NORDIC WORKING PAPERS

Nordic Cooperation on Sustainable Consumption and Production

A Policy Note with relevance to the
One Planet Network

József Slezák

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/NA2018-910>
NA2018:910
ISSN 2311-0562

This working paper has been published with financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. However, the contents of this working paper do not necessarily reflect the views, policies or recommendations of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Nordic Cooperation on Sustainable Consumption and Production

A Policy Note with relevance to the One Planet Network

József Slezák, TransitionEurope: SDG12!

This page is intentionally left blank.

Table of contents

Foreword	1
Summary	2
Introduction: the rationale for promoting a shift towards SCP	3
High-level political mandates for the promotion of SCP	9
Insights into the Nordic implementation of the 10YFP	13
Take-home messages from the closing panel discussion in Umeå	18
Recommendations	21
References	24

This page is intentionally left blank.

Foreword

The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 2012. It calls for voluntary action by governments and stakeholders worldwide to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production.

The Working Group for Sustainable Consumption and Production, under the Nordic Council of Ministers (Working Group for SCP), has been catalysing the process by engaging in common activities with relevance for the implementation of 10YFP.

To help define relevant future actions, the Working Group for SCP has commissioned József Slezák of TransitionEurope: SDG12! to present an overview of challenges concerning the promotion of a shift towards SCP together with a set of recommendations for future Nordic initiatives to be taken by the Working Group on SCP.

The point of departure has been the Swedish Laboratory on Sustainable Lifestyles conference in Umeå 2017.¹ The impressions gained at the conference have been supplemented by a literature review.

The primary target group for this publication is the network of 10YFP Nordic Focal Points. In addition, the document is expected to be generally informative for a wide range of stakeholders, including Focal Points in other UN Member States, as well as other relevant policymakers and stakeholders within the open partnership One Planet Network.²

The Working Group for SCP hereby expresses its gratitude for the recommendations set forth in this policy note.

Stockholm 17/10/2018, on behalf of the Working Group for SCP

Katarina Järverup Frisk,
Senior Advisor, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Chair of the Working Group for SCP

¹ The conference took place on 15-16 November 2017 in Umeå, Sweden. A video recording and the documents of the conference are available at <https://www.greenumea.se/lab>

² <http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/>

Summary

Strong evidence indicates that current patterns of production and consumption worldwide are not sustainable. Some of the fundamental challenges in this regard include not only unsustainable levels of pressure on the environment, but also the related high costs and trade-offs in social and economic terms.

While on the one hand overcoming the relevant negative consequences poses a major challenge to policy makers and other stakeholders worldwide, on the other hand the prospect of renewal and transformation towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production (SCP) offers multiple opportunities, with related benefits to society.

The countries of the Nordic region have been in the forefront of catalysing relevant change for decades and in many respects can be considered the leaders of an ongoing shift towards SCP. Notwithstanding this, a major and common challenge for the region remains how to transition towards more sustainable and equitable forms of domestic consumption (and consequent resource use) in global terms.

In particular, defining and adopting a more systemic and integrated approach to the implementation of the 10YFP under the Nordic Cooperation is one of the main recommendations of this Policy Note: this is because of the mutuality of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the fact that Goal 12 regarding sustainable consumption and production is the most pivotal of these.

Some of the other recommendations of this Policy Note at the strategic level include putting special emphasis on encouraging the adoption of sustainable lifestyles across the Nordic region, with particular attention to the urban population and youth, as well as on facilitating a revenue-neutral shift in the economic framework conditions of the member countries that awards preference to fostering sustainable consumption and production practices.

Towards this joint transition, the Nordic countries benefit from a number of enabling conditions of a social, economic, cultural and political character. The latter include, among others, a shared culture with a strong sense of equality that is manifested in the Nordic welfare model, as well as high level of political commitment to the principles of sustainable development, along with a consensus-based political culture, strong stakeholder cooperation, and the firm position of local governments. In addition, the relatively high level of environmental awareness of the population and significant interest on the part of business in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development put the Nordic countries in an especially good position as regards meeting the challenges of a shift towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Introduction: the rationale for promoting a shift towards SCP

Strong evidence indicates that our current patterns of production and consumption worldwide are not sustainable. Some of the fundamental challenges in this regard include not only unsustainable levels of pressure on the environment, but also the consequent high costs and trade-offs in social and economic terms.

Relevant challenges and opportunities from a global perspective

According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment initiative, largely as a consequence of human action geared at meeting the steadily growing demand for food, timber, and fuel, etc. over the past several decades, many ecosystems across the world have already been degraded and/or are being used unsustainably (MA 2005).³

Illustrative of the growing human demands on nature, and according to the International Resource Panel, global material resource consumption (tonnes of extracted material resources per year) has more than tripled in the last 40 years (UNEP 2016).⁴ Such high levels of resource use go hand in hand with higher levels of energy consumption, demand for land, etc., and ultimately, more pollution.

A recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme concludes that although some forms of pollution have been reduced significantly in the past decades, ongoing man-made pollution has become a persistent and pervasive global issue with far-reaching consequences. The latter include pollution-related diseases and the associated health-care costs, as well as the welfare implications of the degradation of ecosystems, such as an impaired quality of life, among others (UNEP 2017).

