# SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES: TODAY'S FACTS & TOMORROW'S TRENDS

**UNSUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE TRENDS IN EUROPE** food, housing & mobility as sustainability hot spots
**TRENDS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY** promising practices & social innovation
**INFLUENCING BEHAVIOURS** understanding diversity, context-dependency & change
**ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS** infrastructure, innovation, economy, research & policy
**POLICY SOLUTIONS** fostering prosperity & healthy sustainable ways of living

D1.1 Sustainable lifestyles baseline report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# ABOUT SPREAD SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES 2050

# SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES: TODAY'S FACTS & TOMORROW'S TRENDS

D1.1 Sustainable lifestyles baseline report – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPREAD
Sustainable Lifestyles 2050

## STATEMENTS FROM OUR PROJECT ADVISORS

*"Meeting the needs and desires of all citizens, while addressing the global mega-trends which promise widespread resource constraints, scarcity and threats to well-being, is the major challenge of our future. The SPEAD project provides an important space for dialogue and thinking about how this can be done. We will need to act quickly. The SPREAD project will add tremendous value if it can highlight the "must have" actions that we need to take in this decade, to get us on track to more sustainable lifestyles for all by 2050."*
— *Per Sandberg, Senior Manager, Accenture Management Consulting, Accenture Sustainability Services*

*"A big shift from the 20th century hyper-consumption, to a 21st-century age of collaborative consumption is under way. The convergence of social technologies, a renewed belief in the importance of community, pressing environmental concerns, and cost consciousness are moving us away from the old forms of consumerism toward one of sharing, aggregation, openness, and cooperation. The SPREAD project is an important European effort that can take these concepts forward through supportive policy innovation, business model innovation and social transformation."*
— *Rachel Botsman, Author and Founder, Collaborative Consumption*

*"We need to bring entrepreneurs and policy makers together to design and implement the policies that foster the technological and societal innovations needed to achieve more sustainable lifestyles. The SPREAD project can provide such a platform. Feeding these insights into the implementation of the resource efficiency roadmap and the revision of the EU SCP Action Plan would be a great step."*
— *Lars Fogh Mortensen, Head of Sustainable Consumption and Production Group, European Environment Agency*

*"We need to make healthier lifestyle choices the easiest ones. The SPREAD project's consideration of health as a cross-cutting issue, linking healthy lifestyle knowledge to the way we live in our homes, move around and what we eat, will be important in order to promote or deliver holistic sustainable lifestyle options enabled through new partnerships."*
— *Ursel Broesskamp-Stone, Dr.PH, MPH, Health Promotion Switzerland, IUHPE Vice-President for Europe*

*"Enabling sustainable lifestyles must consider how we define and value success, well-being as well as quality of life. We do not need more end-of-pipe solutions, we need to unlearn unsustainable habits and mindsets to transition to different ways of living, doing and being. The SPREAD project can add value by delivering insights and deeper understanding of individual motivations and triggers to behaviour change."*
— *Kerstin Ochs, Dipl.-Kfm. - Head Laundry & Homecare, International Governmental Relations & Public Affairs, HENKEL*

*"Motivating people starts from the heart. Understanding what people feel and desire will help us to provide options that deliver what is desired more sustainably. The SPREAD project's human-centred approach will provide important insights for companies to develop sustainable product options that people also desire."*
— *Per Stoltz, Deputy Sustainability Manager, Sweden, IKEA*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OUR PURPOSE

As a part of the SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 project, the report "Sustainable Lifestyles: Today's Facts and Tomorrow's Trends" provides a synthesis of research, leading policy and practice, and stakeholder views on potential pathways toward sustainable lifestyles. The purpose of this report is to provide the necessary background information to support the SPREAD social platform participants in creating a holistic vision of sustainable lifestyles in 2050 and recommendations for a plan of action.

**This is the Executive Summary of the report**
***Sustainable Lifestyles: Today's Facts and Tomorrow's Trends.***
**The full version can be downloaded at:**
http://www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu/publications/publications.html

Because of the significance of housing, transport, food, health and society, this report focuses on these key domains. It aims to better understand the relationships between lifestyles, the conditions that frame those lifestyles, and the resulting sustainability impacts in Europe today and into the future. In addition, it identifies promising practices from across Europe that have the potential to be examples of sustainable ways of living of the future. Existing visions, scenarios and roadmaps for more sustainable futures – from policy, research, business and civil society perspectives – are also examined in detail.

