



European  
Research Area

# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



## SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050

### Roadmap: The Transition to Future Sustainable Lifestyles.

Policy recommendations for the development of pathways to more sustainable living in Europe from today to 2050.

Final Policy Brief, November 2012

## INTRODUCTION

The SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 European social platform project has been a two-year inquiry that has engaged stakeholders from across Europe – from business, research, design, policy, civil society and citizens – who have participated in the development of a vision and scenarios of future sustainable societies. The social platform has identified inspiring examples of more sustainable living practices around Europe and has developed a EU Action Roadmap of possible actions to enable the transition to more sustainable ways of living by 2050.

**The EU Sustainable Lifestyles Roadmap & Action Plan 2050** is the final deliverable of the SPREAD project.

The Roadmap integrates the following SPREAD project research and deliverables:

- > Qualitative and quantitative indicators and drivers of current unsustainable European lifestyle impacts on the environment, society and individual wellbeing.
- > Examples of current initiatives and ways of living that reveal promising solutions to current lifestyle impacts.
- > Four scenarios of future societies where current challenges to sustainable living have been overcome, sustainable lifestyles are the norm, and supported by society.

The SPREAD EU Action Roadmap towards sustainable lifestyles aims to complement the suite of roadmaps that have been presented by the European Commission as of 2011 in the fields of energy, transport, low carbon, and resources. The SPREAD roadmap focuses on individual citizens and how they live in their homes, use different means of transport, consume, or spend their leisure time.

## BASELINE RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

### Current unsustainable lifestyle trends – the challenges to overcome

The SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE MATERIAL FOOTPRINT is a tool to measure and manage or optimize the resource consumption of our lifestyles, including the products and production processes behind them (i.e. in the areas of consuming, moving, housing and health). In this context, our sustainable lifestyle material footprint means the use of renewable and non-renewable material resources (excl. water and air) plus the erosion caused by agriculture and forestry. It covers the whole lifecycle from the extraction of raw materials to the processing industry, distribution, consumption, recycling, and disposal. The sustainable lifestyle material footprint target has been determined at 8000 kg of material resource consumption as opposed to the 27 000 – 40 000 kg average per person per year today.

Our current lifestyles and consumption patterns have an unsustainable impact on the environment. (SPREAD Baseline Report, 2011).

The unprecedented growth in material wealth in the last two decades coincides with a comparable decline in global resources and an increase in CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Climate change will increase social and health inequalities between and within countries. Global population growth trends will lead to rising consumption levels.

#### Current unsustainable lifestyle trends – the challenges to overcome:

- Together, final consumption of food and drink, private transportation and housing lead to 70-80% of Europe's environmental impacts.
- Meat and dairy consumption alone account for almost one quarter (24%) of all final consumption impacts.
- Domestic heating, water consumption, appliances and electronics account for 40% of Europe's total energy consumption (with 67% of EU-27 household energy consumption linked to space heating alone).
- Car ownership in the EU-27 increased by 35% between 1990 and 2007. EU-drivers own over one third of the world's 750 million automobiles.
- In the EU-27, approximately 60% of adults and over 20% of children are overweight or obese. Coronary heart diseases, often associated with fatty foods and smoking, are the most common death cause in the EU.

It is difficult for individuals to build lifestyles against what becomes the social norm. But there are promising and encouraging examples of how some individuals and communities can adopt more sustainable and healthy lifestyles at scale.

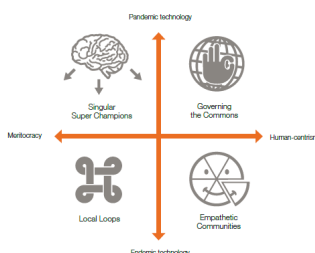
### Scenarios for sustainable lifestyles 2050 – Future societies where challenges to sustainable living have been overcome

**What is a sustainable lifestyle?** SPREAD has defined a material footprint target of 8000 kg per year for one person in 2050, to specify what is meant by "sustainable lifestyles". This forms the fundamental assumption on which each of the four scenarios is built upon - The scenarios proposed by the project describe what 8000 kg living can look like in four diverse future societies.