Although the technological and economic developments of the past decades have contributed to substantial net gains in human well-being, the negative consequences of this process have been borne by different countries and groups of people in a markedly disproportionate way. Less developed countries and vulnerable populations such as the poor and children have been subject to the most severe effects.

³ The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was the first major and comprehensive assessment of the human impact on the global environment. See also: <https://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.html>

⁴ The mission of the International Resource Panel is to provide independent scientific assessments of policy relevance about the sustainable use of natural resources that employ a global perspective. See also: <http://www.resourcepanel.org/about-us>

Ongoing environmental degradation, unless addressed at a fundamental level, is likely to substantially diminish the benefits that future generations obtain from ecosystems (see e.g. MA 2005, UNEP 2017).

Concerning the drivers of rising levels of material consumption and associated environmental burdens, although rapid population growth in the past decades has played a central role in this context, progressive increases in per-capita income and changing consumption patterns have had even more pronounced effects. In connection with the latter, the rise of a “global middle class” and their rising levels of material well-being have played a key role (UNEP 2016).⁵

While on the one hand increased human demands on nature and the socioeconomic consequences of this pose a major challenge to policymakers and other stakeholders, on the other hand the prospect of renewal and transformation towards more sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns offers multiple opportunities, with related benefits to society. The latter include not only further efficiency gains via incremental technological improvement, but potentially also benefits to the environmental, economic and social sphere simultaneously as the result of relevant changes at a system level.

Illustrative of the anticipated benefits, evidence suggests that a shift towards an environmentally more sustainable diet results in better health; similarly, the integration of environmental considerations into city planning improves quality of life, including human health (OECD 2017). Moreover, a structural shift towards SCP is also expected to create a large number of decent jobs in renewable energy generation, energy efficiency in the built environment, ecological agriculture, sustainable mobility and sustainable tourism, among other sectors (see e.g. UNEP 2008, ILO 2012). Concerning trade relations and global value chains, the introduction of voluntary sustainability standards and the establishment of ethical trading initiatives have been proven to create tangible social and environmental benefits, as well as additional economic benefits (see e.g. Krauss, J. & Krishnan, A. 2016, ISEAL Alliance 2017).

⁵ An estimated 3.2 billion people, or 42 per cent of the total world population, belong to the global middle class according to their level of income as defined by the World Bank (Kharas, H. 2017).

Nordic specificities

Along with the countries of Western Europe, the material footprints⁶ of the countries of the Nordic region are among the highest in the world on a per capita basis: the populations of Denmark and Sweden consume on average about two times as many resources as the world average (23.9 and 23.6 metric tonnes, respectively), the population of Iceland about two-and-a-half times (26.8 metric tonnes), and the populations of Finland and Norway approximately three-and-a-half times as many (34.4 and 36.1 metric tonnes, respectively) (SDG Tracker 2018).

However, compared to those living in some of the economically least developed countries in the world, the Nordic consumer, on average, consumes more than ten times as many resources (SDG Tracker 2018).⁷

Simultaneously, the countries of the Nordic region are leaders in the deployment of environmental technologies in many respects, and hence also in terms of the environmental performance of their respective domestic sectors, such as energy production and manufacturing – and others. For example, according to the Global Green Economy IndexTM (GGEI), Sweden, Norway and Finland are the three top-performing countries in the world in terms of the implementation of the principles of the green economy, closely followed by Denmark (Dual Citizen 2016).

Accordingly, the exceptionally high material footprint of the region is rather a consequence of patterns of consumption and the lifestyles of its population, not the level of technological development in the domestic context.⁸ One of the primary drivers of such elevated levels of material consumption is the relatively high level of disposable income: Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland and Denmark (in descending order) are among the countries with the highest levels of household net adjusted disposable income in the world (OECD 2018).

It should be noted, however, that citizens of the same countries might lead substantially different lifestyles according to their level of income and other individual-level factors.

⁶ The Material footprint (MF) is the quantity of global material extraction that is required to meet the domestic consumption of a country (exports excluded). The total material footprint is the sum of the material footprint for biomass, fossil fuels, metal ores and non-metal ores. (SDG Tracker 2018).

⁷ By comparison, the Material footprint of Western Europe on a per capita basis (on average) is 21.6 metric tonnes, while that of the USA and Japan is 27 and 20.1 metric tonnes, respectively – at present all substantially exceeding relevant estimates concerning the equitable sustainable levels of material resource use on a per capita basis (see e.g. Bringezu, S. 2015).

⁸ Lifestyles reflect people's interests, values and self-image and are expressed in terms of individual behavioural patterns in everyday life, including work and leisure activities and, ultimately, income-allocation patterns.

Indeed, according to the findings of a relevant study, differences in the material footprints of Finnish households of up to several-fold exist (Kotakorpi, E. 2008).

In the European Union (EU) context – and therefore of general relevance to the countries of the region – the areas of household consumption that cause the bulk of environmental pressure from a consumption perspective include (EEA 2013):⁹

- **Nutrition:** all the food and drinks that are consumed, food waste, etc.
- **Housing:** relevant infrastructure, energy and water consumption, etc.
- **Personal mobility:** personal travel to work, shopping, recreation, etc.

Additional consumption categories with high environmental impact include the consumption of goods: in particular, furnishings, household equipment and clothing.