## MAIN THEMES

1. Unsustainable lifestyle trends in Europe: Food, housing and mobility as sustainability hot spots
2. Trends toward sustainability: Promising practices and social innovation
3. Influencing behaviours: Understanding diversity, context-dependency and enabling change
4. Enabling environments: Infrastructure, innovation and multi-level, multi-stakeholder change processes
5. Policy solutions: Fostering prosperity and healthy, sustainable ways of living

**Lifestyles** refer to the way we live our lives that allows us to fulfil our needs and aspirations. They serve as "social conversations", in which people signal their social position and psychological aspirations to others. Since many of the signals are mediated by goods, lifestyles are closely linked to material and resource flows in the society.

**Sustainable lifestyles** refer to patterns of action and consumption, used by people to affiliate and differentiate themselves from others, which: meet basic needs, provide a better quality of life, minimise the use of natural resources and emissions of waste and pollutants over the lifecycle, and do not jeopardise the needs of future generations. Sustainable lifestyles reflect specific cultural, natural, economic and social heritage of each society (Mont 2007).
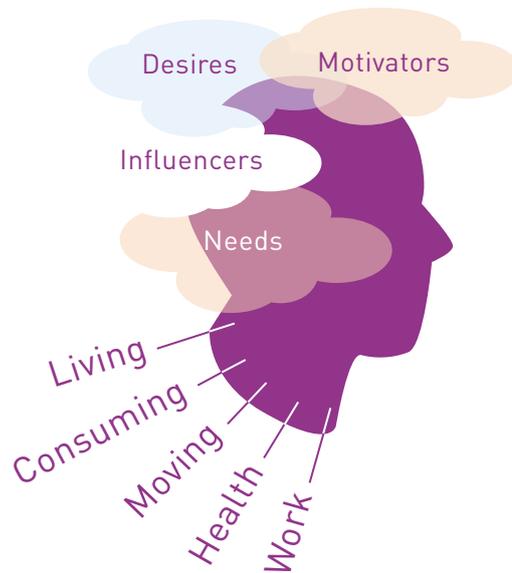
## OUR LIFESTYLES ARE AT THE CENTRE OF OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

- Current lifestyles and consumption patterns are unsustainable
- Our aspirations for prosperity are intrinsically linked to current patterns of unsustainable economic growth
- Meeting our individual needs and desires within the limits of available resources is our collective challenge

There are many factors that contribute to human behaviour and the choices each of us makes in choosing how we live. Our lifestyles reflect our sense of self, our world views and our values. Lifestyle is how we prefer to live, spend our time, interact with others, who these others are, where we live, where we vacation, where we shop and what we consume.
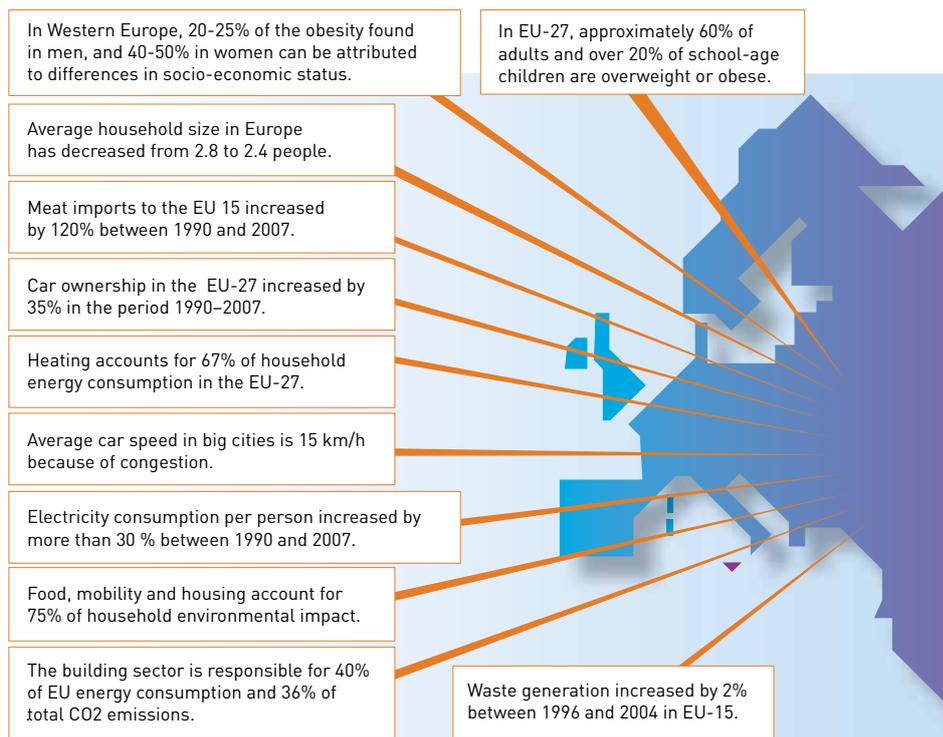
## UNSUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE TRENDS IN EUROPE: THE HOT SPOTS

Sustainable consumption is related to the purchase, use and disposal of products and services. Sustainability in lifestyles is a broader concept and includes activities such as interpersonal relationships, leisure activities, sports and education as well as, but not limited to, material consumption. Lifestyles are based on past and current consumption and production patterns and are intricately interwoven with people's everyday choices and practices (Mont 2007).

