

Nordic Co-operation on Sustainable Consumption and Production



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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

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PHOTO: KARIN BEATE NØSTERUD

Towards a green economy

In fall 2010 the Nordic prime ministers collectively called for a global shift towards green growth. The Nordic countries will together create the conditions for saving the climate while also creating economic growth and new green jobs. A common borderless electricity market, energy-efficient innovative solutions in construction, and a continued focus on green R&D are priorities. The Nordic countries should also exploit their environmental technologies to enhance competitiveness while reducing oil imports and CO₂ emissions.

“ *To achieve a green economy, drivers for green supply and green consumption are needed. The working group on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), under the Nordic Council of Ministers, contributes to greener markets via initiatives and tools in the following areas:*

- *green supply by environmental technology and innovation*
- *green demand by shifting public and private consumption in a more sustainable direction.*

In this brochure, we would like to share some recent results and experiences.

On behalf of the SCP working group.

Bente Nass,
Ministry of the Environment,
Norway.



The Nordic prime ministers call for a global shift towards green growth. Photo: Magnus Fröderberg/norden.org

Nordic SCP co-operation

The SCP policy area covers the entirety of products' life cycles and requires the active involvement of all stakeholders: producers, retailers, governments, businesses, consumers, etc. The Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development¹ states that:

“ Sustainable consumption and production presupposes long-term planning. The governments of the Nordic countries have responsibility for creating clear rules, regulations and incentives that contribute to sustainable consumption and production. Nordic companies need the right incentives in order to develop and produce more sustainable products and environmentally friendly and efficient technologies. At the same time, demand for sustainable products is stimulated, conditions in the workplace are improved and welfare increased.

In 2009 the Nordic Council of Ministers for the Environment launched its working group on Sustainable Consumption and Production,² which replaced the earlier multi-sectoral co-operation on Integrated Product Policy. The group includes representatives not only from the environmental sector, but also from the consumer and business sectors.

The aim is to facilitate the transition towards greener markets by developing, co-ordinating and evaluating the necessary instruments. The current focus areas are cleaner technologies and innovations; green public procurement; and environmental information and sustainable lifestyles. These are all highly important areas in the transition to greener markets.

The work of the group is designed to contribute to the implementation of the Nordic Environmental Action Plan 2009–2012.³

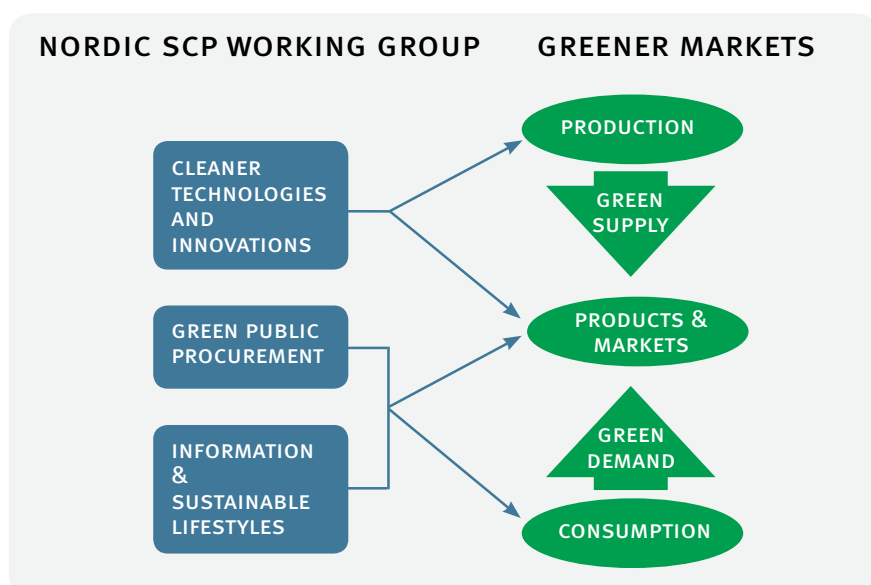


Figure 1. Focus areas for the SCP working group. Each area is presented in this brochure.



Environmental action plan 2009–2012

SCP – overall objective

Consumption and production must take place in such a manner that environmental and health conditions can be improved and resource utilisation is efficient and sustainable.