With regard to consumption in the above-mentioned areas of life, it is also a shared characteristic of the Nordic countries that relatively large volumes of raw materials and goods are imported from other countries and regions of the world.

Illustrative of related emission trends in general, between the years 2000 and 2008 greenhouse gasses attributable to final consumption in Sweden (i.e. excluding exports) that were emitted abroad increased by about 30% (SWEPA 2013). Moreover, and illustrative of the relative magnitude of such impacts, emissions abroad accounted for about 45% on average of associated emissions in total (SWEPA 2010). Exacerbating this general trend, a considerable proportion of imports to the Nordic region arrive from countries and regions of the world where environmental standards are less stringent. Although trade cooperation creates mutual economic benefit, it may also place trading partners under significant environmental pressure.

In light of the fact that the associated production sectors frequently operate at lower levels of material efficiency, imports from less-developed countries are a notable factor in the relatively high material consumption of the Nordic countries.

Simultaneously, the immediate domestic environment in the region remains under considerable pressure. Illustrative of this is the condition of the Baltic Sea. According to the findings of the State of the Baltic Sea 2017 report (HELCOM 2017), this shared natural resource of Denmark, Finland, and Sweden is still under considerable environmental pressure from a range of human activities.¹⁰

⁹ The consumption perspective means that all environmental pressures caused directly or indirectly by national consumption are considered; these include pressures accumulated along global production chains (similarly to the concept of the material footprint).

¹⁰ Relevant concerns in this context include relatively high inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus, water contaminants from a range of sources, including hazardous substances, as well as marine litter, etc.

These include, among others, agricultural and industrial production, fisheries, resource extraction, shipping, tourism and leisure. As a consequence of these environmental pressures, the report also concludes that human well-being across this sub-region has been negatively impacted. Examples of such adverse effects include, among others, a reduction of and changes in fish stocks, the contamination of fish and seafood, and the impaired recreational value of seashores.

Although the countries of the region share a number of challenges, they each also have some areas in which the level of these challenges is particularly high. For example, in terms of the environmental performance of agricultural production, Denmark and Norway face the most challenges in the Nordic context (Sachs, J. et al. 2017). In terms of municipal waste generation per capita, Denmark, Norway and Iceland are particularly challenged (OECD Data 2018). Moreover, in connection with this, the amount of waste recovered in Iceland is especially low. In terms of the specific energy intensity of space heating in the household sector, the country most challenged in the regional context is Finland (IEA 2017) – and so on.

Over approximately the last decade and a half, a number of similar challenges across the region relating particularly to consumption patterns have become more prominent in public and policy debates (see e.g. Lindhqvist, T. 2010, Mont, O. 2013). The latter topics include, among others, citizens' roles in the low-carbon transition (norden.org 2016a), marine plastic litter and microplastics pollution (norden.org 2016b), relatively high levels of food waste in the household context (norden.org 2018a) and, last but not least, relatively high levels of clothing and footwear consumption, while the fate of discarded goods in connection with this also a frequent concern (norden.org 2018b).

Recent societal debate has shed light on some of the unintended social consequences, as well as the ethical aspects, of final consumption in the region, besides the associated environmental impacts. Relevant issues of social concern include, but are not limited to, unsafe or unhealthy working conditions, below-the-living-wage salaries, and even the exploitative use of human labour (i.e. forced labour, bonded labour, etc.), in the early stages of global value chains (see e.g. D'Ambrogio.E. 2014, Clean Clothes Campaign 2016, LeBaron, G. et al. 2018). Moreover, evidence suggests that destructive deforestation in the tropics – for example, in the context of palm oil or soy production – is also linked to consumption in Europe (see e.g. Fern 2015, Schulmeister, A. 2015). These issues, as well as the relatively high level of climate impact per Nordic citizen, also raise ethical concerns (see e.g. Gjerris, E. & Gaiani S. 2013, DCE 2016).

Yet another challenge to the countries of the region that is of shared relevance and cross-cutting nature is how to manage the transition to sustainable consumption and lifestyles in an urban context. This is because the bulk of the population in the region (more than 80%) live in predominantly urban areas.

In closing, although the countries of the Nordic region in many respects can be considered as the leaders of an ongoing shift towards SCP, a major and common challenge for the region remains how to transition towards more sustainable and equitable forms of domestic consumption (and consequent resource use). This is in consideration of global ecological limits, the fact that the human population is nearing eight billion, and the imperative of making social progress worldwide, among others.

Towards a relevant joint transition, the Nordic countries benefit from a number of enabling conditions of social, economic, cultural and political character. The latter include a shared culture with a strong sense of equality that is manifested in the Nordic welfare model, as well as a high level of political commitment to the principles of sustainable development, along with a consensus-based political culture, relevant strong stakeholder cooperation, and the firm position of local governments. In addition, the relatively high level of environmental awareness of the population, an active and widespread design culture characterized by simplicity, minimalism and functionality, and last but not least the significant interest of business in implementing the 2030 Agenda put the Nordic countries in an especially good position as regards meeting the challenges of a shift towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production (Strang, J. 2016, Slezák, J. 2017).

