



Production and Consumption Unit

Sustainable Consumption [SC]



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European Roundtable on consumption and production signals emerging creative society

- ▶ New Issue
- ▶ Past Issues
- ▶ Search
- ▶ Subscribe

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"We need to promote education and analytical thinking to move away from war and come closer to dialogue, to sustainable development and to respect of cultures and communities. Only educated people can be receptors of sustainable consumption." said Prime Minister of the Basque Country, Mr. Juan Jose Ibarretxe. He spoke at the occasion of the European Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production (ERSCP), Bilbao, Spain, 11 to 15 May 2004.

"The utopia is in the horizon, it is always two steps ahead; but it is worth it to reach it. Like the utopia, reaching sustainable consumption and production will be beneficial for all of us", the prime minister added in his opening speech.

One of the participants, the Italian professor, Ezio Manzini (Politecnico di Milano) also referred to the "dramatic" context in which we are currently talking about sustainability: war, poverty, fear, terrorism. He highlighted that there are also signals of an emerging "Creative Society", which is able to organise itself to meet needs and provide services. "There is a need to strengthen these emerging signals and replicate them", said Manzini.

Adriana Zacarias Farah (UNEP) highlighted in her keynote speech the importance of integrating sustainable consumption and production. There is a need to put more emphasis on the demand side, since all the gains obtained by clean technologies and eco-efficiency have been overtaken by the exponential increase of consumption (rebound effect).

Workshops were held on issues such as sustainable building, Eco-design, education, eco-technology, and product and service systems. The German Wuppertal Institute presented its research priorities for the next 5 years. The UK Department of Industry presented its SCP policy framework and challenges for its implementation, which was jointly developed by all relevant ministries.

Mr. Alexandre Pasche, founder of Eco&co presented emerging trends among consumers throughout industrialised countries. He said "that consumers are ready to consume sustainable products, but the government and producers have not made the required efforts to supply them."

Mr. Victor Martins, Environment Department, Sonae, Portugal talked about how companies can communicate sustainability to their customers and supply green products.

The Roundtable, formerly known as the European Roundtable on Cleaner Production, was renamed as a follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The ERSCP gathered over 300 participants, representing governments, business, research institutes, international organisations and NGOs from Europe, as well as other continents. The organiser, the Basque Environment Ministry, IHOBE, has been very active in promoting SC and is currently carrying out a public campaign.

For more information, contact Adriana Zacarias at: sc@unep.fr

Links:
[ERSCP](#)

[<<< Previous article](#)

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