The priorities for resource efficiency and environmentally driven markets are:

- Development of policy instruments and creation of conditions for increased material and energy efficiency through, for instance, Nordic contributions to the implementation of the EU directive on eco-design and to the new waste framework directive
- Improvement in co-ordination and use of various environmental information instruments, for instance, between the Nordic Ecolabel (Swan), the EU Ecolabel (EU Flower), environmental and other labels
- Stimulus of continued development of technology purchases and public procurement contributing to increasing the share of eco-innovative and cost-effective goods and services in the market.
- Development of climate aspects within the framework of the Nordic Ecolabel
- Promotion of sustainable consumption and production through creation of legal conditions and economic policy instruments.
- A new Environmental Action Plan 2013–2017 will in 2013 replace this one.



PHOTO: JOAKIM STÅHL



PHOTO: KNUT FORBERG, AKVAPLAN-NIVA



PHOTO: MIA RAHUNEN

Cleaner technologies and innovations

Addressing global climate change and other environmental problems necessitates the thorough implementation of more resource-efficient products and cleaner technologies. One of the SCP working group's focus areas is *cleaner technologies and innovations*.

Several SCP projects in this area have been carried out. The aim has been to provide input to national policies, as well as international processes such as the EU Environmental Technologies Action Plan and the EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy. These projects highlighted the importance of, among other things, both encouraging and creating favourable conditions for new intelligent, sustainable solutions.

As well as the projects presented in this brochure, other Nordic projects have been launched within the area of cleaner technologies, including:

- A survey of Nordic municipalities' procurement of CleanTech⁴
- Energy efficiency in the Nordic construction industry⁵
- Flexible emission fees and transfer mechanisms as drivers of pollution reduction.⁶

How can government support clean technologies?

The project *Greener Markets and Cleaner Technologies* analyses the ways in which the development and diffusion of environmental technologies can be enhanced.⁷ The *systems of innovation* approach identified three activities crucial to fostering innovation:

1. creation, transfer and pooling of knowledge
2. access to resources
3. formation of markets

Both environmental and innovation policies are needed to inspire and support the market for new environmental technologies and innovations (see Figure 2).

According to Naoko Tojo, Ph.D., Assoc. Professor at IIIIEE, Lund University, Sweden, who worked on the project, the model is the *first attempt to map out which specific policy instruments are used to enhance which activities*.



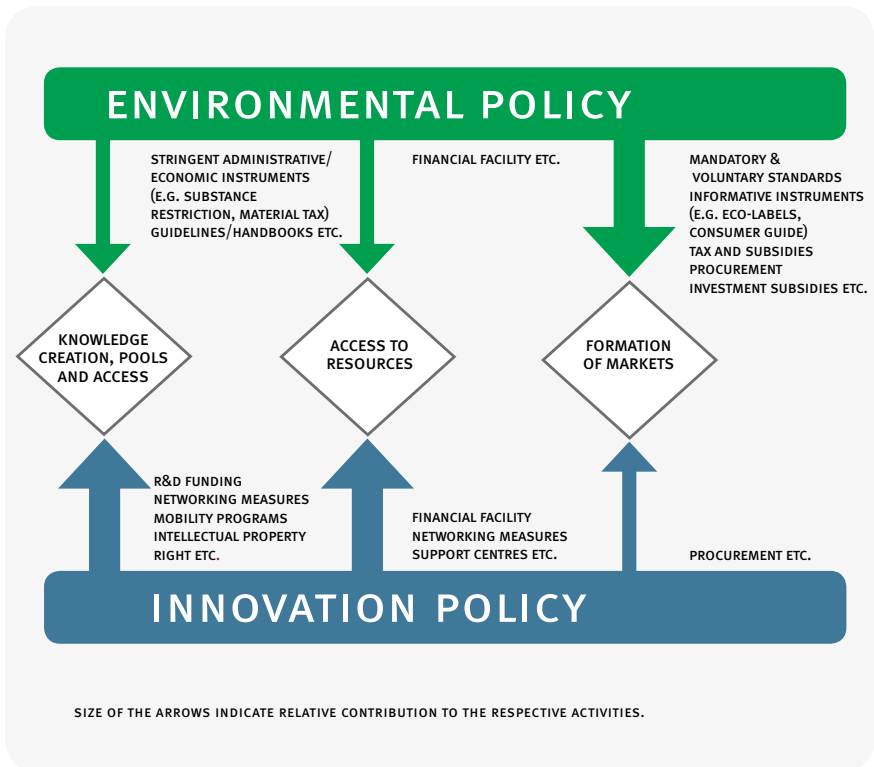


Figure 2. The model shows the role of and relationships between existing policy interventions used to enhance the three activities crucial to environmental innovations and innovation conditions in general.