High-level political mandates for the promotion of SCP

Global level

Recognition at the highest political level that contemporary patterns of consumption and production are a principal cause of global environmental degradation dates back to the Rio Earth Summit, the first international conference on sustainable development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992.¹¹ At this meeting, as well as at the subsequent Earth Summits in 2002 in Johannesburg and in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro (see also Figure 1 in the Annex), heads of state again made non-binding commitments to promote a shift towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

A 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) was adopted at the Rio+20 Earth Summit in June 2012 as a blueprint for voluntary action to accelerate the shift towards SCP in both developed and developing countries. Of direct relevance to governments, one main role of the 10YFP was defined as supporting the integration of SCP into decision-making at all levels of planning and policy making, particularly in view of its cross-cutting nature. The objectives of the 10YFP furthermore included establishing a global, multi-stakeholder knowledge-sharing platform on SCP to enable stakeholders to exchange policies, tools and best practices for enhancing cooperation. This platform, with a focus on six areas of implementation (the 10YFP global programmes) has gradually come into being in the last few years, and in early 2018 was dubbed the “One Planet Network” (see also Figure 2 in the Annex).¹²

Take-home message from Umeå

“The added value of the SCP approach has already been demonstrated extensively, worldwide. One of the greatest challenges concerning the next steps of implementation is how to bring SCP into scale, in view of the many but fragmented and disconnected SCP policies, practices and initiatives.”

– Charles Arden Clark, Head of the Secretariat of the 10YFP

¹¹ For a brief history of SCP, please refer to: <http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/about/what-scp>

¹² For more information concerning the 10YFP and the One Planet Network, please refer to <http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/what-10yfp>

Most recently, in September 2015, the international community agreed to a new and ambitious sustainable development roadmap for the next 15 years: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereafter, the “2030 Agenda”). A list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals with an accompanying 169 targets for helping benchmark progress was also adopted in this context.¹³

The central role of promoting a shift towards SCP in achieving the 2030 Agenda was clearly affirmed with the inclusion of a related standalone goal from among the 17 SDGs: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Goal 12).

Goal 12 is in fact the most central and most transversal goal among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals because it is mutually connected with every one of the other goals. According to the monitoring and reporting framework of the 10YFP (10YFP M&E Task Force 2016) Goal 12 on SCP in the first tier is directly related to other goals such as Clean Water (Goal 6), Clean Energy (Goal 7), Sustainable Cities (Goal 11), Life below Water (Goal 14), and Life on Land (Goal 15) (see also Figure 3 in the Annex).

In the context of the *2030 Agenda*, the 10YFP is considered a means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in general, but in particular Goal 12.

It should also be mentioned that transitioning towards sustainable consumption and production is predicted to be instrumental for reaching the goals and objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement (see e.g. Salo, M. & Nissinen A. 2017, Alfredsson et al. 2018)

The level of the European Union

In the European Union context, the objectives of SCP have been integrated into a wide range of policy fields, including but not limited to energy and climate change, environmental protection (including air/water/soil and chemicals, etc.), industry and eco-innovation, waste and the Circular Economy, and even rural development, trade and development cooperation, etc. More recently, in November 2016, and at the highest overarching level, the European Commission also presented their Sustainable Development Package; the European Union’s response to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Concerning Goal 12, this policy package makes reference to European efforts to foster resource efficiency and the circular economy as the most important means of promoting SCP in the European Union.

One of the European Commission’s central measures concerning Goal 12 is the Circular Economy Package adopted in 2015 that places the focus on five areas of action (see Figure 4 in the annex). The aims and objectives of the Circular Economy Package at the overarching level include improving coherence between industrial,

¹³ For more information concerning the 2030 Agenda, please refer to <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

environmental, climate and energy policies, and developing an optimal business environment through focusing on the creation of new jobs and further growth. Moreover, the aims and objectives of the package include helping consumers choose more sustainable products and services.

Take-home message from Umeå

“The concept of the Circular Economy in the European Union is linked not only to improved environmental outcomes, but also to an objective at a high-level of priority, that is to maximise the prosperity of European citizens, in particular via improved innovation, ensuing new business models and new jobs, created in Europe, for European welfare.”

– Hugo Schally, Head of Unit, Sustainable Production, Products and Consumption, European Commission

The level of the Nordic Cooperation

In the countries of the Nordic region, individually as well as collectively, significant activity has been taking place with regard to the promotion of SCP since 1992 and the Rio Earth Summit. Albeit frequently without explicit reference to SCP, relevant implementation has been taking place at all levels of governance, including the global, sub-regional, national and local levels.

In the international context, between 2003 and 2012 the countries of the region – with Finland and Sweden taking the lead – provided firm support for the implementation of the Marrakesh Process – a global process that was tasked with supporting the elaboration of a 10YFP.¹⁴

As of early 2018, there have been a number of high-level policy documents under implementation in the Nordic region that recognise SCP as a key challenge and/or as an effective mechanism for delivering results. Of these, and at the highest overarching level, is the Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development: A Good Life in a Sustainable Nordic Region (2013) that identifies SCP as a priority area of implementation. According to the vision contained in this strategy, “The Nordic countries will replace a culture of unsustainable consumption and disposability with a more sustainable re-use culture based on production and consumption adapted to the environment.”