The scenarios present different options for sustainable living choices adapted to the diverse needs, desires and cultural considerations of citizens from across Europe. The aim is to bring the future to life, demonstrating that sustainable living delivers improved lifestyles with minimum impact and diverse choice for all households. The scenarios also consider the geographical, political and technological factors that determine lifestyle choices.

Two critical uncertainties, and main drivers of our lifestyle choices, were chosen for the axes of the scenario quadrants:

- Technology is either pandemic (worldwide) or endemic (local)
- Society's governing principle is either human centric (values) or meritocratic (science)



Four Future Scenarios for New European Social Models are presented:

- Singular Super Champions (pandemic technology /meritocratic)
- Governing the commons (pandemic technology/human centred)
- Empathetic Communities (endemic technology /human-centred)
- Local Loops (endemic technology/meritocratic)

#### SINGULAR SUPER CHAMPIONS

Europe has made the leap to a new type of sustainable, competitive and equitable economy through radical market reforms. Sustainability has become the business opportunity of the century. This is a society that celebrates an ethos of learning, achieving and self-mastery.

### GOVERNING THE COMMONS

A new digital reality helps people to break free from many cultural constraints to reach sustainability. Ubiquitous computing enables the smart use of resources and, redirects people's behaviour from material consumption to abandon many institutions of the 20th century, liberate themselves to more meaningful lives driven by new collaborations.

### LOCAL LOOPS

Society has re-evaluated their ideas of well-being and resource systems are organized through "local loops". People build their lifestyles around their work, while technology is focused on local design solutions. A new ethos of craftsmanship and professional communities shape the way people live, organize their work and spend their leisure time.

### EMPATHETIC COMMUNITIES

The failure of the global economy leads to new forms of collaboration and governance grow on the level of cities and towns making them the most powerful level of public decision-making. The many fruits of global advancements are enjoyed, although people in general focus on communicating and developing solutions on the local level.

## Enablers of the transition to sustainable lifestyles 2050

### How do we get to more sustainable lifestyles?

Enabling sustainable lifestyles will require more than promoting green consumerism (Bengtsson & Akenji 2010, Lorek 2010). Sustainable living goes beyond the consumption of the most sustainable material goods and/or services, into the re-design of ways of living, feeling, communicating and thinking. For example: personal and collective attitudes; how values are established over a life-time; how we interact and transact in the economic system; how our cities and education systems provide the infrastructure and skills for lifestyles that support well-being for all and more sustainable societies. Even if there is willingness amongst people for change, they often fail to succeed in lifestyle changes because they are confronted with factors that "lock-in" their unsustainable behaviour and choices (Mont and Power 2010; Van Vliet et al. 2005).

In addition to individual consumption and lifestyle change there is a need to strengthen the enablers that will facilitate the changes needed (or sometimes to force that change), as well as eliminating the blockers and barriers to change. Often those so called, "gate-keepers" have (economic) interests with the current (unsustainable) systems and traditions. There are also risks of "rebound-effects", as net profit of technological innovation is often used for other energy consuming products. Hence social and political innovation is also crucial to enabling sustainable and resilient change.

Change will require political leadership, collective actions and responsive citizens. Such transitions will only be triggered if bottom-up and top down approaches come together. Four key enablers have been identified through the multi-stakeholder consultation of the social platform. The Sustainable Lifestyles Roadmap explores how these four interwoven enablers can contribute substantially to the transition towards 8000 kg Sustainable Lifestyles:

- Policy and governance.
- Economy and the monetary system.
- Social innovation.
- Behaviour change.

Each enabler forms a pathway which outlines opportunity spaces for policy makers and corresponding stakeholders to overcome existing lock-ins to unsustainable living.

**Policy and governance:** Governance and policymaking is an important enabler for sustainable lifestyles as it designs the structure and the rules of the game for our societies. It has unique powers to establish top down approaches (by regulations, by imposing taxes, spatial planning etc), but can also support and sometimes even initiate bottom up approaches (i.e. upscale local initiatives, active participation facilities). Coherent policy making will be better achieved with the institutionalisation of Sustainable Development in general and with extra focus on Sustainable Lifestyles. Using legal frameworks is another strong tool.