The need for government intervention varies depending on the structure of the sector and whether the innovation relates to core business or not. Nordic Industry sectors studied within this project were Pulp and paper, Mobile phones and Construction. Environmental innovation in particular benefits from public funding when it concerns new knowledge and requires input from a range of players. The study also confirms challenges related to diffusing environmental innovation, despite the availability of knowledge.

The model and other outcomes from the project and related activities funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers formed the basis for a workshop held at the COPENMIND Conference in Copenhagen in 2008. This generated a number of policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the diffusion of cleaner technologies and environmental innovation e.g.:

- using mandatory administrative instruments assisted by economic instruments and informational measures in order to create markets
- expanding green public procurement
- maintaining and developing high-quality education systems
- promoting multidisciplinary approaches
- creating a market that includes external costs for resource use and waste disposal.



Resource efficiency in eco-design

Approximately 80% of a product's total environmental impact is determined during the design phase. As a result of the Directive on Energy-using Products (EuP), products are required to comply with minimum environmental performance standards in order to be sold in the inner market. EuP has the potential to become one of the most influential policy instruments in the fields of Integrated Product Policy and Sustainable Consumption and Production. When determining the requirements for this work, one challenge is to reflect not only new technologies but also changes in consumer and market trends.

A project assessed how other environmental aspects have been taken into account in the EU's product-specific EuP studies.⁸ The principles of eco-design are not upheld if reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency are the only objectives. However, several experiences to date indicate that many environmental parameters tend to be overlooked.

From a company's point of view, the interest in eco-design comes from the desire for competitive advantages. In a report from 2008,⁹ most companies said that they could do more for the environment, but had little incentive to do so. Some companies asked for tougher legislation and regulation, as well as flexible and long-term support for research. Incentives for developing eco-design concepts are therefore needed, so that best practice may shape legislation.

At a Nordic workshop in Copenhagen, November 2010, the focus was on how existing regulations can contribute to increased resource efficiency and act as a source of recommendations to inspire the revision of the EuP Directive in 2012. Other issues discussed included strengthening the application of and synergy between the different product-oriented policy instruments as well as their links to other product regulations (such as RoHS and REACH).

“ *Investment in energy efficiency is the most effective way to reduce emissions. EuP's motor directive alone will reduce EU's electrical energy consumption by 5%. Our involvement in the EuP Directive aims to raise the level of ambition in this area, and thereby create a win-win-win situation in relation to reduced CO₂ emissions, lower life-cycle costs and increased sales opportunities. However, to create the right conditions, political regulations are crucial.*

– Mads Sckerl,
Market Segment Director at Grundfos, Denmark



BAT – Best Available Techniques

The Nordic Council of Ministers' BAT group, a sub-group of the SCP working group, develops guidance on the best available techniques for different industries and areas. Over the last 12 years, it has produced 16 publications. The group has worked on areas from marinas to steel plants, and has contributed to cleaner production at both national and European level. Its activities include:

- development of BAT information in industries with many small and medium-sized companies with environmental problems, in several Nordic countries
- making a Nordic contribution to the work on integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC) in Sevilla, in the form of providing input into the revision of the BREF (Best Available Techniques REference document) for the industrial sector.

The results are used by both the authorities and companies in the Nordic Region. Some reports have been translated into English and are also used in other countries. For instance in relation to BAT in the food industry, the Nordic reports are some of the most referenced documents in the BREF- document. Experience shows that the use of BAT reports and BREF documents means:

- more qualified dialogue between authorities and companies
- earlier implementation of a greater number of environmental activities
- inclusion at an earlier stage of some items on the agenda.