Most recently, in September 2017, the Ministers for Nordic Cooperation also adopted Generation 2030: the Nordic Programme for Agenda 2030, with the overarching objective of promoting knowledge-sharing and cooperation between the Nordic countries in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

¹⁴ For more information, please refer to: <http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech/>

Reflecting the greatest challenges, the region faces, Generation 2030 defines sustainable consumption and production and thus SDG 12 as a priority theme for the implementation period 2017-2020. Simultaneously, it places marked emphasis on the importance of children and young people in the planned implementation activities as agents of change – hence the name of the programme “Generation 2030”.

The planned outcomes of Generation 2030 include, among others, the creation of a holistic approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the level of the Nordic Cooperation in particular, and specific initiatives at the level of the various ministerial councils, as well as those with a specific focus on involving Nordic young people.

Insights into the Nordic implementation of the 10YFP

Nordic discourse concerning unsustainable patterns of production and consumption

A considerable number of topics and issues of direct relevance to contemporary patterns of production and consumption, as well as potential approaches to addressing them, have been debated in the policy context and in public across the region over recent years.

Relevant overarching concepts and approaches in the policy discourse have included resource efficiency, green growth and/or the green economy, the circular economy, the bioeconomy, the energy transition, carbon neutrality and/or the fossil-free economy, low-carbon development, and so on. Moreover, relevant policy debate has also involved topics and concepts that take their starting point as social sustainability, social progress, and/or the future of the Nordic welfare model, while also integrating environmental and economic concerns.

The necessity of also addressing patterns of consumption and Nordic lifestyles has become an integrated part of the relevant discourse and has largely been endorsed across the region.

Ongoing cooperation in promoting a shift towards SCP at the Nordic level

There is a long tradition of cooperation among the countries of the region pertinent to the necessary shift towards SCP. At present, the relevant focus is on the activities of the Working Group for Sustainable Consumption and Production.

The mandates of this working group at the highest level include contributing to the implementation of the relevant strategies and action plans of the Nordic Cooperation, as well as related cross-sectorial cooperation.¹⁵ In addition, the working group manages relevant research activities and informs the Nordic policy-making community about the findings of research by means of reports and stakeholder meetings, etc.

Moreover, there are also other working groups of high relevance to SCP in place at the level of the Nordic Cooperation, among them the Environment and Finance Group, the Chemical Group and the Waste Group.

¹⁵ For more information, please visit: <http://www.norden.org/HKP>

At present, 10YFP National Focal Points in the Nordic Region have been nominated by Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. At the Swedish National Laboratory on Sustainable Lifestyles conference (November 2017) the Nordic Focal Points presented results from common activities and initiated a discussion on how to enhance the implementation of the 10YFP in the period 2018-22.

Strategic policy framework for the promotion of SCP at the Nordic level

At the level of the Nordic Cooperation, the pivotal role of SCP in furthering sustainable development is recognised in a number of strategies and action plans. In addition to the Nordic Strategy on Sustainable Development (2013) and Generation 2030 (2017) at the highest overarching level, these include, among others:

The Nordic Environmental Action Plan 2013–2018 (2015) under the thematic heading “Inclusive Green Development” endorses SCP as main topic. The related aims and objectives of the action plan include, “Promoting sustainable consumption and production by introducing laws and financial instruments, and by implementing UN and EU action plans for sustainable production and consumption”. Concerning the intended means of the envisioned change, the action plans makes reference to legislation, economic instruments, information and education, and infrastructural measures that enable consumers to act in a sustainable way.

The overarching objective of the Nordic Action Plan for Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Well dressed in a clean environment (2015) is to define the framework conditions for sustainable design, production and consumption in fashion and textiles by 2020. This action plan also places special emphasis on addressing patterns of consumption with the generic aim of creating new synergies and increasing the value of initiatives already launched by the individual countries of the region. In particular, the action plan focuses on the environmental dimension of sustainability and provides the following overall vision statement: “to be the world leader in sustainable design, consumption and production, and to make a positive contribution to sustainable development and green growth, both in the Nordic Region and globally by 2050”. Focal areas of the Action Plan include, “Promoting sustainable Nordic design”, “Promoting more sustainable materials,” and “Promoting environmentally conscious consumer behaviour”.

Moreover, there are a number of other initiatives of strategic character currently under implementation that either explicitly or implicitly endorse the added value of the SCP approach. The latter include the New Nordic Food Manifesto and related implementation activities (ongoing since 2005), the Nordic Bioeconomy Initiative (NordBio) (2014), and the Co-operation Programme of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry 2017-2020 (2017).

Strategic policy framework for the promotion of SCP at the national level

The countries of the Nordic region promote the transition towards SCP in a number of different contexts, explicitly or implicitly. Significant activity has been ongoing in terms of relevant agenda-setting and policy planning and implementation at the strategic level, supported by robust structures for evidence-based policy making as well as by extensive initiatives in the area of relevant stakeholder engagement.

For example, and re-confirming their relevant and strong commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the countries of the region have each already adopted a national status report, action plan or strategy for mainstreaming the SDGs into their national policies. As a result of the relevant scoping studies, gap analyses, etc. that contributed to the preparation of these national reports and programmes, SCP frequently features, either explicitly or implicitly, as one of the priority areas for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in a domestic context.

In terms of relevant strategic action in the domestic context, both Finland (in 2005 and 2013) and Sweden (in 2016) have, for example, adopted national programmes dedicated to the promotion of a shift towards SCP.¹⁶ Various other strategies and action plans of high relevance to SCP have also been adopted in the other Nordic countries since 2012 and the Rio+20 Summit, albeit frequently without explicit reference to SCP (with a focus on, for example, the Circular Economy, etc.).

