

## Main features of a Monitoring-System for measuring sustainable consumption

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### *Introduction and research background*

Key to the implementation of the “Framework Convention on Sustainable Consumption and Production” is an integration of ecological, economic and social aspects and a global implementation of international programmes for sustainable production and consumption patterns. Programmes targeting sustainable consumption and production (SCP) already started on the national level in many countries. They make use of existing capacities and networks, for instance in integrated product policy, indicators or sets of indicators, consumer policy and protection or sustainability reporting. In order to develop assessment and measurement systems that are pointing in a definite direction, supporting instruments are needed. Those should be capable to analyse, include and represent complex and abstract aspects of social reality – like the consumption sector.

Due to their analytical and pragmatic qualities, indicators are integrated in public or private institutions, authorities, companies or organisation. But applying measurement and assessment systems for sustainable consumption faces constraints which a survey, undertaken by the Wuppertal Institute Climate, Environment and Energy in 2005, showed. The study (in total, 82 different concepts were analysed, 26 of which follow a German, and 56 an international approach) points out that the analysed concepts do not fulfil a systemic view. They do not include either incentives to act “sustainably”. A consistent and target oriented measurement and assessment system for SCP instead needs to:

- Provide an assessment of the status quo and describe trends towards SCP, generating information for monitoring and assistance of decisions on the macro-level;
- Target the consumer at the point of sale (POS) – while making purchasing decisions – influencing decisions with a simple information structure suitable for everyday use;
- Allow for the measurement of the achievement of companies, giving them the opportunity to communicate them to the public.

Many aspects and efforts of the researched material are of use for the development of a more systemic measurement and assessment system, that focus the behaviour of all three society groups: politics, consumers, companies.

### *The design of a measurement and assessment system for sustainable consumption*

According to the survey done by the Wuppertal Institute, a unique and promising concept for measuring and assessing sustainable consumption does not exist. The design the measurement and assessment system is module based, envisaging addressing different target groups. Developments are planned for the short (1-2 years), medium (3-4 years) and the long run (5-6 years), leading to the creation of five new indicators/concepts to measure and assess SCP. The development is process-oriented and integrated. This should offer great opportunities and advantages for different target groups. Key to the development and implementation of the different modules are cooperation and dialogue with stakeholders and a foresight study.

When implemented, the strategy will generate five tools:

1. 1. A “Meta-label” (“TRlangel”) that addresses the sustainability of products according to ecologic, social and economic criteria;
2. 2. A tool for consumers to verify the “sustainability performance” of their households;
3. 3. An index of Meta-label (“I-CON”) certified products, indicating their market share;
4. 4. A “basket of goods” (“BALANCE”) containing selected leading products and services, its purpose is to indicate current household consumption trends;
5. 5. An indicator of consumption trends, to be used by policy-makers (“GO-21” – consumption

trends).

The fact that housing, nutrition and mobility are the most resource intensive consumption sectors, it is necessary to concentrate on them.