

Comments: Civil society and a Pan-European framework for green economy

From

Jeffrey Barber, Integrative Strategies Forum

Janis Brizga, Green Liberty

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1. Greening the economy in the pan-European region

(a) What steps should be taken to further promote cooperation among countries in the pan-European region to facilitate the overall transition to green economy? What are the supporting regulatory frameworks as well as educational and awareness raising activities in your country? How do you balance the impacts and trade-offs of policies on social, economic and environmental concerns e.g. on employment, prosperity, improvement in human well-being and social equity, private investment and natural capital safeguarding? What are the remaining challenges for greening the economy in your country?

Since the Environment for Europe meeting in Kiev European ECO Forum has consistently highlighted the need for a Pan-European Framework on Sustainable Production and Consumption -- which is the underlying basis for a "green economy." In 2016 the UNECE members have an opportunity to establish a Pan-European strategic framework on the green economy which can put into place policies and programs to promote sustainable production and consumption practices, including the transition of infrastructure establishing sustainable enterprises and livelihoods which in turn enable citizens' transition to sustainable lifestyles.

The development and implementation of this framework, however, cannot effectively take place without the active participation and cooperation of civil society and private sector. This participation and cooperation requires multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms linking stakeholders and sectors within and across the countries making up the Pan-European region.

Countries have both common and differing views, interests and understandings of as well as capacities in addressing the various issues of this transition, it is the same with the various stakeholders within and across countries. Thus it is essential to discuss, establish and enable effective *intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms and methodologies* linking national and local governments with civil society and the private sector in this common project to encourage, produce and share insights and solutions to the challenges of realizing this transition.

(b) What resource efficiency and productivity policies might be considered to promote sustainable development? What approaches can be most useful in reducing total resource use (e.g. circular economy, energy generation and use)?

Research suggest that housing (heating, waste, electricity etc), transport (public and private) and food (agriculture, processing and distribution) are the sectors with the highest environmental pressures. However, each country should have its own assessment identifying the main pressure areas. Four footprints (land, water, resource and carbon) should be used to

identify these direct and supply chain impacts and policies should be developed accordingly, using a mix of policy tools - from communication tools to regulation and taxation.

Development of these policies need to include consultations and partnerships with civil society and the private sector, considering the role, perspectives, interests and potential problems with the implementation of those policies. Rather than a top-down approach, multi-stakeholder buy-in and engagement from the beginning is more likely to enhance transition.

(c) What partnerships/programmes are working successfully/are to be introduced in your country to address the challenges of sustainable production and consumption (SCP)? What are the major impediments in the way of SCP?

To ensure green economy we have to encourage co-operation, partnership and alliances, thereby creating a network of mutual support and reliance. Participation of all stakeholders, including businesses, governments, households and mediators (NGOs, educational facilities, media and other stakeholders mediating information, values and behavioral patterns) is needed to do that.

Various networks of stakeholder organizations committed to sustainability values exist within each sector as well as those cross-cutting networks rooted in specific ecosystems and ecoregions and ecosystems. Networks and communities of practice also exist focused on promoting specific policy instruments, such as sustainable procurement, EPR, socially responsible investment, lifecycle analysis and many others. The challenge is in establishing cooperative frameworks and dialogue mechanisms linking these various networks together, coordinating practical knowledge flows and exchanges resulting in innovative approaches and solutions. Again this calls for mechanisms and methodologies bringing together governments, CSOs and business in productive dialogue processes.

(d) What programs, policies or incentives, including sustainable public procurement and the removal of environmentally harmful subsidies, have been introduced successfully to induce the shift in the public and private sectors to green economy? What types of policies exist or are being introduced to encourage green investment, including Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) in different sectors? What are your Government's current and future priorities on these topics?

As revealed in the recent survey, a wide range of sustainability programs, policies and actions are now in place and continuing to emerge, yet hardly at the level of what is needed. Responsible investment requires vision, knowledge and encouraging policy and action trends. Governments and stakeholders need to strengthen this vision and support each other in mobilizing ideas, institutions, and resources to this end.

Action is needed in the following areas:

- Long-term policy signals through taxation and stimulus packages should be established to create appropriate incentives for business.
- Ecological tax reform - **shifting tax burden** away from income and employment towards environmental pollution in order to internalize the cost of pollution, revising electricity tariffs and increasing the prices of fuels and encourage businesses and individuals to reduce emissions and consumption. Eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and build support for advanced low-impact technologies.

- Improving regional cooperation and **exchange of low-impact technologies** and best practices. This can be achieved by expanding financial flows and developing new financing mechanisms.
- **Trade regimes** should be adjusted to encourage rapid deployment of technologies and products that enhance sustainable development while lowering emissions.
- **Regulations on land use planning**, construction, air quality and transport should be enhanced. Stimulate **public procurement** to facilitate demand for environmentally friendly goods and services and investments in energy efficiency in schools, hospitals, government buildings, and municipal services.
- **Energy efficiency improvement** should be accelerated, using incentives that encourage institutional and behavioral change.
- The demonstration and deployment of near commercial technologies is required, as is significantly increased investment in **R&D** for promising technologies in the long term.
- Policies and frameworks should be implemented which enable a change in **human behavior and lifestyle**, by **removing high-impact choices** and providing households with the opportunity to benefit from green economy.
- **Cultural shift** to move away from materialism to a new standard of 'good life' build around wellbeing, community and equity.
- The **required level of trust** can be built by continuing and enhancing coordination by national and local governments and by different stakeholders. Regional cooperation should be enhanced, as should the sharing of expertise and best practice between national, regional and international stakeholders.

2. Improving air quality for a better environment and human health

(a) What experience does your Government have with specific investments in air quality improvements that lead to health improvements? How effective have control measures been in addressing the impact of air pollution on public health? What are the costs of inaction? How does international cooperation aid the improvement of air quality?

(b) How effective have current policies been in addressing the impact of air pollution on ecosystems, agricultural crops, and urban areas? What actions are needed to improve air quality and lessen impacts on ecosystems, damage to crops, and impacts on human health? What are the associated challenges?

(c) How successful has your Government been in integrating air pollution reduction measures into financial and development policies, as well as other sectoral policies? What role can policymakers and financing institutions play in ensuring that projects which reduce air pollution and the human exposure to it, receive funding?

(d) How could enabling public participation in relevant processes (e.g., policy development) improve air quality? What do you do in your country in this regard? What legal measures, policies and practices, including educational and public awareness campaigns, and voluntary or incentive measures to ensure effective public participation in reducing air pollution, work best in your country?