Take-home message from Umeå

“There is a very interesting discussion going on in society about environmentally and socially sustainable consumption in Sweden, with more and more people understanding that these are very important topics. Moreover, it is being also recognized that if we are not able to change the way we consume, it will be very hard to reach the high targets we have defined, for example concerning the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.” – Per Bolund, Minister for Financial Markets and Consumer Affairs, Deputy Minister for Finance, Sweden

¹⁶ *Getting more from less: Finnish initiatives on sustainable consumption and production* (2013) and respectively the *Strategy for Sustainable Consumption*, Sweden (2016)

Best practices for the promotion of SCP the Nordic way

A large number of successfully introduced projects, initiatives and programmes of high relevance to SCP are in place and functioning across the Nordic region.

A series of reports under the auspices of the Working Group for SCP that showcase relevant Nordic best practices, experiences and lessons learnt have recently been published.¹⁷ In the focus of these reports are themes directly linked to the 10YFP, such as Sustainable Lifestyles and Education, Sustainable Public Procurement, Sustainable Tourism, Consumer Information for SCP, Sustainable Buildings and Construction, as well as Sustainable Food Systems..

Nordic 10YFP global initiatives

The countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden are amongst the main financial sponsors of the 10YFP. In addition, Sweden is the co-leader (together with Japan) of the Sustainable Lifestyles and Education Programme (SLE) while Finland is the co-leader (together with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the UN Environment) of the Sustainable Buildings and Construction Programme (SBC).

The mission of the Sustainable Lifestyles and Education Programme is to foster the uptake of sustainable lifestyles as the common norm, with the objective of ensuring their positive contribution to addressing global challenges such as resource efficiency and biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, poverty eradication and social well-being.¹⁸

The Sustainable Buildings and Construction Programme aims at improving knowledge of sustainable construction and supporting and mainstreaming sustainable building solutions. Through this programme all major sustainable construction activities can be brought together under the same umbrella. The work involves sharing good practices, launching implementation projects, creating cooperation networks, and committing actors around the world to sustainable construction.¹⁹

Most recently, with the leadership of Denmark, the countries of the region have been in the process of bringing a new initiative about sustainable textiles and fashion to life, with the aim of integrating it into the SLE Programme (Juhl Madsen, K. 2017).

¹⁷ For the reports please refer to: <http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/initiative/nordic-best-practices-relevant-10yfp>

¹⁸ See also: <http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-lifestyles-and-education>

¹⁹ See also: <http://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-buildings-and-construction>

This new initiative builds upon the aims of the Nordic Action Plan for Sustainable Fashion and Textiles with the specific objective of supporting information exchange for enhancing the implementation of SCP in the textile and fashion sector at the global level, based on relevant Nordic experiences and work.

In addition, Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges (2017), an initiative of the Nordic prime ministers, and the flagship programmes “Nordic Green” and “Nordic Food and Welfare” promote good examples of Nordic solutions to the global challenges pertinent to the 2030 Agenda, primarily in the field of international cooperation with other countries and regions of the world.

Take-home messages from the closing panel discussion in Umeå

The aim of the panel discussion at the Swedish Laboratory on Sustainable Lifestyles conference in Umeå was to discuss the future of Nordic collaboration towards the enhanced implementation of the 10YFP. It addressed the two following main themes (as indicated in bold):

1) Who should cooperate and co-act towards better outcomes, and how?

Relevant challenges formulated by the panellists included:

- How to communicate the rationale and way forward to SCP to various players and stakeholders such as local business communities, etc.
- How to simultaneously bring together relevant issues, agendas, etc. at different levels of governance (global/EU/national/local) when it comes to implementation at the practical level.
- The bulk of the Nordic best practice examples (presented at earlier sessions) concern relevant action at the local level. The challenge is how to upscale these initiatives, especially when there seems to be insufficient awareness about them in relevant forums at the national and global levels.
- There is a considerable gap in relevant policy implementation in the global context.²⁰ Who are the relevant stakeholders to interact with in this context, and how could the Nordic region overcome the challenges?
- The population of the Nordic countries enjoy good lifestyles and a high quality of life, partly due to the fact that associated environmental and social impacts are incurred elsewhere. How can Nordic lifestyles be transformed so that they are in harmony with ecological limits, etc. – and who are the main partners to cooperate with in this effort?
- There are, however, significant limits on expectable outcomes that solely depend on the result of cooperation and co-action: it will be necessary to change some of the framework conditions at a higher level – most of all, economic framework conditions. This is because there is an inherent conflict between the prevailing paradigm of continued economic growth and the goals and objectives of SCP. The

²⁰ An example quoted in this context in the panel discussion was that strong evidence indicates that timber originating from unreliable sources in the tropics arrives to Sweden certified according to sustainable forestry standards.

challenge remains how to change the storyline, which we presently follow, because this largely still involves acting according to the ideas of the seventeenth century when nature was seen as infinite and there was a significant need for development in terms of the creation of material wealth.

