



Brussels,
ENTR/B4/DD D(2007) 39559

Subject: Highlights from SCP/SIP public internet consultation (27 July – 23 September 2007)

Respondents' profile

The questionnaire was addressed to two types of respondents: general public and stakeholders. The survey was accessed by 658 respondents. 479 of these provided their affiliation, of whom 277 were individuals and 202 stakeholders.

All sectors participated in the survey. Given the subjects at stake, a high number of respondents were from industrial sector (slightly above 30%, of which 51% were stakeholders) and the environmental field (almost 30%, of which 47 % were stakeholders).

Among the general public that indicated their origin, 22 EU countries were represented. France, Belgium, United Kingdom and Germany were the most numerous. Their age range, by order of magnitude, was 30-50, 18-30 and 50-65. Almost 55% were female. Stakeholders were mainly located in Belgium, United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy.

Barriers and opportunities

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed (97,8%) with the need for action in the fields of sustainable industrial policy and of sustainable consumption and production. There was an equally strong consensus (81,6%) with the choice of the five key challenges towards a more sustainable industrial policy and unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

In general, focusing actions on smarter consumption was identified as the most important area of action. The general public considered that actions should also concentrate on consumption. For stakeholders consumption, innovation and product policy appear as the three more important areas for action.

Leveraging innovation

The key barrier for innovation identified by 39.1% of stakeholders is the lack of long term policy and regulatory direction. Unawareness by consumers for better products (27.2%), high risks associated with greening the production processes, products and services (27.2%) as well as little public procurement (24.3%) appear to be also very important. When considering only “the most important (code 1)” barriers, high investment appears among the three top ones.

In terms of options for action, quite similar consensus appears for the three most important options: improving the link between research and industry (36.1%), providing services to SMEs (34.2%) and market based instruments to promote technology adoption (33.2%) are the most selected ones. Market based instruments to promote innovation in eco-design (29.7%) as well as research on eco-innovation (29.2%) appears to be also quite important. Among the “top” priorities, increasing research funding has to be added to the ones mentioned above.

For leveraging innovation fostering a closer relationship between research and industrial stakeholders appears to be essential.

Leaner and cleaner production

With regard to the main barriers for adopting energy and resource-efficient production systems in industry, the majority of respondents (63,8%) identified the lack of incentives to improve product processes as most important; this was followed by (48,1%) agreement on the disadvantages to international competitiveness by having to follow high environmental requirements. This was followed by 44,6% who considered of rather low importance the implementation of best available technologies too demanding in terms of investments, skills, etc. The costs of improving environmental performance and lack of environmental awareness were also considered important barriers.

Amongst the most important options to meet the challenge of "leaner production", at equal footing are the use of incentives to induce industries to adopt better technologies and processes (35,1%), and the use of fiscal measures, subsidies and trading schemes to improve the efficient use of resources (raw materials and recycling) (33,1%). However, it needs to be noted that setting resource and material efficiency targets was identified as the most important of all options (26,8%). At equal par was the use of fiscal measures, subsidies and trading schemes to stimulate investment in more sustainable companies (25,3%). Reinforcing the European Action Plan for Environmental Technologies (ETAP) and promoting sectoral approaches to improve the energy efficiency and the carbon footprint internationally were also supported.

Better products

The respondents indicated that the extension of the scope of products covered by Eco-design will facilitate the promotion of better products. Taxation, public procurement and an enhanced labelling system gather the greatest consensus in terms of concrete actions.

In terms of barriers for the use of better products, lack of awareness by consumers of the potential pay-offs appears as the most important factor (61.8%). Lack of incentives for consumers to purchase better performing products (46.1%) and higher prices (40%) are also important, whereas 37,8% consider the definition of minimum requirements for products is not based on a high enough level of sustainability performance. When

considering only the “top” barriers, insufficient environmental ambition adds up to the ones mentioned above.

To induce dynamic performing systems for enhancing the environmental performance of products and boosting innovation in the EU markets, respondents clearly supported using mandatory instruments (65.7%), whereas voluntary approaches were supported by 25%. When considering only stakeholders, the responses are 51.5% and 39.6% respectively. Individuals however clearly indicated their preference for mandatory instruments (75.4%).

In terms of product based approach, there is a slight preference for concentrating on products improving resource and energy efficiency (79,1%). The opinion is different when considering only the “top” priority, which clearly indicate the need to concentrate on those products whose consumption causes the highest environmental damage (71,3%).

Very similar reactions on the first best action to meet the challenges were expressed, with a slight preference for enhanced use of eco-design instruments (67.3%).

Participants indicated that they (strongly) agree to see eco-design instruments extended to new products (67,3%). The results are more ambiguous on the second preferred option: a higher number of participants strongly agreed by the inclusion of other products within the Energy-using Products (EUP) Directive than with developing new policies. Strong support was also shown for environmental product declarations and sustainability labels and data collection (60,2%).

To support the development, supply and use of better performing products, respondents clearly indicated that the best option is a taxation system that reflect the energy and resource efficiency of the products (48.3%). Public procurement focusing on energy efficient products (32.4%) and an enhanced labelling system for products indicating several performances (28.9%) were the next options. A dynamic system regularly updated including minimum requirements and benchmarks for best performing products and an enhanced use of energy efficiency labels are also alternatives to explore. When considering only the “top” option, the order of options varies and a new option appears: to broaden the scope of products to which minimum requirements apply.

In terms of additional role for the EU to support SCP, the three options (coherent labelling, transparency in compliance and minimise impacts of EU consumption and production overseas) were broadly supported.

Smarter consumption

Ranking the most important options which could be developed to meet the challenge of more sustainable consumption, the key option for many respondents (49,7%) was to differentiate tax according to the environmental footprint of products and consumer education and training (37,3%); Others strongly supported options were enhancing the role of energy efficient and green products in public procurement (33,6%) and addressing misleading advertising/false environmental claims (30,7%). Also at high equal footing were the enhanced use of fiscal incentives, subsidies and trading schemes (28,9%) and consumer information: communications material and awareness-raising (28,1%).

There was strong agreement on the need to develop EU level initiatives to help retailers green the supply chain and influence consumer choices (71,8% between agree and agree

strongly); the same level of respondents (78,3%) supported the need for action to ensure the reliability of environmental compliance claims by suppliers/retailers for the environmental performance of products they sell. There was overwhelming support for public procurement to concentrate on green products, even if they are more expensive (82%), with the majority of respondents (60,5%) considering that green procurement should be mandatory. The majority also (71%) agreed on the need to provide for additional incentives to stimulate green public procurement by private purchasers.

Global markets

In terms of international actions, promoting sectoral approaches, establishing international minimum requirements and promoting energy efficiency in international policies appear to have the broadest agreement to level playing field.

Three key barriers for EU international positioning of products, technologies and services gather similar degree of consensus: different quality requirements (36.1%), IPR problems (35.2%) and lack of compliance with international commitments (33.1%). In terms of “top” barriers, lack of incentives to transfer technologies and policies not always addressing level playing field also add to the previous ones.

Stakeholders were more precise in terms of options to address the barriers: setting minimum requirements internationally (59.9%), level playing field (53%) and the consideration of energy efficiency in bilateral agreements (43.1%) and in EU trade and development policies (39.1). Most of the respondents (strongly) agree on the need to promote global sectoral agreements.