Modern European lifestyles are unsustainable in many ways and are based on overproduction and overconsumption; putting too much pressure on our natural resources and imposing negative environmental, economic, (individual and collective) social and health impacts. Understanding consumption patterns and their resulting environmental and social impacts has been a major focus of recent research in Europe. Highlights of research findings concerning consumption impacts that are driven by lifestyle choices include:

- Together, final consumption of food and drink, private transportation and housing are the source of 70-80% of Europe's environmental impacts (Tukker and Huppes 2006).
- Meat and dairy consumption alone account for almost one quarter (24%) of all final consumption impacts – by far the largest share in the food and drink sector (Weidema et al. 2008).
- Domestic heating, water consumption, appliance and electronics account for 40% of Europe's total energy consumption (with space heating alone accounting for 67% of household energy consumption in the EU-27) (EEA 2010).

**Figure 1** Examples of unsustainable consumption in Europe



In Western Europe, 20-25% of the obesity found in men, and 40-50% in women can be attributed to differences in socio-economic status.

In EU-27, approximately 60% of adults and over 20% of school-age children are overweight or obese.

Average household size in Europe has decreased from 2.8 to 2.4 people.

Meat imports to the EU 15 increased by 120% between 1990 and 2007.

Car ownership in the EU-27 increased by 35% in the period 1990–2007.

Heating accounts for 67% of household energy consumption in the EU-27.

Average car speed in big cities is 15 km/h because of congestion.

Electricity consumption per person increased by more than 30 % between 1990 and 2007.

Food, mobility and housing account for 75% of household environmental impact.

The building sector is responsible for 40% of EU energy consumption and 36% of total CO2 emissions.

Waste generation increased by 2% between 1996 and 2004 in EU-15.

- Car ownership in the EU-27 increased by more than one third (35%) between 1990 and 2007 (EEA 2010a). Over one third of the world's 750 million automobiles are owned by drivers in the EU (IEA 2010).
- In the EU-27, approximately 60% of adults and over 20% of school-age children are overweight or obese. Coronary heart diseases (CHD), which are often associated with fatty foods and smoking remain the single most common cause of death in the EU (WHO 2011).

**Figure 2** Environmental pressure per euro spent on private consumption in nine EU Member States, 2005
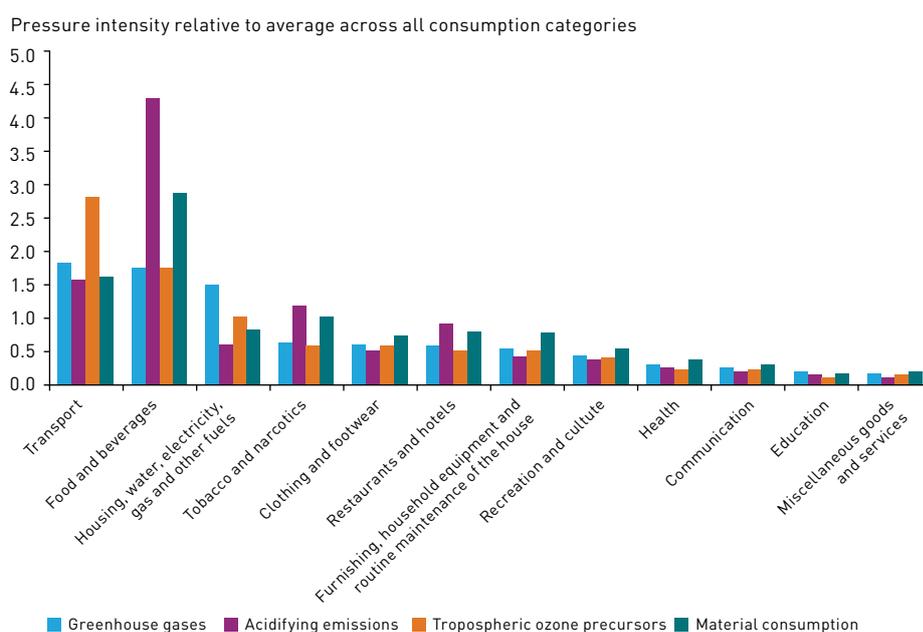