Current areas of study include breweries and the waste-treatment industries. The number of micro-breweries is increasing in all Nordic countries. It is therefore important to have current information on how to minimise their environmental impact and use of energy. A joint Nordic contribution will also be made to the BREF work.¹⁰

The aim of the project on the waste-treatment industries is to provide a Nordic contribution to the revision of the BREF. The project highlights a number of good BAT examples from the Nordic countries. The aim is that this will increase the use of good and clean technologies in the EU.



PHOTO: BANANA STOCK



PHOTO: NØRREBRO BRYGHUS



Green public procurement

Green public procurement (GPP) is one of the SCP group's main focus areas. Buying green products is an important way of expanding green markets, and the public sector is an important consumer, representing around 15% of GDP in the EU. The public sector has the chance to be a pioneer in the work of making intelligent purchasing decisions that foster companies' development of sustainable innovations. Stringent and relevant standards help to alleviate the environmental impact, promote the effective use of resources, and ensure a wider range of environmentally sound goods and services.

A fundamental precondition for developing new solutions is that dialogue takes place between different players, e.g. decision-makers, purchasers, marketers and innovative companies. Procurement law includes several provisions that enable purchasers to promote innovative products and solutions. These opportunities need to be more fully realised – a prerequisite for which is that procurers are made more aware of them.

A Nordic project showed that GPP is a powerful market driver.¹¹ The Nordic countries are good at enforcing environmental standards, but there is still considerable scope for improvement.

The Nordic Council of Ministers was the first body to initiate the development of international common criteria for GPP, and its work has had a considerable impact.¹² Nordic experiences have thereby made a contribution to the work of the EU and its member states.

“ *Environmental labelling and Green Public Procurement play an extremely important role in the process of achieving more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.*

– Janez Potocnik,
EU Commissioner for Environment



PHOTO: JOAKIM STÅHL



PHOTO: NORDEN.ORG

Promoting green technology by public demand

In innovative green public procurement (IGPP), eco-innovation is stimulated through dialogue, demand and interaction with suppliers and stakeholders. The purpose is to improve the environmental performance of products and services, including via technology procurement and pre-commercial procurement.

Two projects by the SCP group have examined how IGPP can enhance the volume of environmentally innovative products and services. In addition, the most recent project ¹³ sought to make policy-makers aware of the potential benefits of IGPP and related strategy elements. Several product groups were considered to be particularly relevant in this analysis: the construction industry, computers and IT services, and taxi and bus services.

Among the recommendations for a Nordic Action Plan for IGPP were:

- performance-based tender criteria
- improved integration of LCC in public procurement
- financial support, where stimulation is necessary
- spreading and multiplying best practice.

Another project ¹⁴ collated examples of technology procurement in the Region. This highlighted the need for a culture that promotes innovative green procurement via recommendations for organisation, systems and strategies.

Experiences from the Nordic projects have been passed on to the EU. Some key factors to consider include a framework agreement based on risk sharing; the development of eco-innovative procurement programmes and incentives; and systems to ease and harmonise the process of innovative procurement.

SABO (the Swedish Association of Public Housing Companies) and BeBo (a purchasing group focusing on energy-efficient apartment buildings) has, following a technology-procurement exercise, implemented two innovative solutions for a test installation of heat recovery from ventilated air in seven apartment buildings.

“ *The national goals concerning energy efficiency are very ambitious and we must start acting now to find smart and sustainable solutions for existing buildings. We have great expectations of these systems and believe that our specified goals and criteria in the procurement have pushed the technical development further.*

– *Therese Rydstedt,*
Energy Coordinator at SABO

Nordic push for EU green procurement criteria

The Nordic Region aims to be a pioneer in green procurement. Due to the costs of producing and updating environmental criteria, several SCP projects have been focusing on creating a common Nordic criteria format. The purpose is not only to save valuable time and money, but also to increase quality and create more uniform environmental standards.

The project produced a set of guidelines for defining and presenting the common format, as well as a set of criteria for eight different product groups, which will serve as *Nordic examples*.¹² The original goal, i.e. drafting common Nordic criteria, was not met due to different development processes in the individual countries. The criteria were co-ordinated and drafted in close co-operation with *Toolkit* – a corresponding EU project. The criteria of the two projects complement each other, and the sets of criteria share the same basic format. In this way, the project influenced the development of a new approach at EU level.

