicate urgent and priority actions to help Europe change its consumption and production patterns. The document ends with a list of proposed actions and expected leadership from government, business and civil society organisations (CSOs)

The formal SCP agendas developed in European countries so far often suggest 'convenient truths'. Too often the bet is that marginal changes or technical progress will save the day. Scientifically, this is erroneous. The scale of destruction already created by the world's 6.7 billion people (which is largely driven by production for and consumption in "Western", industrialised societies) can be considered a "global collision" between ecological limits and economic performance. By 2050, 9 billion people are forecasted to inhabit the Earth, almost 50% more than today. Nowadays, despite poverty and low consumption patterns for the majority, globally we already consume resources as if we have 1.3 planets available. This overconsumption and the related destruction of the planet will accelerate to 2 planets by 2030 and beyond that from then on. Under these conditions, there is simply no technical improvement scenario that can deliver the level of decoupling needed between economic growth and absolute limits on energy and resource use.

Such a situation demands that we address the underlying problems in how we have structured our societies and to undertake a fundamental re-think of production, consumption and our economic system as a whole. This would mean providing good lives for everyone in the world, while remaining within set ecological limits.

A serious SCP agenda is one that addresses the key areas where impacts are made, or where behaviour creates the most serious damage. In Europe, this demands that we focus attention on:

- Making society more equitable through distribution and redistribution systems, social justice, ending poverty, designing it so that it is easier for people to contribute to a society that they want to live in.
- Designing society to be a low environmentally damaging one, focusing on the areas where the largest environmental impacts are made, in food and drink/agriculture, housing including energy-using products, and transportation including tourism.
- Creating social and physical infrastructure to make sustainable behaviour easier.

For the future, two alternatives are possible. The first is to adjust production and consumption systems marginally – and ultimately see the economy crash against the Earth. The second is to take up the challenge with all the positive energy possible and to develop a world providing good lives for all. Where in the past, we focused more on wealth, growth and efficiency, the future will need to be about well-being, quality and sufficiency. The SCP agenda is hence about nothing more, and nothing less, than an intelligent and controlled transition to living better and more equally, within planetary limits, which requires fundamental changes to our historical approach including:

- Living within limits
- Shaping a sustainable *society*, not a sustainable *consumer*
- Addressing the public as citizens in society, not simply as consumers
- Addressing production *and* consumption
- Creating the systems that lead to sustainable behaviour

Such fundamental changes require that the SCP agenda be seen as a strategic one that is embedded in an appropriate institutional framework. It should be seen as an overarching agenda playing a central role in EU and national Sustainable Development Strategies. It should be handled by units at the top of institutions engaged in cross-cutting sustainability policies, requiring adequate monitoring, both in terms of process and result. Finally, access to knowledge and finances for operational activities should be fostered.

The transformational nature of the agenda calls for embarking on two complementary strategies combining bottom-up and top-down action:

- a. Implement approaches and policies that are already legitimised.
- b. Embark on actions and experiments that create inspiration and foster legitimisation for more far-reaching change.



A courageous, skilled and inspiring leadership should be able to implement most agenda points now and really make the difference between an intelligent, controlled transition and a chaotic, clumsy one forced on us by further crises. Given the need for far-reaching change, including in areas where there is not yet political and scientific clarity and agreement, it is important to focus on the optimism of action. We know that the current "system" or approach is not working, and although we may not have complete answers for how it needs to change, we need to start out with the idea that change needs to happen, and most importantly that it *can* happen.



## Introduction

The backdrop of this document is a policy agenda called ‘Sustainable Consumption and Production’ (SCP). At the European Union level, a Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan was produced in 2008 as part of international-level work on the United Nations’ Ten Year Framework of Programmes on SCP<sup>1</sup>. In preparing the Blueprint, the NGO and research communities wanted to present their views on the SCP agenda and what actions public institutions (governments at all levels), the business community, and civil society can – and should - undertake. So the Blueprint acknowledges the complexity of this challenge, particularly as Europe includes some of the most industrialised, consumerist countries in the world.

Yet, the formal SCP agendas as they have been developed so far often deny complexity. Too often the bet is that marginal changes or technical progress alone will save the day, ignoring or denying that we have already had difficulties maintaining the “gains” made from improved efficiencies because increased consumption has eaten up these gains. Pressing problems hence often remain under-addressed or ignored, posing important risks in the longer term. This is even true for SCP agendas in European countries, often seen as world leaders on issues of sustainability, especially on environmental issues.

This Blueprint takes a different approach. We show that business as usual is a dead end street and marginal change is not enough. We try to provide clear ways forward or hints towards some new paths needed, to help us make the change to more equitable societies that live within the Earth’s ecological limits. Such an effort includes looking at how we have organised our economic systems around production and consumption, and therefore the need to change both the systems and the behaviour they encourage if we truly want to achieve sustainable development.

Although the Blueprint looks at SCP from a European perspective, the global impacts of these activities are implicitly considered. Our shared vision is global equity in wellbeing and access to resources, and recognition that Europe’s policies and behaviour have global impacts. As European individuals and institutions, we start from a principle of moral obligation to achieve such global equity and from a spirit of collaboration and interdependence.

This Blueprint first presents the need and goals for change (section 2). It then provides a vision on change and the actions needed by government, business and civil society (section 3), followed by a concluding review that includes a table with proposed actions and leadership per action (section 4).

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<sup>1</sup> See: [ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/escp\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/escp_en.htm) and [esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/](http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/)

## SCP: goals of change

**The starting point: the sense that something is going wrong** Since the Industrial Revolution, humans have realised an economic growth unprecedented in human history. This growth was made possible by technical progress, but also by an unprecedented rise in the use of finite, non-renewable resources, transformation of ecosystems into cultivated land, and the use of nature as a sink for residuals of production and consumption.

Yet, this tremendous economic achievement could not prevent the increasing number of stories of damage, instability and loss. These stories centre around humans, the environment and economies – the classical three pillars of sustainable development. Since the 1987 Brundtland Report, the term “sustainable development” has become part of the political fabric, with sustainability objectives woven into the practices of most public institutions, organisations and companies. Yet, despite more than 20 years of integration into words, signals indicate that things are continuing to get worse.