**Economy and the monetary system:** The original purpose of the economy (*oikonomia*) was the management of the household in a way that would increase the well-being of all

members of the household (or communities) over the long term. In general we may say that our current economic system does not lead to sustainable and healthy lifestyles for all. In the last decades debt bubbles have been recurrent - not only monetary debt, but also ecological debt, as we are also indebted with our planet. In 2012 the “overshoot day” was the 22th of August (Global Footprint Network, 2012). This means that after that day our economy uses natural resources and energy that we don't really have or takes it from future generations.

**Social innovation:** Realizing 8000 kg lifestyles can only partly be achieved through technological innovations. The rebound effect<sup>i</sup> has been attributed to the lack of net savings of resources, even with increased levels of efficiency often through technology. Social innovation can provide the needed complement to technological innovation in order to achieve systemic, long-lasting social changes. Our trend research has shown that local and or grassroots initiatives have been successful in testing innovative ideas. Social innovations can be initiated by individuals or groups, but also by entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs and designers are promising actors, finding new solutions to existing social needs – or market failures.

**Behaviour change:** The transition towards sustainable lifestyles will also involve individual behavioural changes across age and life stages; socio-economic groups and cultural backgrounds with varying levels of knowledge, awareness, and interests. Therefore understanding the needs, desires and future aspirations of different household segments is critical to offering a diversity of options and solutions for more sustainable living for all. On the other hand people have demonstrated the intrinsic capacity to think collectively for their survival (Rifkin, 2010). A shift in perception, to consider individuals as citizens (not merely as consumers), could provide a new lens in which actors can create more relevant provisions for social change to support sustainable living. Recent evidence of increased citizen awareness regarding issues related to the environment, health and justice amongst Europeans seems to be providing added momentum for behaviour change.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Policy and governance:

The **main task of governments is to define the rules of the game** and to act as trustful stewards. If governments put sustainable development and well-being at the core of their policy and long-term decisions, this will be a very important enabler for sustainable lifestyles.

- Public management of the commons and public services (natural resources, health care, education, social protection and welfare) takes care of vulnerable groups and nature. This also includes an adequate evaluation of business initiatives.
- The subsidiarity principle<sup>ii</sup> has to be optimal for all levels. Local governance is therefore very important and can be responsible for many issues, like education, health care, etc. That brings decision making closer to the citizens.
- Participation is a critically important dimension of sustainable development. Civil society organisations are key actors in the transition process. An open, transparent and institutionalised governance system for sustainability is required. Up scaling of grassroots initiatives, horizontal decision-making, and local participation in budgeting, will create ownership of decisions taken and ensure better implementation.
- Institutional frameworks are useful tools to achieve sustainable lifestyles and provide coherence in policymaking. Long-term decision-making, such as development of National Strategies for Sustainable Lifestyles, with targets and timetables are crucial.
- Review and impact assessment mechanisms need to be improved, and made compulsory, to guarantee implementation.

### POLICY & GOVERNANCE PATHWAY TIMELINE

2012-2015: *Policy-making becomes systemic, human-centred and participatory supporting citizens towards more sustainable living – Establishment of ombudsperson for “protecting the future and future generations”.*



2015-2020: *Regulatory frameworks now in place in all EU countries incentivize sustainable living and sufficiency in production & consumption – 8000kg sustainable lifestyle footprint targets enforced.*

2020-2025: *Transparency and continuous improvements in sustainable living through improved policy assessment tools and (external) audits – Launch of personal resource use quota cards.*

2025-2050: *National and EU policies demonstrate the effectiveness of sustainable lifestyle footprint, equity and well-being targets globally - boosting the world-wide competitiveness and leading role of the Euro-zone.*

## Economy and monetary system

It is important to recognise the planetary boundaries and to **rethink the economy** to support lifestyles that do not go beyond those boundaries.