Pressure intensity relative to average across all consumption categories
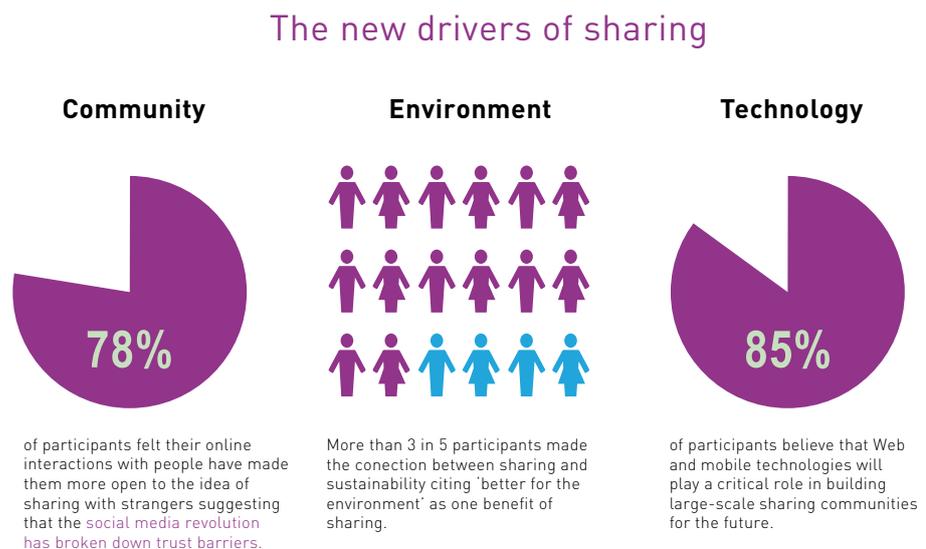
Source: EEA 2010b

## TRENDS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY: PROMISING PRACTICES AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

Despite the prevailing unsustainable trends outlined above, a growing number of people are aspiring to lifestyle changes that support increased sustainability, for themselves and for the societies in which they live. There exist a growing number of movements, initiatives, entrepreneurs and new business models that aim to facilitate sustainability in the way we consume, live and move. Some examples include:

- Shifts towards efficient consumption (wasting less), different consumption (shifts to high quality goods and services), and sufficient consumption (reducing material consumption) demonstrate opportunities for sustainable ways of utilising products and services.
- Collaborative consumption (sharing, swapping, trading, etc.) reveals a shift in preferences away from ownership of goods to "access" to goods and services and from being passive consumers to becoming co-producers of goods and services (e.g. urban farming; growing your own food).

**Figure 3** New drivers of sharing



The new drivers of sharing

**Community**

78%

of participants felt their online interactions with people have made them more open to the idea of sharing with strangers suggesting that the social media revolution has broken down trust barriers.

**Environment**

More than 3 in 5 participants made the conection between sharing and sustainability citing 'better for the environment' as one benefit of sharing.

**Technology**

85%

of participants believe that Web and mobile technologies will play a critical role in building large-scale sharing communities for the future.

Source: Botsman and Rogers 2010

- Household behaviour change to conserve energy and make investments in energy efficiency signals an increasing awareness and readiness to shift to more sustainable ways of living.
- Cities and municipalities are supporting modal shifts in transportation toward walking, cycling and public transit as well as new technologies, such as electric vehicles.
- Community and city action demonstrates the success of participatory approaches to sustainable, long-term living and mobility options such as eco-towns, sustainable city initiatives and Transition Towns.
- Promising synergies are emerging for health, equity and well-being through a re-examination of the way we live, eat and move.

The SPREAD project has chosen to examine in detail the four key lifestyle impact areas of consuming (food, household and leisure consumer products), living (the built environment and homes), moving (individual mobility and transport), and health and society (health, well-being, ageing, and equity). Table 1 illustrates the key challenges and impacts, related to our current lifestyle patterns, as well as some promising sustainability trends and practices starting to be revealed across each of the four lifestyle impact areas.