People are affected by rocketing prices of staple foods, growing disparity between rich and poor, increases in illnesses and growing insecurity and uncertainty. These make their lives more precarious and make many people fear for their future. Climate change brings us melting ice caps, reduced or failed harvests, forest fires, droughts and floods. Biodiversity loss continues, and an increasing number of countries are becoming ecological “debtors” with ecological footprints larger than what the countries can sustain themselves. The meeting of fundamental needs, such as access to clean drinking water, shelter and food, are a harder struggle for more people on the planet – whether in poor or rich nations.

**Such stories illustrate the problems associated with the concept of limitless growth on a finite planet.** The 20<sup>th</sup> century was one characterised by expansion – of knowledge, wealth, use of resources, the human population, and markets. Since the Industrial Revolution our approach has been based on encouraging consumption as a means of stimulating economy and of supporting production. Some commentators and policy-makers recognise that we have begun to see the downturn in the growth curve since we’ve gone beyond the limits of some finite resources or as our use of some resources is systematically at a level higher than they are able to renew themselves. To date, these have not been translated into SCP policies addressing this reality.

### The simple maths: Western lifestyles are negotiable and need questioning

We now live in a world of 6.7 billion people, where 1 billion live wealthy lives, 1-2 billion live in fast developing economies, and 3-4 billion people get by on just a few dollars a day. But a new and rapidly expanding middle class in fast developing economies like China and India is quickly closing the wealth gap with the West<sup>2</sup>. This happens in a world where already at present the economy seems to ‘crash against the Earth’ (See Box 1) – a process still mainly driven by consumption in Western, industrialised economies, which cause over two thirds of the global environmental impacts (including impacts caused abroad by production of imported goods).



<sup>2</sup> Meyers, N, and J Kent; “*The New Consumers: The Influence of Affluence on the Environment*”; Washington DC/ Covelo CA, London: Island Press; 2004.



### Box 1: The Great Collision - a global economy crashing against the Earth

James Gustave Speth, former United Nations Development Programme administrator, starts his book *'The Bridge at the Edge of the World'* with a sobering summary of findings in recent authoritative environmental and ecological assessments: "Half the world's tropical and temperate forests are now gone... About half the wetlands and a third of the mangroves are gone... An estimated 90 percent of the larger predatory fish are gone, and 75 percent of the marine fisheries are now overfished or fished to capacity... Species are disappearing at rates about a thousand times faster than normal... Over half of the agricultural land in drier regions suffers from some degree of deterioration and desertification. Persistent toxic chemicals can now be found by the dozens in essentially each and every one of us."<sup>3</sup>

We also know that if fast developing countries copy current Western consumption and production patterns, we will need around 5 planets to provide the resources for these lifestyles by 2050 (see Box 2). Since we do not have those 5 planets, environmental crises and conflicts about access to natural resources will be unavoidable, unless we find ways to use resources more efficiently, as well as more equally. Forecasts for reserves of some finite resources found commonly in everyday products, such as copper, zinc and silver have horizons within the lifetime of many of us – 30-40 years. Indium, which is an essential and rare metal used in LED lights (which are seen as highly energy efficient alternatives even to compact fluorescent lamps), is so rare that there are less than 15 years' worth of reserves left at 2006 global consumption levels.

### Box 2: Our Ecological Footprint: Ending Overshoot

The Ecological Footprint, developed in the 1990s by Matthis Wackernagel and William Rees, is a measure expressing how much bioproductive land is needed for meeting human consumption. It consists of various factors: land use for infrastructure, land use for agricultural activities and fishing, and (potential) land use for compensating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from non-renewable energy resources.

In 2005, the Earth's biocapacity was estimated at 1.8 global hectares (gha) per person (at a global population of just over 6bn). Yet, the resource extraction and emissions caused by the consumption of an average European caused a use of around 4.6 gha bioproductive land per person. Population growth to 9bn people in 2050 would shrink the available biocapacity to around 1.2 gha/person. This implies that even in the absence of economic growth, in a world where each citizen can claim equal rights to bioproductive land, the average European should reduce his ecological footprint by a factor of 4 to 25% of their current footprint. For US citizens, now using 9.6gha/per person, this would mean a reduction by a factor of 10, to 10% of their current footprint<sup>4</sup>.

Even in the area of energy and global warming, where there is much more scientific and political consensus than on other sustainability issues, the challenge is daunting. A recent paper by the International Energy Agency (IEA) has identified the serious impact of the current economic and financial crisis taking public attention away from critical energy and climate change challenges. Where for instance the Stern review and the latest assessment of the IPCC call for major human CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions<sup>5</sup>, which ultimately should be as low as 5 gigatonne (Gton) per year, the IEA projects that without strong policy actions such emissions will rise from 28 Gton in 2006 to 65 Gton in 2050 (see box 3). It should be noted that this projection is based on economic scenarios that still reflect significant disparities in wealth and income in the world.

<sup>3</sup> Speth, J G; *'The Bridge at the Edge of the World'*; Yale University Press; Yale/London; 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Data from WWF (2006), Living Planet Report 2006, Gland, Switzerland, [http://www.panda.org/about\\_our\\_earth/all\\_publications/living\\_planet\\_report/](http://www.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/living_planet_report/)

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. <http://www.occ.gov.uk/activities/stern.htm> and IPCC (2007): Climate change 2007: Synthesis Report , [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4\\_syr.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr.pdf)

### Box 3: The challenge of meeting IPCC targets – a reflection of the IEA<sup>6</sup>

*"The IEA has identified a clear need for substantial investment in all segments of the energy chain. But project delays and cancellations are becoming increasingly common. This creates the real risk that an energy supply crunch could choke off economic recovery as demand rebounds. At the same time, G8 governments have recognised that a business-as-usual pathway for the global energy system is not sustainable. ... Without additional policies, the IEA projects that primary energy demand will increase by an average of 1.6% per year over the next 25 years. Despite some changes to the fuel mix, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in this reference scenario also increase by 1.6% per year. This means that by 2030 energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will have risen by 45% from their 2006 levels of 28 Gton. Looking further ahead, without decisive action, energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could reach 62 Gton in 2050, resulting in an eventual global average temperature increase of up to 6°C. Most of the increase is in non-OECD countries, but per capita emissions will remain higher within the OECD. This is unsustainable, not only from a climate change perspective, but also from a security of supply perspective – this reference scenario would imply a 25% increase in global oil demand by 2030."*

There is also mounting evidence that current patterns of consumption and production are inefficient in providing social well-being. Of course, people need a certain material base – and hence income – to live decent lives. However, above a certain threshold, around \$10 -15.000 a year, more income or material use does not lead to a further rise of experienced prosperity or well-being. People in medium and low-income countries such as Chile, Costa Rica and Cuba have a higher life expectancy than in the US<sup>7</sup>. Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica and Barbados fall in the same Human Development Index category as the wealthy OECD countries<sup>8</sup>. There are strong indications that societies with a high inequality of wealth and income, and that after basic needs are met still focus predominantly on enhancing material wealth as the road to better lives, may in fact destroy or diminish the quality of the social fabric and institutions indispensable for real quality of life (box 4).