The criteria should be designed with a view to their everyday applicability. The following three areas were identified as the most important for further criteria work:

- purchasers can refer to criteria instead of copying them to tender calls
- exact details for verification must be included for each criteria
- contract models include sanctions if the supplier does not fulfil the criteria.

“ *I believe that skilful public buying can speed up the greening of the market. Using environmental objectives and criteria in all public procurement is a matter of just doing it. And right now we should focus on promoting innovations that radically decrease the climate impacts of the society.*

– Ari Nissinen,
member of the SCP working group, Senior Researcher (PhD),
Finnish Environment Institute



PHOTO: B-LINE



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LCC – as easy as ABC?

Life cycle costs (LCC) – or real total costs – should be systematically considered when deciding on the economically most advantageous forms of procurement. When a life-cycle perspective is applied, construction and transport are the sectors in which measures would prove the most beneficial. This is because during the operating phase, including maintenance and service, costs can be high in relation to the purchase price.

Despite the potential benefits of a life-cycle perspective, it is rarely applied to public procurement. Instead, decisions are based mainly on purchasing price. Private consumers would also save money and help the environment if they looked at LCC instead of just the purchase price.

A study¹⁵ looking at ways of increasing the use of LCC identified not only barriers but also success factors. These include access to adequate resources, knowledge and information; relevant procedures and support within organisations; dialogue between the parties involved; methodology and standard tools that can be used to apply LCC calculations and economic incentives throughout the value chain.

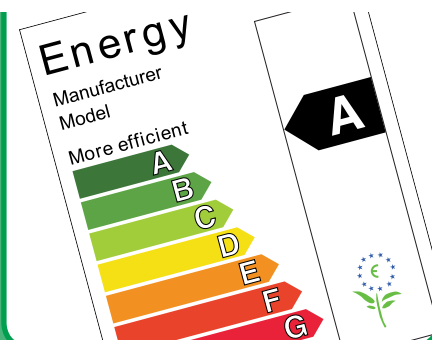
The ongoing project *Communicating LCC in Public Procurement* aims to integrate LCC into mainstream public procurement. This will be done in co-ordination with national GPP processes in the Nordic countries. The main focus is on:

- how to use LCC in different stages of the procurement process
- environmental aspects that can be addressed via LCC
- LCC as a tool for the procurement of new service concepts and environmental innovation, as well as for communication.

“ We have used LCC several times in our decision-making process. I believe that LCC will be used more extensively once we have learned more about the method.

– Mikael Zivkovic,

Energy Specialist, National Property Board, Sweden



Environmental information and sustainable lifestyles

One of the SCP working group's main focus areas is boosting green demand by promoting environmental information and sustainable lifestyles. Buying greener products and shifting consumption patterns towards less climate-intensive lifestyles is necessary in order to create sustainable societies, improve quality of life and ensure that future generations are able to meet their own needs.

Environmental information can be an important tool, e.g. eco-labelling is a central part of Nordic SCP work. Experience shows that well-informed consumers alone will not pave the way for sustainable consumption and production, and nor will the pressure they exert on producers be enough to avoid negative environmental impacts from production. Environmental communication to consumers is a policy instrument that needs to be supported by structural prerequisites such as the ready availability of public transport and organic products, as well as a price policy that reflects the environmental and social effects of the product or service across its whole life cycle.

In addition to those presented in this brochure, other information projects by the Nordic SCP group include:

- Reporting environmental information in annual reports¹⁶
- Less formal approaches to eco-management.¹⁷



PHOTOS: BANANA STOCK



PHOTO: JOAKIM STÅHL

Nordic Ecolabel – flying high

The Nordic Ecolabel¹⁸ (Swan) is a successful eco-label with a very high degree of credibility, recognition and awareness among consumers. Its criteria-development system functions well and its financial basis is sound, with a relatively high proportion of its funding derived from license fees. The environmental aspects included in the Nordic Ecolabel are increasingly discussed in a broader sustainability context, which also takes social issues into account.

The Nordic Ecolabel is an important part of Nordic environmental policy. It provides guidance for Nordic consumers and purchasers and offers real opportunities for green purchasing. At the same time, producers are encouraged to provide greener products.