**Table 1** Key challenges and promising practices for more sustainable ways of living

| Lifestyle area | Key challenges and impacts | Promising sustainability trends and practices |
|---|---|---|
| **Consuming** | High or rising environmental impacts due to:<br>■ Food and drink consumption, in particular meat and dairy<br>■ Increasing long distance transportation of goods, particularly import of non-seasonal and exotic foods<br>■ Increasing use of chemicals in food production and increasing consumption of processed food | ■ Increased awareness of sustainability issues among many European citizens<br>■ Emergence of collaborative consumption (sharing, lending, trading, swapping)<br>■ Growing availability and demand for eco-efficient or organic/ecological products and foods<br>■ Growth of urban farming<br>■ Movements toward consumption reduction (e.g. meat consumption) |
| **Living** | High or rising environmental impacts due to:<br>■ Increasing number of households (e.g. more single-person households)<br>■ Increasing individual living spaces<br>■ Increasing consumption of energy and water despite recent energy efficiency gains in household appliances<br>■ Growing number of electricity consuming appliances and devices in households<br>■ Rebound effects | ■ Growing availability and demand for environmentally friendly appliances<br>■ Increasingly successful energy efficiency efforts in private households<br>■ Increasing awareness and behaviour change for energy and water conservation<br>■ Emergence of energy-efficient, passive and energy-positive housing<br>■ Emergence of innovative urban planning approaches<br>■ Cities or neighbourhoods that support sustainable living |
| **Moving** | High or rising environmental impacts due to:<br>■ Increasing numbers of passenger cars<br>■ Oil dependency (a consequence of passenger car use)<br>■ Increasing mobility needs related to urban sprawl and urban structures that favour car use (e.g. shopping facilities in the urban periphery)<br>■ Rising air travel and cheaper air fares | ■ More efficient transportation technologies, such as electric vehicles<br>■ Growth in car sharing services that show a shift away from private ownership to collaborative consumption<br>■ Increasingly successful efforts to stimulate modal shifts toward walking, cycling or public transportation<br>■ Strategic urban planning to decrease mobility needs and make sustainable modes of transport safer and accessible |

| Lifestyle area | Key challenges and impacts | Promising sustainability trends and practices |
|---|---|---|
| **Health and society** | High or rising health impacts, such as:<br>- Increasing levels of obesity and heart disease associated with poor diets and inadequate lifestyle choices<br>- Increasing of respiratory and heart diseases associated with poor housing conditions<br>- Increased availability and low prices for highly processed, unhealthy food products<br><br>High or rising social inequity:<br>- Per capita environmental impacts are considerably higher in high income groups than in lower income groups<br>- Low income groups are more affected by adverse sustainability effects (e.g. climate change, local air pollution, rising energy prices)<br>- High income groups are more likely to have healthier diets | - Growing awareness and better information on healthy diets and lifestyles (e.g. labelling)<br>- Increased availability and demand for local, ecological and seasonal food<br>- Initiatives that promote walking, cycling and limit cigarette smoking in buildings<br>- Increasingly successful efforts to integrate health and equity considerations into policy making and urban planning |

**To enable large-scale transitions to sustainable lifestyles current promising practices point to two important areas for further work:**
- understanding and supporting individual behaviour change; and
- creating enabling environments and infrastructure that stimulate and support more sustainable ways of living.

A broader understanding of individual lifestyle contexts as well as the systems in which different individual lifestyles operate are needed to address our current lifestyle impact hot spots (identified above) and to propose options to overcome these urgent challenges.

### INFLUENCING BEHAVIOURS: UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY, CONTEXT-DEPENDENCY AND ENABLING CHANGE

Current sustainable action strategies rarely acknowledge the diverse needs, desires and motivations of individual people. Strategies tend to be "single issue – single solution" approaches and often focus on technological innovation or policy solutions in isolation. Initiatives often target a separate industry, the public sector or households without taking into consideration the trade-offs and compromises that are required for people to pursue sustainable ways of producing, working or living.

Successfully changing behaviour depends on understanding people and the diversity of lifestyles and access to sustainable lifestyle options. There is a growing body of knowledge on processes for behaviour change and the factors that influence the success of these processes. Key success factors include:

**Acknowledging and nurturing diversity by providing a broad range of solutions and options**
Changes toward sustainable lifestyles involve behaviour changes across age and socio-economic groups and across population segments with varying levels of knowledge, awareness, and interests. Successful sustainability initiatives are those that go beyond the "one size fits all" approach and try to understand how to motivate and enable change among different groups. This requires solutions and combinations of solutions to fit specific contexts and target groups that are not necessarily easily transferred from one situation, setting or domain to another one.

The Defra Centre of Expertise on Influencing Behaviours has developed a framework for and overview of key behaviours shown below (Table 2).