### Box 4: Limiting social polarisation: creating conditions for human flourishing

Many thinkers such as Ivan Illich and Fritz Schumacher have pointed out that material wealth is just one element relevant for quality of life<sup>9</sup>. Sure, it is essential that basic material needs are met. But after this, equally important are a sense of place in the society you help to construct, control over life, a sense of belonging, absence of fear. Research suggests that good family relations, health, a nice place to live, community and friends determine subjective well-being. Nobel Prize Laureate Amartya Sen argues that living standards are related to the capabilities of people to flourish and function in any given context<sup>10</sup>. In consumer societies, fulfilment of many of such 'immaterial' needs now requires (purchasing) access to stuff – often lots of stuff. Further, it does not take too much imagination to see that a society that is purely based on polarisation and competition will show important shortcomings. A high level of income disparity tends to enlarge the aspiration gap. The relative losers in the competition for income will see themselves living in less pleasant neighbourhoods. The desperate may be tempted to embark on crime. In a society where 'greed is good', social cohesion will easily fall victim to competition between individuals, with distrust, continuous uncertainty, etc. as a result. Denmark, a country with a very egalitarian tradition and limited income disparity, consistently comes out at the top of scores on societal equality and on well-being. Earlier this year, the new economics foundation (a UK 'think and do' tank) produced a report on the National Accounts of Wellbeing, in which Denmark scored the highest on personal well-being and social well-being<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> International Energy Agency; "Ensuring Green Growth in a Time of Economic Crisis: The Role of Energy Technology", Paris, France, April 2009. [www.iea.org/Textbase/Papers/2009/ensuring\\_green\\_growth.pdf](http://www.iea.org/Textbase/Papers/2009/ensuring_green_growth.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_life\\_expectancy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_life_expectancy)

<sup>8</sup> [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_20072008\\_Tables.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_Tables.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Schumacher, E F; "Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered": 25 Years Later. With Commentaries (1999). Hartley & Marks Publishers ISBN 0-88179-169-5; Illich, I; "Toward a History of Needs". New York : Pantheon Books; 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Sen, A; "Development as Freedom"; Oxford University Press; England; 1999.

<sup>11</sup> [www.neweconomics.org/gen/nationalaccountsofwell-being240109.aspx](http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/nationalaccountsofwell-being240109.aspx)



In any case, society is being pushed towards a change in consumption and production patterns, as our consistent over-use of the planet reaches its limits. Limits – to finite resources or to the planet’s ability to absorb the emissions resulting from our activities - are currently most evident in our over-dependence on fossil fuels: climate change and Peak Oil<sup>12</sup>. It will not be possible in future to consume as much energy as we do, particularly if we give room to less developed countries to catch up (see box 3). Therefore the products we make, how we transport them to their points of sale, how we transport ourselves, etc. will need to be reconsidered.

To conclude, this analysis leads to some ‘inconvenient truths’. It is very questionable if it is possible to make true the politically convenient suggestion that we can provide wealth for all countries, and keep climate change and Peak Oil at bay, solely through technical progress<sup>13</sup>. The planetary limits we have reached or exceeded, sooner or later will disprove the politically convenient view that we can grow a highly material-based economy forever on a finite planet, so the first inconvenient truth is that Western lifestyles *are* negotiable and need reconsidering if we are to share equitably at the global level the resources that remain.

### Implications: a transition to living better and more equally, within limits

The policy implications of this analysis are manifold. Remaining locked in the 20<sup>th</sup> century expansionist approach or in the consumption-production mindset is not an option. Examples such as Peak Oil, limited resource horizons and the limits to the planet’s ability to absorb emissions, demand that we reconsider this approach for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Having gone beyond natural limits or being very close to doing so on a number of resources, this century will need an approach of coming back *and staying well within* planetary limits. We will also need to do this with a growing global population.

Creating an approach for the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires change. Our societal objectives, hard and soft infrastructure, and the tools we use to deliver our objectives, need a rethink. Whereas in the past, we focused more on wealth, growth and efficiency, the future will need to be about well-being, quality and sufficiency. We need to change our approach from expansion to contraction and simplification. According to Richard Heinberg in his book *“Peak Everything”*<sup>14</sup>, those things that depend on the availability of energy and other critical resources, like economic growth, easy and cheap mobility, and technological change and invention, we will need to contract and simplify. *“All of these are clearly related to the availability of energy and other critical resources. Once we accept that energy, fresh water, and food will become less freely available over the next few decades, it is hard to escape the conclusion that while the 20th century saw the greatest and most rapid expansion of the scale, scope, and complexity of human societies in history, the 21st century will see contraction and simplification. The only real question is whether societies will contract and simplify intelligently or in an uncontrolled, chaotic fashion.”*

Yet not everything is about reduction - there are some things that are not near peak or have no limited supply: community, personal autonomy, satisfaction from honest work well done, intergenerational solidarity, cooperation, leisure time, happiness, ingenuity, artistry and beauty of the built environment. Heinberg says: *“We must focus on and use the intangibles that are not peaking (such as ingenuity and cooperation) to address the problems arising from our overuse of substances that are.”*

<sup>12</sup> According to Wikipedia, Peak Oil is “the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached, after which the rate of production enters terminal decline”.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Jackson, T; *“Prosperity without Growth: The Transition to a Sustainable Economy?”*; UK Sustainable Development Commission, London, UK; 2009. <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications>

<sup>14</sup> *“Peak Everything: Waking up to the Century of Decline in Earth’s Resources”*; Richard Heinberg; Clairview Books, 2007



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A planned, intelligent change requires a sustainability transition approach, one which refocuses the lens of our societal objectives, economic activities and behaviour. It is in this intelligent and controlled change where the SCP agenda has to play a crucial role. The SCP agenda is about nothing more than a transition to living better and more equally within planetary limits. In that sense, the SCP agenda is a crucial vehicle to ensure that we meet internationally set targets related to such limits, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.<sup>15</sup>