The Nordic Ecolabel has been the subject of several evaluations. As a follow-up to the last evaluation from 2008¹⁹, the Nordic environmental ministers adopted in November 2010 a new vision for the Nordic Ecolabel 2015²⁰. The SCP group's work to implement the vision 2015 in co-operation with the Nordic Ecolabelling Board will involve, for example:

- taking advantage of synergies with other labelling, information and certification systems, through co-operation and exchange of knowledge and criteria
- visualizing synergies and collecting and disseminating good examples
- improving marketing in co-operation with license holders and developing profitability analysis for companies
- increasing support for eco-labelling in public procurement and actively providing input to EuP-directive and other existing policies
- further development and communication of climate criteria
- developing indicators for yearly surveillance of different labels' performance (Nordic Ecolabel and the EU Ecolabel).

Experience from the work on Nordic eco-labelling not only contributes to the development of the EU Ecolabel system, but it will also be useful to the elaboration of a 10-year framework of programs on sustainable consumption and production (10 YFP), taking place under the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). It can also act as a possible source of inspiration for developing countries in relation to sharing experiences of regional co-operation within the field of environmental labelling.

“ *Market demand for sustainable cleaning products is increasing, especially among younger customers. Fulfilling the criteria and putting the Swan on our microfibre products makes the decision easier for customers who want to reduce their use of chemical products. The Nordic Ecolabel also stands for high quality and is well known, which conforms to our business concept.*

– Aino Määttä,
Vice President, Sinituote Oy, Finland



Vision Nordic Ecolabel 2015

It is envisioned that the Nordic Ecolabel, by offering a reliable tool for consumers who want to consume eco-friendly, will be one of the most effective voluntary consumer policy instruments for the environment by 2015. The Nordic Ecolabel will establish a strong position through its high credibility and market penetration, and acts as a driving force for other labels regarding the stringency of the criteria. Companies see the Nordic Ecolabel as an attractive and credible way to use the environment as a competitive edge and it is an obvious choice for consumers who place high demands on the environment and on quality. Consumers are aware that high demands on climate aspects are part of the criteria for the Nordic Ecolabel. Sustainability criteria, in addition to those of the environment, are gradually being added to the Nordic Ecolabel.

“ *Our company puts a great emphasis on environmental issues and the Nordic Ecolabel is a major milestone in realising our goals. Being able to put the Swan on our printed matter is a key element in maintaining the company's strong position on the market and making the environmental commitments visible.*

*– Jón Ómar Erlingsson,
Director, Oddi Printing, Iceland*

Retailers facilitating green demand

Sustainable products and services are prerequisites for future sustainable development. One major challenge is how to turn today's niche market of sustainable products into tomorrow's mainstream market. A report ²¹ focuses on experiences and best practice among Nordic retailers in relation to selling sustainable products. The study includes retail chains for everyday commodities, medicines, textiles and building materials.

The survey was based on research and interviews at both corporate and shop-floor level. Its conclusions included that retailers demand various forms of action at a political level, but also that corporate action (in the form of education and training) is essential. At the political level, there is a demand for long-term and stable political priorities. This sends an important signal to stakeholders that this is not a passing phenomenon. Public authorities could provide support by raising awareness among consumers. Sustainable products are often more expensive, but this could be adjusted via taxes, including external costs for non-sustainable products or other means of control. Another critical aspect is to avoid "label confusion", based on the principle that some consumer segments are already characterised by information overload. Stimulating and providing consumers with relevant incentives to make sustainable decisions is important in relation to creating greener markets.

The EU SCP Action Plan emphasises co-operation with retailers, among other players. At the EU Retail Forum 2009, the Nordic SCP group presented their experiences of how retailers can work to increase sales of sustainable products. Based on these experiences, a potential next step would be to look into how national and EU policy might support this process.

“ *The EU Retail Forum allows a permanent, open dialogue between retailers, producers, civil society organisations and policy makers, which aims to foster the sustainability of the sector. Working with retailers is an important part of the EU SCP Action Plan, as this is the meeting point between a more sustainable supply and demand.*

– *Pavel Misiga*, Head of Unit, Sustainable and resource efficient production and consumption, DG Environment, EU Commission



PHOTO: FILIP JÄRNEHAG



PHOTO: ALEXANDER RUAS

Sustainable Lifestyles – lessons from successful projects

A recent study²² looked at the variety of and success factors for projects promoting sustainable lifestyles in the Nordic countries. The projects focused on, for example, sustainable supply, new information channels, social learning and cultural change.