**Table 2** Key behaviours of a sustainable lifestyle

| Headline behaviours | Key behaviours | Sub-behaviours | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Eco-improving your home (retrofitting)** | Insulating your home | Installing loft insulation | Topping up loft insulation | Installing cavity wall insulation | Installing solid wall insulation | Installing double glazing |
| | Upgrading heating & hot water systems | Upgrading boiler | | | | |
| | Fitting & using water saving devices | Upgrading to low flush toilet | Fitting water efficient shower head | | Fixing dripping taps | |
| | Generating own energy by installing renewables | Wind | Solar / electric | Solar / water | Micro-CHP | Ground and air source heat pumps |
| **Using energy & water wisely** | Managing temperature | Fitting & using temperature controls | | | | |
| | Washing & drying laundry using minimum energy & water | Line drying laundry | Using right amount of detergent | | | |
| | | | Switching to green energy tariff | | | |
| **Extending the life of things (to minimise waste)** | Maintaining & repairing (instead of replacing) | Keep electrical goods longer | Repairing electrical goods | Repairing furniture | Repairing clothes | |
| | Giving new life to unwanted items e.g. furniture | Appliances & electrical goods | Using furniture reuse organisations, or services such as Freecycle, Ebay, etc. | | Clothes to charity shops | |
| | Making the most of kerbside and local recycling services | Disposing safely of batteries, paint | Recycling textiles & clothes | Registering with Mail Preference Service | | |

| Headline behaviours | Key behaviours | Sub-behaviours | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Cooking and managing a sustainable & healthier diet** | Choosing foods grown in season (in country of origin) | | | | | |
| | Increasing proportion of vegetables, fruit, and grains in diet (eating a balanced diet) | | | | | |
| | Cooking sustainable & healthier food | | | | | |
| | Wasting less food | Home composting food waste | Planning meals ahead | Storing for quality & safety | | |
| | Growing your own food | | | | | |
| **Choosing eco-products & services** | Using labelling to choose most energy & water efficient products | | | | | |
| | Choosing fairly traded, eco-labelled and independently certified food, clothing, etc. | Sustainable fish such as MSC fish | Sustainable wood such as FSC wood | Low impact clothes | Recycled products | Choosing without excessive packaging |
| | Borrowing, hiring or sourcing second-hand or recycled | Borrowing or hiring electrical goods | Choosing 2nd hand furniture | | Choosing 2nd hand clothing | Using local hire / share & swap schemes for tools etc. |
| | Buying ethically when travelling | | | | | |
| **Travelling sustainably** | Making the most of cycling, walking, public transport and car sharing for short journeys | | | | | |
| | When buying or replacing a vehicle, take advantage of lower-emission models available | | | | | |
| | Making the most of alternatives to travel e.g. video conferencing | | | | | |
| | Making the most of lower-carbon alternatives to flying e.g. trains | | | | | |
| | Driving more efficiently | Combining trips | Using eco-driving techniques | Maintaining tyre pressure | | |
| **Setting up & using resources in your community** | Setting up car share and using car clubs | | | | | |
| | Installing community micro-generation | Swapping skills | Finding / using local shops | Working with community to grow food | | |
| | Sharing knowledge, skills, etc. | | | Comparing energy use within community | | |
| **Using & future-proofing outdoor spaces** | Gardening for biodiversity & environment | Creating an environment for wildlife | Using rainwater and a water butt | Home composting garden waste | Using peat free compost | |
| | Enjoying the outdoors | Using your local green spaces | | | | |
| **Being part of improving the environment** | Volunteering (with a local or national group) | Volunteering for local conservation project | | Joining an environmental / conservation group | | |
| | Getting involved in local decisions | Taking part in local planning process | | | | |

Source: Defra, 2011

**Making it easy by adapting the context to support sustainable lifestyles**
To achieve resilient change that enables more sustainable ways of living, we need to make sustainable living options easy, convenient, accessible and enjoyable. This will require the development of appropriate infrastructure and context-specific solutions through enabling institutions.

One example of facilitating sustainable choices is the idea of "nudging" - which refers to a deeper understanding of how people think and the design of contexts that embed or normalise sustainable options. Nudging through various types of non-intrusive and non-coercive policy interventions is an emerging trend in European policy making. Table 3 illustrates a range of administrative, economic and informative policy instruments presented from the perspective of guiding public choice.

So far however, policy measures for example have tended to focus on environmental impacts of consumption and production processes and technology solutions, rather than on how and why people select and use products. On the consumption side, policy instruments mostly focus on the provision of information about products. Examples of economic instruments, such as taxes on luxury consumption items are extremely rare and inadequate in the light of growing social inequities.