A sustainability transition approach must have at least the following characteristics:

- Taking the concept of One Planet Living as a starting point: accepting planetary limits, global equity as a key goal, minimising differences between rich and poor countries and people, and allowing equal access to resources.
- Going from a lower to a low or no environmental impact approach: this implies mainstreaming low/no carbon, low resource, low impact objectives – as compared to lower carbon which views improvements according to existing conventions. A low or no impact attitude sets out that behaviour, a product or service needs to already be designed at a low or no impact level.
- A strong focus on building social structures that aim to ensure well-being, dignity and equality for all, based on enabling people to help shape the society they want to live in.
- Economic strategies and mechanisms that aim to serve nature and society, through environmental protection and social justice.
- 'Beyond GDP': Replacement of quantity by quality as the measure of success or growth – particularly in economic terms, but also in recognition of equality for all, provision of societal services, etc.
- Recognition of the serious need for political leadership, through clear, coherent policy frameworks and regulations – no self-regulation for fundamental services with strong potential for societal or environmental impacts.
- Prioritisation of collective action - relocalisation of decision-making as a means of enabling them to shape their society.
- A strong focus on sustainable social justice, under consideration of cultural diversity and respect of 'otherness'. This agenda is based on well-being for all, giving attention to growth of human and social resources and having longer-term social aims.
- Social innovation also needs to be considered when seeking solutions, and the relationship between social and technological innovation needs to be better understood. Innovation develops in such a way that it does not simply add more to an existing situation (e.g. products), but rather that quality replaces poorer equivalents – ex-novation or out-novation.

Given that our path comes from a history of expansion, the aims of a sustainability transition approach can only be met if we accept that we need to change the path we are on, in order to allow everyone on the planet to live better and more equally, within limits.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. [www.cbd.int/](http://www.cbd.int/) and [unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)



## SCP: a vision for change

**Types of change needed** SCP requires some fundamental changes to our historical approaches:

**LIVING WITHIN LIMITS** The daily reminders of our having over-stepped ecological, social and economic limits are ongoing proof of the need to change our objectives and structures. Our social policies need to deliver more equal societies, within and between countries. The policies and delivery mechanisms needed to bring humanity back within ecological limits need to address this issue of limits, especially in the areas where our impacts are greatest<sup>16</sup>: food and drink and related agriculture; transportation and tourism; and housing (including the use of energy using products).

In any case, an important issue will be how to develop an economy that delivers what we truly value as a society – human wellbeing, relationships, community cohesion, rather than just growth in terms of money and material goods.

**SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY, NOT A SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER** Sustainable consumption and production in itself implies addressing *behaviour, to change unsustainable patterns*. The SCP agenda is a result of the recognition that our behaviour has social and environmental impacts with direct effect on achieving sustainable development (SD) objectives. The link between SCP and SD, therefore, is both obvious and important. At EU level, SCP has been added as a further “priority challenge” to the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, alongside issues such as public health; social inclusion, demography and migration; climate change and clean energy; and sustainable transport. In other words, it is treated like another objective to be elaborated and delivered via public policy, rather than as an implementing measure to help achieve overall SD objectives. SCP measures need to be mainstreamed into all policy areas, as a means of implementing SD objectives.

**ADDRESSING PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION** Although sustainable production can be considered more developed, due to more attention having been paid to environmental issues in production, to date the approach taken has been to look at a process or product in near isolation, with the aim of *reducing environmental impact as compared to convention*. **It has been assumed that environmental impact reductions through efficiency gains or reduced emissions naturally bring about reduced impacts overall. Overwhelming evidence has proven that this is not the case** – gains won through environmental improvements are lost through increased use especially when these gains bring reduced cost. For example, car fuel efficiency has generally increased over the past 3 decades, but more people own cars and are driving more and further. This phenomenon is called the rebound effect and has been mostly ignored in historical sustainable or eco-production efforts.

An *absolute reduction* in resource use or negative social or environmental impact requires that both consumption and production be addressed by policies, to avoid the rebound effect and to link both activities to the policy objective.

**ADDRESSING THE PUBLIC AS CITIZENS IN SOCIETY, NOT SIMPLY AS CONSUMERS** Part of the forward process on SCP needs to be to elaborate what it means and how it is developed to help deliver SD objectives. This is particularly true in the area of sustainable consumption, where traditional *consumer* policy has focused on consumer protection and safety, and aimed to provide protection from unsafe and unfair practices. Sustainable consumption demands a much broader approach, based on concepts of well-being and social justice. People live and consume within social constructs and therefore those structures need to be set up to support sustainable behaviour, including consumption. Sustainable consumption therefore needs to treat people as citizens in societal networks, not simply as consumers.

<sup>16</sup> A variety of studies has shown that these three consumption clusters drive 70-80% of the impacts of final consumption in developed economies. See for instance: Tukker, A. (ed., 2006): “Special Issue on the Environmental Impacts of Products”, *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 10:3; Hertwich, E G , “Life cycle approaches to sustainable consumption: A critical review”; *Environmental Science & Technology*, 39(13); 2005; pp 4673–4684.

## CREATING THE SYSTEMS THAT LEAD TO SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR

In order to address the citizen within society, and production and consumption together, policies and actions need to take a systems approach. That is, to consider actions within social structures, and to seek coherence in objectives throughout the production and consumption chain. This is done by considering the *social and physical infrastructure* in which production and consumption take place. For example, the public cannot be expected to drive cars less if there are not efficient and affordable public transport systems available to them, or if it costs less to use more polluting forms of transport (e.g. airplanes or cars over trains or buses).



### Actions by level of change – finding the path forward

**Genuine SCP needs to go further than just fostering marginal change and stimulating technical fixes. It needs**

**to facilitate the transition to more sustainable societies.** Where this Blueprint primarily focuses on European action (which could easily be applied to other Western economies), this holds for other parts of the world as well<sup>17</sup>.

Given the complexity of societies, it cannot be expected that individual actors, be they businesses, governments, or citizens, will embark successfully on such action on their own without some difficulty. Of course, there will be areas where a vision on how to implement change is commonly shared and legitimised and where direct action is possible (for example, on the need to reduce climate change impacts). However, there will also be areas where there is profound disagreement about the direction of change, or that may require change that clashes with existing societal preferences and approaches<sup>18</sup>. And finally, there will be areas where – despite there being a shared sense of urgency – it cannot be predicted what the transition path will look like because of the long time-horizons, interconnectedness of technology, behaviour and institutions. However, steps must be taken today to start the transition process, especially on those issues having significant mid- to long-term impacts in order to create the right “lock-in” for options in the future.