- A transformation from a “debt-based-economy” (in financial and natural resources terms) towards a common-based-economy.
- Redefining the monetary system, promoting alternative currencies and decentralising the banking systems.
- Short-term strategies to get the prices right, and shifts in investments and subsidies. Tax reforms (tax the “bads”, not the “goods”) are key for behaviour change.
- Economic education, from primary schools to universities, is rather traditional and has to reform too. Ecological economics needs to become mainstream.
- For businesses it is crucial to promote new models for value creation and to drive innovation to meet the diverse needs for sustainable living. Eco-efficiency has to prevail above economic efficiency in all levels of production chains.

### ECONOMY & MONETARY SYSTEM PATHWAY TIMELINE

2012-2015: *Economic policy supports provisions for alternative economic models, complementary currencies and new business models that support sustainable living – Creation of a Sustainable Monetary Systems Commission*

2015-2020: *Sustainable investment into essential infrastructure, products and services that enable sustainable living promoted and incentivized through supporting (legal) frameworks.*

2020-2025: *Transition from debt-based economies to common based economies that force the economic activities to stay within the planetary boundaries*

2025-2050: *Complementary currencies and inclusive economic models legally recognized across the Euro-zone accelerating the pace of change and stimulating innovation for sustainable living.*

## Social innovation:

**Social innovation can play a meaningful role.** For example, changes in social norms may be necessary to support initiatives for more sustainable living.

- Effective policy instruments could include regulation, economic incentives and public participation, as well as strong governance supporting social innovation.
- One size will not fit all. Instead, combinations or hybrid models and the acceptance of provisions for dynamic structures that allow for change will be needed in order to fit the diversity of contexts across Europe.
- Up-scaling promising practices like transition towns, cycling cities, local currency systems, car sharing, and neighbourhood gardening are important. Institutional support can be given to those initiatives, as well as to social entrepreneurs.
- Facilitating breakthrough and creative thinking can be done by establishing free thinking “designLabs”.
- Providing opportunities for societal actors, business and policymakers to leave their own “comfort zone” and experiment and test new solutions in collaborative open sourced platforms.
- Creating partnerships with other sectors, such as the health sector, to change current obesogenic environments into those facilitating more active and healthy lifestyles is necessary too.

### SOCIAL INNOVATION & BEHAVIOUR CHANGE TIMELINE

2012-2015: *Promising and proactive shifts to more lifestyles through social innovation and citizen movements result in policy reforms at the local levels of communities and cities that promote more participatory approaches to policy-making and budget decisions*

2015-2020: *Smart information communications & technology (ICT) advancements*

*accelerate social innovation and behaviour change for sustainable living – including transformations in formal and informal education to focus on skills for sustainable societies of the future*

*2020-2025: Transitions from ownership to access to needs, goods and services supports new ways of living at the household, community and city levels – there will be more balance in work and personal lives.*

*2025-2050: Sustainable living bears fruit as households realize benefits, which encourages new thinking and actions for societal organization. Big shopping malls are repurposed into community centres. Global Footprint Overshoot day is 31 of December.*

### Individual behaviour change:

**Many promising examples of voluntary downshifting** of individual material needs already exist. Conscious consumerism is on the rise around Europe as consumers demand better quality and/or more sustainable products and services, but also support the idea to consume less – or a shift from ownership of goods and services to access to goods and services.

- Changing collective norms and ethics will support individual behaviour change. The main societal norm needs to shift from the focus of material wealth towards well-being.
- Awareness-raising on what effects our life style has on other people and environment is important. This can be achieved by formal and informal learning, like integrating in all curricula sustainability knowledge, and by, for example, facilitating sustainable and healthy living course at community level. But governments can also provide for instance 5 days a year provision for employers for training on sustainable living.
- Mass media and advertisements must also be used to tell the new narrative of sustainable lifestyles, without the focus on material accumulation.

## RESEARCH PARAMETERS

### Objectives of the research

SPREAD [Social Platform Identifying Research and Policy Needs for Sustainable Lifestyles] has been a 24-month project running from January 2011 to December 2012.

The SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 European Social Platform project aimed to:

- Inspire change amongst all actors and draw attention to the role of policy in stimulating change towards 2050 by providing a vision of more sustainable ways of living and scenarios of possible futures.
- Consolidate the existing theoretical, empirical, practical and experiential knowledge on trends towards sustainability.
- Collect promising practices on sustainable ways of living.
- Produce alternative future scenarios of sustainable lifestyles entailing social and behavioural innovation.
- Develop a roadmap of opportunity spaces and action strategies for different societal actors to enable the shift to more sustainable lifestyles by 2050.

The main feature of the SPREAD project is has been a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform, which seeks to engage and inspire people from across society. The project is participatory as transformational change requires swift action at all levels of society and amongst all actors. SPREAD also aims to bring a 'real-world' perspective into the discussion, by examining the reality that normal citizens face every day when striving for more sustainable lifestyles. It has provided a number of thematic and cross-cutting working group discussions, live workshops, a people's forum and an on-line community facilitating a broad societal engagement of various stakeholders throughout the project.

### Research method

**Sustainable Lifestyles Baseline Research:** "SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES: TODAY'S FACTS & TOMORROW'S TRENDS :

- Current unsustainable lifestyles trends have been defined through desktop research.
- The SPREAD baseline research has brought together research from the different lifestyle domains consuming, living, moving and health & society and challenges and opportunities for each of them have been analysed.
- Promising practices have been identified through research and stakeholder engagement via the SPREAD online community.

**Scenarios for Sustainable Lifestyles:** In order to establish four sustainable lifestyles scenarios for Europe in 2050, the project team used a methodology called backcasting. Backcasting helps to set compasses towards sustainable futures by defining sustainable lifestyles, and their elements, as fixed variable goals. These normative goals as a starting point for the scenarios helps to see the discrepancies between current realities and desirable futures, but also helps to understand, where disruptive changes are most needed.

The creation of alternative futures for sustainable lifestyles to as far as 2050 was completed in 6 phases.

- Defining the framework (axes of critical uncertainties) for the creation of the scenario quadrants. This was made with help of the SPREAD baseline research and findings of the Delphi survey of expert views.
- Defining four scenario landscapes based on scenario quadrants.
- Exploring the pathways to sustainable living in a two-day workshop with 60 experts.
- Qualifying and quantifying the scenarios and pathways with help of desk-research, 2<sup>nd</sup> Delphi survey and analyses on 8000 kg living.
- Finalising the scenario stories and visualisations.
- Identifying gatekeepers and triggers for lifestyle change of each of four scenarios.

**“EU Sustainable Lifestyles Roadmap and Action Plan 2050 Roadmap”**, which forms the basis of the recommendations made in the Policy Brief, was developed using a participatory action research approach:

- Organization of two main workshops, one in Milano on future visions 2050 (forecasting) and one in Helsinki on possible scenarios (backcasting) to concretise the future visions.
- Organisation of 13 expert meetings on various key topics such as health, energy, education, ICT, business and policy. Experts were asked to express “must haves” for 2025 and 2050 and milestones.
- Bilateral interviews with experts, to have more detailed reactions in the roadmap drafting process.
- Analysis and summary of expert inputs in the roadmap document.

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2. Future scenarios for New European Social Models and Visualisations (2012) “Scenarios for Sustainable Lifestyles 2050: From Global Champions to Local Loops”.
3. EU Sustainable Lifestyles Roadmap, Action Plan 2050: “Pathways for enabling social innovation and behaviour change” (2012)
4. Future Research Agenda for Sustainable Lifestyles (2012)
5. European Lifestyles: The Future Issue (2012)

## PROJECT IDENTITY

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### Budget

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### Website

[www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu](http://www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu)

### Online Community

[www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu/community](http://www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu/community)

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<sup>i</sup> The fact that the monetary savings of eco-efficiency are often used for other 'energy-consuming' products or services, thus net resource or energy savings are not achieved.

<sup>ii</sup> The principle of subsidiarity is defined in Article 5 (paragraph 3) of the Treaty of the European Union. It ensures that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made to verify that action at Union level is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level.