Many of the policy measures implemented to date have proven insufficient in the face of rising incomes, material living standards and the consequent aggregate impacts of consumption as well as the widening gap between rich and poor. A key factor in this dynamic is the widely held perception of well-being as intimately linked to a high level of material consumption in the dominant consumer culture of the twentieth century.

**Table 3** Policy interventions that guide, rather than restrict, individual choice

| | Regulation of the individual | | Fiscal measures directed at the individual | | | Non-regulatory and non-fiscal measures with relation to the individual | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | | | Guide and enable choice | | | Choice architecture ("Nudges") | | |
| **Interventions category** | Eliminate choice | Restrict choice | Fiscal disincentives | Fiscal incentives | Non fiscal incentives and disincentives | Persuasion | Provision of information | Changes to physical environment | Changes to default policy | Use of social norms and salience |
| **Examples of policy interventions** | Prohibiting goods or services e.g. banning certain drugs | Restricting the options available to individuals e.g. outlawing smoking in public places | Fiscal policies to make behaviours more costly e.g. taxation on cigarettes or congestion charging in towns and cities | Fiscal policies to make behaviours financially beneficial e.g. tax breaks on purchase of bicycles or paying individuals to recycle | Policies which reward or penalise certain behaviours e.g. time off work to volunteer | Persuading individuals using argument e.g. GPs persuading people to drink less, counselling services or marketing campaigns | Providing information in e.g. leaflets showing the carbon usage of household appliances *Regulation to require businesses to use front of pack nutritional labelling, or restaurants to provide calorific information on menus | Altering the environment e.g. traffic calming measures or designing buildings with fewer lifts *Regulation to require businesses to remove confectionary from check outs, or the restriction of advertising of unhealthy products | Changing the default option e.g. requiring people to opt out of rather than opt in to organ donation or providing salad as the default dish | Providing information about what others are doing e.g. information about an individual's energy usage compared to the rest of the street *Regulation to require energy companies to provide information about average usage |

Source: The House of Lords, 2011

**Systemic and holistic approaches through multi-stakeholder involvement**
Research on change processes highlights the need for stakeholder participation, a focus on end-users and the need for simple yet ambitious targets (both for technology and policy). This is needed to enable the development of instrument packages that are tailored to contexts and that use a range of tools (regulatory, economic, information) to influence diverse stakeholders and target groups.

If the mainstreaming of sustainable lifestyles is to be achieved, considerably more will be required than local innovation and small-scale initiatives that trigger shifts to more sustainable individual behaviours. Current unsustainable behaviours are often "locked-in" due to existing infrastructure and systems of provision, such as in transportation or energy supply. This emphasises the role of integrated multi-level and multi-stakeholder approaches in creating enabling environments that facilitate sustainable lifestyles and long lasting change.

### ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS: INFRASTRUCTURE, INNOVATION, ECONOMY, RESEARCH AND POLICY

The kind of products or infrastructure available, including politics, institutions, laws and regulations, can either hamper or support individual choices towards more sustainable ways of living.

**Figure 4** Situational and behavioural factors influencing human behaviour
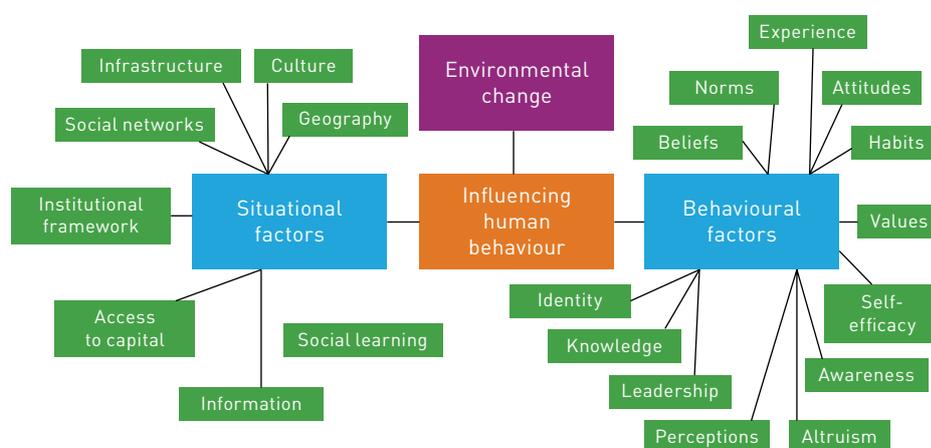


Source: Defra, 2011.