Against this background, we have identified at least three blocks of activities important for developing transitional action programmes towards SCP<sup>19</sup>:

- Establish a **basic institutional framework** in which real action can take place.
- Lead **change that can be realised within existing structures** and mindsets (there is a shared sense of urgency, and the steps are generally clear)
- Develop **inspiring approaches that can foster change** in the future that is not feasible now (due to unknowns in the transition path or outright controversy over the direction of change)

<sup>17</sup> For instance, through the potential for leapfrogging directly to sustainable patterns of production and consumption in fast developing economies and the need to provide livelihoods for the poor and contribute to poverty reduction. See e.g. S. Hart and M.B. Milstein (1999), “Global Sustainability and the Creative Destruction of Industries”; Sloan Management Review, Autumn 1999:23) and C.K Prahalad and S. Hart (2002), “The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid”; Strategy + Business, 26: 2-14.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, society is currently accustomed to continuous economic growth and largely based on free markets. The current economic crisis has made clear that uncontrolled markets fostering short-term profits are not sustainable, even in economic terms. However, it is far from clear what the right balance is for market controls and if an across-the-board limits to growth agenda is the answer. Protecting the Earth’s natural resources is key, not limiting growth *per se*. The ability of humankind to implement far-reaching technical/organisational innovations and shifts to less materials-based lifestyles will determine if growth – and what type of growth – will be possible within planetary limits.

<sup>19</sup> See for some further backgrounds about transitions in relation to SCP e.g.: Elzen, B., Geels, F.W. & Green, K. (eds) (2004), System Innovation and the Transition to Sustainability: Theory, Evidence and Policy, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar., and Tukker, A. M. Charter, C. Vezzoli, E. Sto and M.Munch Andersen (2008): System Innovation for Sustainability 1. Perspectives on Radical Changes to Sustainable Consumption and Production. Greenleaf Publishing, UK: Sheffield



#### ESTABLISH A BASIC INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

A serious SCP agenda at EU and Member State levels need a serious and appropriate institutional framework, addressing at least four key issues.

1. The EU and Member States need to develop SCP strategies that incorporate the three types of activities mentioned above, to shape a framework for transition.
2. SCP needs to be placed at a strategic, high level. It is striking to see that in most governmental institutions SCP is dealt with lower in the institutional and political hierarchy by relatively small groups, despite the strategic and fundamental character of the SCP agenda.
3. The additional activities mentioned in developing new approaches need to be facilitated by fostering access to finances and knowledge, and learning and networking activities.
4. A robust monitoring system must be created, one that is capable of analysing societal drivers, pressures, impacts and state of the environment and effectiveness of responses.

With regard to the first three topics, leadership lies clearly with the EU and the EU Member States. With regard to the last topic, a natural lead role lies with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and/or EUROSTAT and their national counterparts.

At global level, international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol on climate change are needed most urgently in other priority areas where humankind is in danger of surpassing planetary limits (particularly on certain natural resources including water and biotic resources). The recently created UNEP Resource Panel is the ideal starting point for such an Intergovernmental Panel on Resource Consumption, which would address natural resources limits and their consumption.

#### LEAD CHANGE THAT CAN BE REALISED WITHIN EXISTING STRUCTURES AND MINDSETS

**Growing awareness of the problems behind our economic, social and ecological crises and their impacts means that there is already legitimisation for many SCP solutions and strategies. It is becoming**

**much less acceptable for businesses not to take responsibility for social and environmental problems, even if this happens in supply chains.** In virtually all EU countries, organisations supervise specific markets to ensure fair competition and the absence of monopolies, unfair subsidies, etc. Transparency about social and environmental performance is widely supported. Normative objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals were unanimously accepted in the General Assembly of the UN. Many business leaders from international corporations signed up their companies to the UN Global Compact, committing their companies to contribute to key social and environmental objectives, and the concept of corporate social responsibility is recognised widely even if implemented in a narrow way thus far.

Such existing structures and mindsets already provide strong backing for far reaching SCP strategies. Unfortunately, in practice, the implementation of policy measures and other approaches is often frustrated by groups that feel their (short term) interests are challenged. In sum, more often than not, strong SCP policies are legitimised, even if not easy to implement in the current "system". Therefore, they need courageous, skilled and inspiring political and business leadership to be implemented. We call upon pro-active policy makers and business leaders to show this leadership, both at EU and national levels.

Actions focusing on 'direct change' can be taken at various levels. Here, we make a difference between consumption-specific actions and general actions. The latter include<sup>20</sup>:

<sup>20</sup> For an overview of SCP instruments, see the recent reports published by the EU-funded studies SCOPE2 (Sustainable Consumption Policies Effectiveness Evaluation, by TNO, SERI and Lund University, available via [Arnold.tukker@tno.nl](mailto:Arnold.tukker@tno.nl)) and ASCEE (Assessing the potential of various instruments for sustainable consumption practices and greening of the market), executed by IÖW, IES & SIFO (available via [Frieder.rubik@ioew.de](mailto:Frieder.rubik@ioew.de)).

1. Policy-driven actions: maximising the use of SCP instruments along the value chain. The EU and Member States clearly need to lead here, and such actions include:
  - a. Setting emission and (working towards) resource use caps, setting standards and charges and setting energy performance targets
  - b. Articulating sustainable industrial policy (as developed so far at EU level) and developing this more comprehensively at national level
  - c. Articulating sustainable innovation, with clearer targets than “reduced environmental impact”, and mainstreaming it so that it becomes the only acceptable kind of innovation
  - d. Enforcement of compliance with United Nations agreements on Human Rights<sup>21</sup>
  - e. Enforcement of International Labour Organisation standards, including for imported products
  - f. Shifting taxes from labour to resources
  - g. Internalising external costs and abolishing perverse subsidies
  - h. “Mainstreaming” eco-design so that all good design is ecologically performing
  - i. Requiring transparency in product design/ingredients/components – provision of information beyond advertising messages and labels
  - j. Limiting advertising
  - k. Countering monopolistic markets and allowing free consumer choice
  - l. Scaling up sustainable public procurement
  