The way forward should include reference to and interaction with the following:

- Creating new and innovative methods of communication, among them, for example, working with culture and art.
- In Sweden, a reference stakeholder group whose goal is to support the implementation of the 10YFP has been established, and the Swedish Consumer Agency has also been given an explicit role in relevant implementation. The fact that the Ministry for Finance has formulated the Strategy for Sustainable Consumption in Sweden, and moreover, the fact that it follows a relatively novel approach by putting special emphasis on consumer-citizens, is expected to bring about considerable results.
- The Umeå National Laboratory on Sustainable Lifestyles conference was the third meeting of this kind in Sweden and also the first to bring together different levels of governance such as global, EU, national and local levels, and all the national 10YFP focal points of the Nordic countries: it is expected to create new momentum for relevant cooperation pertinent to the implementation of the 10YFP in the next period.
- It is necessary that the Nordic countries remain challenged by best practices in other parts of Europe. This includes, for example, concerning relevant action at the level of cities, such as the generally progressive cities in France, etc.
- There is no need to keep “reinventing SCP”; however, it is necessary to keep constantly challenging ourselves in terms of defining and addressing challenges.
- It is necessary to bring new perspectives into the discourse as they bring in new understanding. One example is the gender perspective in sustainable consumption. We require a better understanding of how gender affects infrastructure and environmental outcomes, etc.
- SCP has to expand out of the domain of environment ministries to the level of finance ministries and development cooperation, among other policy fields. Measures aimed at furthering SCP such as enhanced cooperation and awareness raising among citizens should be backed by relevant economic and fiscal incentives, such as taxes and charges, etc. to give them leverage.

Have the Nordic countries been doing enough since 2012?

The European Union and the Nordic countries provided strong support for the formulation of the 10YFP in 2012. Since then, and concerning the implementation of the 10YFP at the global level, this momentum appears to have lessened.

However, promoting SCP is a complex challenge and the formulation of relevant policies takes time. In the time period between 2012 and 2017 the Nordic countries have been intensively engaged in piloting the implementation of the 10YFP in their domestic national contexts (for example, see the case of Sweden described above) which has taken considerable effort. The momentum for transferring relevant knowledge and lessons learnt to the global level remains, thus the countries of the Nordic region have an indispensable role to play in fostering a global shift towards SCP as a cohesive group of creative actors. At the same time, the enhanced implementation of the 10YFP remains essential, even within the Nordic context.

Recommendations

Based upon the combined results of desk research and the outcomes of the Swedish National Laboratory on Sustainable Lifestyles conference – with no claim to be exhaustive – the following considerations and recommendations towards an enhanced implementation of the 10YFP under the Nordic Cooperation are suggested:

- 1) Defining and adopting a more systemic-integrated approach to the implementation of the 10YFP under the Nordic Cooperation represents not only an opportunity for better outcomes, but is an imperative: this is because of the mutuality of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the fact that Goal 12 regarding sustainable consumption and production is the most pivotal of these.
- 2) One major challenge central to the success of the future implementation of the 10YFP in the context of the Nordic Cooperation is understanding how to effectively ensure policy integration and policy coherence that is pertinent to both the realisation of the SDGs and the implementation of the six thematic and sectorial global 10YFP Programmes.
- 3) Evidently, the future of Nordic cooperation on SCP must relate to the recently launched 5-year Strategy of the One Planet Network, as well as to the results of the review of global progress towards achieving SDG 12 which was carried out in the framework of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2018 in New York.
- 4) Building on the above considerations, this Policy Note recommends putting special emphasis on enhancing collaboration in the various dimensions of the Nordic Cooperation at all levels of governance (local, national, sub-regional and global), in close relationship with the relevant stakeholders, pertaining to, among other goals:
 - Encouraging the uptake of sustainable lifestyles across the Nordic region in line with common principles, with particular attention to the urban population and youth, as well as on the development of the necessary infrastructure in this context;
 - Facilitating a revenue-neutral shift in the economic framework conditions of the member countries that awards preference to sustainable consumption and production practices;

- Encouraging the implementation of zero-waste principles along the entire value chain of products and services;
- Fostering greater uptake of the ecosystems services approach in the management of natural resources;
- Committing to full respect for human rights; moreover, to ensuring decent working conditions and a decent income for the individuals involved in global value chains that support Nordic prosperity.

Examples of potentially relevant initiatives at the tactical level en route to the achievement of the above goals include, among others:

- 5) Working out integrated guidelines for the members of the Nordic Cooperation for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals that emphasise the pivotal role of SDG12 in meeting all the other SDGs and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda;
- 6) Defining common guiding principles that support the enhanced integration of SCP in the development cooperation policies of the members of the Nordic Cooperation;
- 7) Joining forces to promote the global transition towards SCP with the Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges initiative, in particular with regard to relevant Nordic experience, lessons learnt, etc. concerning the global 10YFP programmes;
- 8) With similar objectives to the above, investigating the potential of closer cooperation with the European Commission pertaining to its initiatives, including SWITCH Africa Green, SWITCH-Asia II, and SWITCH-Mediterranean;
- 9) Enhancing ongoing cooperation among the various national ethical trade initiatives of the Nordic countries with the aim of multiplying the volume of trade in relevant products and services;
- 10) Investigating in what ways Nordic experience with the implementation of the 10YFP could be integrated into new or already existing forms of cooperation among the Member States of the European Union for mutual benefit;
- 11) Informing the ongoing Nordic debate concerning the future of welfare policies about the anticipated benefits of the enhanced implementation of SCP in the environment/economy/society nexus;