The projects provide inspiring lessons in how and why they were successful. The success factors were analysed and several themes recur in many of the projects, e.g.:

- promoting sustainable structures
- exemplifying the lifestyle change
- the power of networks.

The conclusions identify the need for new sustainable products and services. Good examples are crucial, since human behaviour is essentially social action. Co-operation and sharing experiences between players are therefore essential.

Gunilla Blomquist, Deputy Director at the Swedish Ministry of the Environment, is responsible for the UNCSD Marrakech Task Force on sustainable lifestyles. She says that

“ *lifestyle changes are a fundamental precondition for a sustainable future. Every human has a responsibility to act, but governments and business must enable sustainable choices so that the changes are easily made. I think that the Nordic projects have an important role to play by sharing good examples of sustainability in everyday living.*



PHOTO: SARI LAINE



PHOTO: © AGATHE DEVISME, IPIUTAQ GUEST FARM, GREENLAND





SCP in small communities

The Nordic SCP work also focuses on how to secure small communities' ability to carry out local development based on principles of sustainable development. Special conditions in small communities often require a modified implementation of SCP tools and these are addressed in a sub-group of the SCP working group.

“ *In small communities it is natural to find solutions based on specific local conditions by a holistic and cross-sectoral approach.*

– Gunda Åbonde-Wickström,
Architect, Head of Åland's Agenda 21-office

Several projects and workshops dealing with the concerns of small communities have been run. One of the activities is the implementation of green public procurement in small Nordic societies. Dealing with waste from households, local industries and boats have been some of the first focus areas in the introduction of cleaner technologies.²³

Due to restricted infrastructure and services, environmental management can be a challenge for small communities and small businesses. A project on Light Environmental Management (EMS-Light) has run in Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. It resulted in increased local awareness of the advantages of environmental management and environmental certification.²⁴

A new report focuses on sustainable tourism destinations in small Nordic communities. The report provides an overview of small Nordic communities' opportunities to achieve a sustainability certification.²⁵ Another new project highlights the Nordic Ecolabel in small Nordic communities. This includes providing examples of best practice from the Nordic Region.²⁶

“ *The Nordic work with sustainable production and consumption is an important driver for sustainable development in the Faroe Islands.*

– Maria Gunnleivsdóttir Hansen,
Environmental Supervisor, Environment Agency, the Faroe Islands



PHOTO: BANANA STOCK

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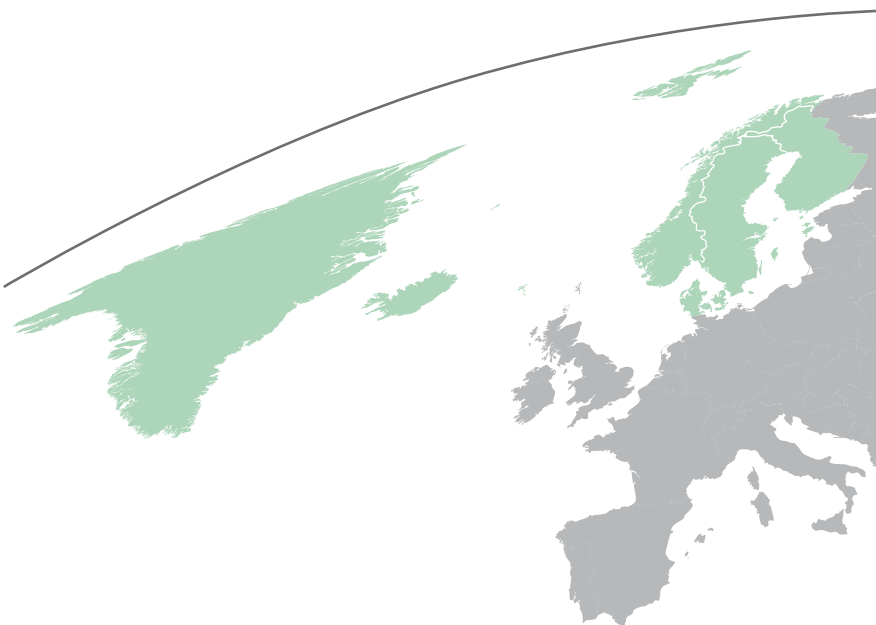




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