2. Society-oriented actions: Here, the EU and Member States clearly need to lead. Two main lines can be discerned:
  - a. Governments should develop more equal societies through distribution and redistribution systems and building structures for societal engagement, ensuring that basic needs can be met for everyone while respecting diversity.
  - b. Crisis support such as the current economic recovery packages and innovation support should focus on making industrial systems fundamentally more sustainable. Much of the current economic recovery packages seem to focus on industries in turmoil, and at best ask them to become a bit ‘greener’ (e.g. the automotive industry). Instead, a sizable part of such recovery packages should be set aside for a ‘Green New Deal’<sup>22</sup>: packages that facilitate the shift from “sunset” to “sunrise” jobs such as in renewable energies, sustainable buildings, agriculture and transportation. Therefore **economic recovery or stimulus packages need to become transition packages, clearly transitioning to a different societal / economic set-up.**
  
3. Business-driven actions: maximising the use of SCP business initiatives. Proactive businesses and their representative organisations clearly need to lead here, and such actions include:
  - a. Upstream: corporate social responsibility and sustainable private procurement, often supported by certification schemes, aimed at eradicating unsustainable production and inhumane working conditions in the supply chain;
  - b. Company level: scaling up integration of sustainability (social and environmental) issues into decision-making, eco-design and innovation, making technologies and operations as sustainable as possible; investing in radically more sustainable innovations; provision of information on product/service components/ingredients, coherence on sustainability between product design and marketing/communications

<sup>21</sup> These agreements are: Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention Against Torture; Convention Against Genocide; The Geneva Conventions; Convention on the Rights of the Child; Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; and the Charter of the United Nations.

<sup>22</sup> See the Green Economy Initiative of the UN, <http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/>



- c. Downstream: provision of information on product/service components and ingredients; choice editing<sup>23</sup>; sustainability marketing; sustainable business models such as turning products into services; coherence on sustainability between product design and marketing/communications
- 4. Consumer-oriented actions: maximising opportunities for sustainable consumption and lifestyles. Here, civil society organisations (CSOs), individual consumers and governments play a key role. Actions include:
  - a. 'political consumerism': putting pressure on companies and governments allowing unfair or unsustainable products on the market (by CSOs and consumers)
  - b. Awareness-raising campaigns for consumer-citizens (by governments and CSOs)
  - c. Educational programmes for consumer-citizens (by governments)

In general, governments have the most powerful role to play here, with business in a contributing role. It concerns maximising the use of instruments limiting emissions and resource use with regard to:



Natural building insulation

- Built environment and housing: e.g. performance standards, retrofitting existing housing stock, stimulating zero-energy housing, and addressing the resource use implications via sustainable land-use/ planning and sustainable buildings objectives.
- Energy-using products: e.g. progressive energy performance targets and benchmarks
- Mobility (including for tourism): e.g. progressive emission and energy performance targets, fuel taxes, road pricing and stimulating alternative modalities; coherence between policy objectives and fiscal mechanisms

- Food and drink/agriculture: e.g. stimulating sustainable farming, with organic production as a starting point; stimulating low environmental impact diets, etc.

**DEVELOP INSPIRING APPROACHES TOWARDS CHANGE THAT ARE STILL RESISTED NOW**

This concerns strategies tackling problems where consensus or knowledge about the way forward is fundamentally lacking. Therefore, actions here need to aim to overcome existing barriers, including interest-driven quarrels about implementation of specific policy measures. Solving controversies on approaches to be taken and dealing with areas where it is still difficult to deliver fundamental scientific evidence-based decisions will address this problem.

The approaches tend to be process-oriented as they try to fit alternative behaviour into conventional structures. They should instead acknowledge that the system can be changed using inspiring and enabling approaches. The main focus is therefore on developing inspiration, creating legitimacy and collective action (i.e., an "I'm not in this alone" mentality) and reducing uncertainty and ignorance. It also concerns action that can, and must, be taken now – though effects may be visible only in the longer term. Roughly three types of activities can be identified here:

- Provide inspiring, practical examples of radical change
- Provide convincing evidence where change is most needed, and how it can be organised;
- Organise a process of deliberation, learning and analysis on leading examples

Bottom-up action here is equally or even more relevant than top-down support, particularly given levels of the public's lack of trust in institutions.

<sup>23</sup> Choice editing is the selective elimination of products from a market, according to set objectives. For example, retailers can decide not to stock products that have a poor environmental performance or that are made with endangered species (such as wooden products) or are endangered species (such as fish).

**PROVIDE INSPIRING, PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF RADICAL CHANGES**

Providing inspiring, practical examples is one of the most powerful ways to break deadlocks due to opposing views and uncertainty about how to realise change. Shining examples of change show what is possible, and create legitimacy for further institutionalisation of measures that can mainstream such examples. Examples and pilot projects are also an excellent way to test approaches and learn about uncertainties and how to tackle them. Below we give some examples of relevant movements and projects:

- WWF's **'One planet living'** campaign, based on a concept developed by entrepreneurial charity Bioregional and WWF, articulates a number of flagship examples of low-impact living in the areas of housing, food and mobility. One example is BedZed, a zero-energy eco-village near London developed by Bioregional. Another ambitious project is being organised with the government of Abu Dhabi to deliver the world's greenest city, Masdar<sup>24</sup>. It is one of the most serious and visible campaigns globally that aims to show how comfortable and rich lives can be lived, while not surpassing the maximum ecological footprint per capita. Recently, WWF was able to have this programme supported by resources dedicated to CSOs from the EU's 7th Framework Programme<sup>25</sup>.
- **"Transition Towns"** is a fast growing, bottom-up movement of groups of citizens to realise social and environmental goals like carbon-neutrality and local economies. A Transition Initiative is a community working together to address Peak Oil and climate change by seeking answers to the question: "for all those aspects of life that this community needs in order to sustain itself and thrive, how do we significantly increase resilience (to mitigate the effects of Peak Oil) and drastically reduce carbon emissions (to mitigate the effects of Climate Change)?"<sup>26</sup>
- The **"Slow Food" movement** was born, and has been particularly successful, in Italy and promotes traditional, locally-produced foods as opposed to the trend to fast food catering. It has given rise to the "Slow City" movement, a group of towns with less than 50,000 residents aiming to care for the town and the people who live, work in or visit it. Such towns aim to protect the environment, promote local goods and produce and avoid the 'sameness' that has resulted from globalisation<sup>27</sup>.
- The **"Covenant of Mayors"** is an initiative of the European Commission to bring together the mayors of Europe's most pioneering cities in a permanent network to exchange and apply good practices across these cities and beyond to improve energy efficiency significantly in the urban environment. The Covenant of Mayors is the response of the most active cities to global warming: a formal commitment by the cities to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions even beyond the EU 20% objectives through enhanced energy efficiency and cleaner energy production and use. Cities from 34 countries internationally have signed the Covenant, including all EU-27.
- Individuals **"walking the talk"** – on their own initiative, individuals have taken public decisions to live sustainably, usually by trying to live within their ecological footprint. Such actions help to show how everyday people can change their behaviour, although messages need to be delivered so that the public considers it normal behaviour rather than being turned off by extreme characters. An example of this is Steven Vromman, a Belgian who embarked in mid-2008 on the challenge of becoming 'low impact man'. His aim was to develop with his family a 'lifestyle that is good for the environment and that makes us happy'. During one year he tried to live just using a fair Ecological footprint of 1,6 gha. He looked for and received a lot of media attention. He managed to get people thinking – and showed the example – about living with just what is your fair part<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Masdar will be car-free and solar-powered, and will house 70,000 people. See [www.panda.org/index.cfm?uNewsID=121361](http://www.panda.org/index.cfm?uNewsID=121361)