- 12) Ensuring an exchange of relevant information and knowledge concerning policies, tools and best practices, etc. across the Nordic region by establishing a common "Nordic Stakeholder Forum for the Promotion of SCP";
- 13) Establishing a "Nordic Champions of Change and Cheerleaders" network, with equal emphasis on finding and showcasing relevant innovators and leaders in the business and public sectors, as well as in relevant Nordic communities, such as those among indigenous people and/or communities in the archipelagos, etc.;
- 14) Investigating the potential of social innovation for promoting SCP, including – for example – the potential of the sharing economy, as well as of urban-rural linkages of high relevance to SCP, such as agro-tourism and short food supply chains, etc.;
- 15) Participating in relevant and ongoing activity under the Nordic Cooperation aimed at developing indicators for monitoring the shift towards SCP.

References

- 10YFP M&E Task Force (10YFP Monitoring and Evaluation Task Force) (2016). Demonstrating progress and Impact of the 10YFP – Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
- Alfredsson et al. (2018). Why achieving the Paris agreement requires reduced overall consumption and production.
- Bringezu, S. (2015). Possible Target Corridor for Sustainable Use of Global Material Resources.
- Clean Clothes Campaign (2015). Living Wage Now! (Magazine) Digest Edition Autumn 2015.
- D'Ambrogio, E. (2014). Workers' conditions in the textile and clothing sector: just an Asian affair? Issues at stake after the Rana Plaza tragedy.
- DCE (Danish Council on Ethics) (2016). The Ethical Consumer – Report.
- Dual Citizen (2016). Green Economy Index.
- ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the United Nations) (2017). Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals Report of the Secretary-General.
- EEA (European Environment Agency) (2013). Environmental pressures from European consumption and production.
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) (2017). Trade Policy Briefs No. 30: Voluntary sustainability standards in agriculture, fisheries and forestry trade.
- Fern (Making the EU Work for People & Forests) (2015). Stolen Goods: The EU's complicity in illegal tropical deforestation.
- Gjerris, E. & Gaiani S. (2013). Household food waste in Nordic countries: Estimations and ethical implications.
- HELCOM (Helsinki Commission) (2017). First version of the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report – June 2017 – to be updated in 2018.
- IEA (International Energy Agency) (2017). IEA Energy Efficiency Indicators Database.
- ILO (International Labour Organisation) (2012). Green jobs becoming a reality Progress and outlook 2012.
- ISEAL Alliance. (2017). The business benefits of using sustainability standards.
- Juhl Madsen, K. 2017. New Nordic initiative regarding sustainable textiles and fashion.
- Kharas, H. (2017). The unprecedented expansion of the global middle class: an update.
- Kotakorpi, E. et al. (2008). Natural Resource Consumption of Finnish Households and Its Reduction.
- Krauss, J. & Krishnan, A. (2016). Global decisions and local realities: Priorities and producers' upgrading opportunities in agricultural global production networks.

LeBaron, G. et al. (2018). Confronting root causes: forced labour in global supply chains.

Lindhqvist, T. (2010). The sustainability potential of work with consumption and green lifestyles.

MA (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment) (2005). Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis.

Mont, O. et al. (2013). Improving Nordic policymaking by dispelling myths on sustainable consumption.

norden.org. (2016a). Citizens' Role in Mitigating Climate Change and Reducing Green House Gases.

norden.org. (2016b). Joint Nordic Statement on marine plastic litter and microplastics.

norden.org. (2018a). Reducing food waste.

norden.org. (2018b). Textile waste - a future resource for the Nordic region.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2018). Better Life Index – Income.

OECD Data. (2018). Municipal waste.

OECD (2017). Healthy people, healthy planet.

Sachs, J. et al. (2017). SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017.

Salo, M. & Nissinen A. (2017). Consumption choices to decrease personal carbon footprints of Finns.

Schulmeister, A. (2015). Eating up Forests: How EU Consumption Drives Deforestation and Land Conversation – the case of soy from Brazil.

SDG Tracker (2018). Material footprint per capita.

Slezák, J. (2017). Fostering Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) at the national level in the pan-European context: highlights on relevant and recent policies in Sweden.

Strang, J. (2016). Nordic Political and Economic Cooperation: Context, History and Outlook.

SWEPA (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency) (2013). Consumption-based indicators in Swedish environmental policy.

SWEPA (2010). The Climate Impact of Swedish Consumption.

UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) (2016). Global Material Flows and Resource Productivity. An Assessment Study of the UNEP International Resource Panel.

UNEP (2008). Green Jobs: Towards decent work in a sustainable, low-carbon world.

UNEP (2017). Towards a Pollution-Free Planet Background Report.

Annex

Figure 1

Source: Presentation by C. Arden-Clarke, Head, 10YFP Secretariat in Umeå

Figure 2

Source: Presentation by C. Arden-Clarke, Head, 10YFP Secretariat in Umeå

14 key targets linked to outcomes and impacts from the shift to SCP*

Figure 3

Source: Presentation by C. Arden-Clarke, Head, 10YFP Secretariat in Umeå

Circular Economy Package

Figure 4

Source: Presentation of Hugo Schally, Head of Unit, European Commission in Umeå