<sup>25</sup> See: [www.oneplanetliving.org](http://www.oneplanetliving.org)

<sup>26</sup> See [www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

<sup>27</sup> [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)

<sup>28</sup> See <http://lowimpactman.wordpress.com/>

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. the example of the city of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, [www.rotterdamclimateinitiative.nl/NL/Over ons/Clinton\\_Climate\\_Initiative/?cid=377](http://www.rotterdamclimateinitiative.nl/NL/Over ons/Clinton_Climate_Initiative/?cid=377)



This list provides examples of mainly bottom-up action by individuals or civil society, but equally inspiring examples can be found with businesses, or governments at any level. Many cities have joined the Clinton Climate Initiative and usually set themselves stringent targets to reduce climate impacts<sup>29</sup>. Various businesses have set themselves far-reaching sustainability targets that require fundamental changes in products, processes, and business models<sup>30</sup>. In sum, virtually all societal actors are in the position to embark on such activities, where governments can obviously facilitate action by making available resources in situations where they lack.

**PROVIDE CONVINCING EVIDENCE** Solving fundamental uncertainty and paradigmatic controversy in part can be realised by improving insights and knowledge. As policy scientists have shown convincingly, science never solves such messy problems entirely, but analytical approaches can provide new insights that form the support for change. Examples include:

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): It played a key role in developing the evidence base on which climate change policies and measures are based. Sustainable development (and therefore SCP) seeks to provide good lives for humanity, whilst not surpassing the resource base the Earth supplies. A new Intergovernmental Panel on Natural Resource Consumption<sup>31</sup> could provide evidence which resource limits are critical given the Earth's carrying capacity, population growth, economic growth, etc., necessarily leading to efforts on natural resources as those made on climate change to date.
- Roadmaps are needed providing routes for radical reduction of impacts in the key consumption areas of food and drink/agriculture; mobility and tourism; and housing and energy-using products. Exercises such as back-casting, and roadmap programmes, etc. are essential to develop common views in which direction change has to go.
- Some interesting examples exist of research having had a clear challenging effect on prevailing approaches. For instance, the new economic foundation's "Happy Planet Index" and "National Accounts of Well-Being" (see Box 4) showed that prosperity does not depend entirely on income, and that prosperity in Western nations in the last 40 years did not grow despite massive economic growth. Such research helps to identify the parameters that truly matter for developing a flourishing society, and to refocus policy attention.

Research plays a key role here, usually with influential scholars or high profile think tanks in the lead. Their role can be made much easier and more influential if government or research bodies set aside resources for "paradigm challenging" research, or institutionalise high level think tanks. The UK has an interesting history in this field, with independent bodies such as the Sustainable Development Commission and the new economics foundation publishing fundamental reports<sup>32</sup> that challenge mindsets and embedded beliefs that prevent positive change from occurring.

<sup>30</sup> For example, carpet manufacturer InterfaceFLOR aims to realise a zero environmental footprint by 2020, see <http://www.interfaceflor.com/default.aspx?Section=3&Sub=4&Ter=1>

<sup>31</sup> Such a proposed panel would have a considerably larger scope as the recently created International Panel on Sustainable Resource Management of the UN (see <http://www.unep.fr/scp/rpanel/>)

<sup>32</sup> In addition to nef's "Happy Planet Index", the UK Sustainable Development Commission's recent report "*Prosperity Without Growth: The Transition to a Sustainable Economy?*" untangles meticulously how society has become addicted to growth, shows that the current economic model is dead-end and proposes actions to change this model. See: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=914>

**ORGANISE A PROCESS OF DELIBERATION,  
LEARNING AND ANALYSIS ON LEADING EXAMPLES**

Informed deliberation is the complement of the former point – and in part may even overlap with it. Virtually any organisation with a certain level of authority can take the initiative to start such processes. In 2007, the EU did not shy away from organising a major conference on “Beyond GDP”, essentially questioning GDP as the core indicator defining success of our economic system. In a totally different context, a small group of researchers based in Paris took the initiative for the first “Degrowth” conference in April 2008 that gathered around 200 scholars analysing what a no-growth society could look like<sup>33</sup>. Another example is the “Commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress” set up by French President Sarkozy, and led by Nobel Prize Laureates Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen<sup>34</sup>. Like the EU

conference, this Commission focuses on developing better measurement methods than GDP for assessing social progress. Such actions can bring insight into how change can be organised in a credible way, but need to be legitimised by being placed within a political framework that better guarantees a change to prevailing approaches. In other words, these activities should lead to change.



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<sup>33</sup> See: [www.degrowth.net/](http://www.degrowth.net/)

<sup>34</sup> See: [www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/](http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/)



## Conclusions

Humanity is at a crossroads. We cannot provide all global citizens with Western prosperity and stay within ecological limits, pretending that technical progress alone will save the day. Humanity has to take up the challenge of change.

For the future, two alternatives are possible. The first is to adjust production and consumption systems marginally – and see ultimately an economy the more violently ‘crashes against the Earth’. The second is to take up the challenge with all the positive energy possible and to develop a world that provides good lives for the masses. This requires a re-think of production, consumption and our economic system as a whole. Where in the past, we focused more on wealth, growth and efficiency, the future will need to be about well-being, quality and sufficiency. The SCP agenda offers the opportunity to develop an intelligent and controlled transition to living better and more equally, within planetary limits. In that sense, the SCP agenda is a crucial vehicle to ensure that we meet internationally set targets related to such limits, such as the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The implications of this position are manifold.

First, it is essential that the SCP agenda is seen as a strategic one that is embedded in an appropriate institutional framework. It should be seen as an overarching agenda playing a central role in EU and national Sustainable Development Strategies. It should be handled by units at the top of institutions engaged in sustainability policies, rather than by teams competing with other (often more powerful) policy areas. Such a strategic agenda requires adequate monitoring, both in terms of process and result. Finally, access to knowledge and finances for operational activities should be fostered.

Second, the transformational nature of the agenda calls for embarking on two complementary strategies combining bottom-up and top-down action:

1. Implement approaches and policies that are already legitimised. Such actions would:
  - a. Focus on the priority areas of the built environment and housing, energy-using products, food and drink/agriculture, and mobility;
  - b. Maximise the use of policy instruments along the value chain, business initiatives and opportunities for sustainable consumption;
  - c. Turn current economic stimulation packages and innovation support into transition mechanisms to stimulate fundamental change rather than restoring the status quo.
2. Embark on actions and experiments that create inspiration and foster legitimisation for more far-reaching change. Such actions would encompass:
  - a. Providing inspiring, practical examples of change (e.g. WWF’s One Planet Futures campaign);
  - b. Providing convincing evidence that current approaches do not work (e.g. the new economics foundation’s ‘Happy Planet Index’ report);
  - c. Engaging in deliberative and analytical exercises exploring change (e.g. the EU-lead ‘Beyond GDP’ conference).

The following tables summarise this SCP agenda and the required leadership. A courageous, skilled and inspiring leadership should be able to implement most agenda points now and really make the difference - between an intelligent, controlled transition and a chaotic, clumsy one forced on us by further crises. We know that the current “system” or approach is not working, and although we may not have complete answers for how it needs to change, we need to start out with the idea that change needs to happen, and most importantly that it *can* happen. It is now time for governments, industry, and civil society to work together to make this change a reality.



**A: Establish a basic institutional framework**

Actions	Expected leadership	Examples of tools for change
Turn the UNEP Resource Panel into an IPCC equivalent on resource use and consumption	UN, EU	EU and UN Sustainable Development Strategies
Develop policy frameworks and plans covering all the below at EU and Member State levels	EU and Member States	7 <sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme; UN and EU Sustainable Development Strategies
Place SCP policy units at a strategic level in governments	EU and Member States	A European Commissioner level Sustainable Development Committee
Develop monitoring systems for SCP	EEA, EUROSTAT and national counterparts	
Where relevant, facilitate networking and access to knowledge and finances for the activities below	EU, Member States: Finances All: networking	Specific CSO projects in FP7; national government funding for CSOs; Global Environment Fund
Develop social policy and structures to create more equal societies, allowing active engagement	EU and Member States	

**B: Lead change that can be realised within existing structures and mindsets**

General actions	Expected leadership	Examples of tools for change
Maximise use of policy instruments along the production- consumption lifecycle	EU and Member States	Articulated sustainable industrial policy development; enforcing ILO standards; green/sustainable public procurement; coherence between sustainability objectives and fiscal mechanisms (taxes, subsidies, emission trading, etc)
Maximise implementation of business instruments	Business and business organisations like WBCSD	Corporate Social Responsibility, choice editing, supply chain management, new business models
Maximise (opportunities for) sustainable consumption and practices/lifestyles	CSOs and individuals, EU and Member States	Political consumerism, education, responsible advertising
Focus financial support like innovation and recovery packages on fundamental change	EU and Member States	Abolishing perverse subsidies, internalising external costs, investment in sustainable infrastructure
Consumption-area specific actions		
Built environment and housing	EU, Member States, local governments and businesses	Maximise use of domain-specific instruments limiting emissions and resource use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability standards / minimum requirements for houses, cars, electronics, agriculture</li> <li>• Fiscal mechanisms (e.g. aviation fuel tax, emissions trading, subsidies, etc)</li> </ul>
Energy using products		
Food and drink/agriculture		
Mobility (including for Tourism)		

**C: Develop inspiring approaches towards change that are still resisted now**

Activity	Expected leadership	Examples of tools for change
Provide practical, inspiring examples showing fundamental change can work	CSOs Front runner businesses, EU, Member States, local government	WWF's One Planet Futures programme, Transition Towns, Slow movement, eco-cities, individuals "walking the talk"
Provide convincing evidence of how change can work and where it is most needed, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessing environmental and resource limits</li> <li>• providing indicative roadmaps for change in key consumption domains</li> <li>• performing 'paradigm challenging' research</li> </ul>	EU/UN: establish an Intergovernmental Panel on Resource Consumption; CSOs/Independent think tanks	IPCC for climate change; new economics foundation; and UK Sustainable Development Commission
Organise a process of deliberation, learning and analysis on leading examples	CSOs Front runner businesses EU, Member States	"Beyond GDP" conference; "Stiglitz Commission"



The **European Environmental Bureau (EEB)** is a federation of over 150 environmental citizens' organisations based in EU Member States, in candidate, potential candidate and neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international. Created in 1974, EEB aims to provide a focal point for our members to monitor and respond to the EU's emerging environmental policy.

EEB is the environmental voice of European citizens, standing for environmental justice, sustainable development and participatory democracy. We want the EU to ensure all people a healthy environment and rich biodiversity.

**SCORE!** (Sustainable Consumption Research Exchanges) was set up as an EU 6th Framework Programme co-ordination action. The mission of SCORE! is to organise a leading science network in the field of sustainable consumption and production (SCP), supportive to the most important policy initiatives in this field (such as the EU's SCP/Sustainable Industrial Competitiveness Action Plan and the UN's 10 Year Framework of Programs initiated during the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development). The Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research TNO, one of the largest Dutch not-for-profit contract research organisations, took the lead in setting up SCORE!

For more information see:

[www.score-network.org](http://www.score-network.org) (in future: [www.scp-network.org](http://www.scp-network.org))

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