Enabling behaviour change and ways of living that support a sustainable future will require innovation, cooperation and participation at all levels of society, policy, production and consumption systems to create the necessary infrastructure and change (see also Figure 4).

**Opportunity spaces are:**

**Infrastructure**
- **Sustainable neighbourhoods, communities and cities are emerging through co-creation and participation.** Buildings, public space and urban infrastructure are important to enable sustainable lifestyles, for example through increased energy efficiency, reduced car use and more social and community activities. Compact, complex and efficient cities with strong social cohesion promote sustainability and well-being and are being created through participatory multi-stakeholder urban planning approaches (see for example Table 4).

**Participation** refers to mechanisms to empower those affected by a decision and other relevant actors to participate in decision-making processes. Participatory decision-making can take place along political, technological, ethical, cultural, social, judicial and other decision-making processes.

**Co-creation** is a strategy where those who are affected by a development (e.g. investors, firms, governments, citizens) interact, share, learn and develop technologies, products, concepts, services, or neighbourhoods in such a manner that value is created for all.

- **Roadmaps towards sustainable futures are being developed within sectoral approaches.** Visions and scenarios of sustainable futures have been developed by a range of actors in recent decades. These efforts have so far mainly focused singularly on a sector or a societal actor group.

**Table 4** The 10 principles of One Planet Living communities

| | |
|---|---|
| Zero carbon | Make buildings more energy efficient and deliver all energy with renewable technologies. |
| Zero waste | Reduce waste, reuse where possible, and ultimately send zero waste to landfill. |
| Sustainable transportation | Encourage low carbon modes of transport to reduce emissions, reducing the need to travel. |
| Sustainable materials | Use sustainable healthy products, with low embodied energy, sourced locally, made from renewable or waste resources. |
| Local and sustainable food | Choose low impact, local, seasonal and organic diets and reduce food waste. |
| Sustainable water | Use water more efficiently in buildings and in the products we buy; tackle local flooding and water course pollution. |
| Land use and wildlife | Protect and restore biodiversity and natural habitats through appropriate land use and integration into the built environment. |
| Culture and heritage | Revive local identities and wisdom; support and participate in the arts. |
| Equity and local economy | Create bioregional economies that support fair employment, inclusive communities and international fair trade. |
| Health and happiness | Encourage active, sociable, meaningful lives to promote good health and well being. |

Source: BioRegional & WWF[1]

**Innovation**
- **Small-scale initiatives are important test-beds and sign-posts to large scale sustainable solutions.** Identifying and supporting small-scale initiatives can create an environment that supports large-scale change by connecting relevant stakeholders and groups, such as business and policy.
- **Both social and technological innovation are important drivers of change.** Technological innovation creates opportunities for sustainable lifestyles and is the subject of significant attention from policy makers, the research community and businesses. However, it is innovation from within the society itself (so-called social innovation) that can stimulate and sustain lifestyle changes. For example, through online or offline communities, and networks that share knowledge, ideas, tools, solutions and experiences. Social entrepreneurs and designers are important change agents in the search for more sustainable ways of living.

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1    www.oneplanetliving.org

**Economy**

- **Our aspirations for prosperity are intrinsically linked to current patterns of economic growth (Jackson 2009).** The current situation is the result of two misconceptions upon which the current economic system rests. The first is the belief in unlimited natural resources and natural sinks capable of absorbing environmental pollution. The second misconception is the belief in continuous economic growth without limits (Daly 1977). For 200 years, these two assumptions have facilitated constant improvements in labour productivity at the cost of resources that are underpriced, and at a cost to the environment that is rarely priced at all.

- **Many actors in society now accept the need to redefine the current economic paradigm to take into consideration the environment, quality of life and well-being and to balance growth, profits and consumption.** UNEP and the OECD address the complex task of integrating economic and environmental considerations into Green Growth Strategies (Sukhdev 2009; UNEP 2009). "Beyond GDP" discussions aim to develop measurable indicators to track the transition from consumption- to value-based societies based on, for example, health, education, sound governance, living standards and biodiversity. In terms of an individual's personal life this could imply a reduced focus on material wealth in place of greater engagement with the environment, with the well being of one's self and that of others (SPREAD consortium 2011).

**Research**

- **Research on the sociology of consumption indicates the need for a paradigm shift in thinking** about how to foster changes towards more sustainable lifestyles; from a focus on individuals, to a focus on wider communities and social norms and practices; from a focus on changing discrete behaviours to a focus on changing entire lifestyles, cultures and values; from a focus on top-down approaches and information provision to shared community approaches and leading by example (Breukers et al. 2009; Jackson 2005; Mont and Power 2010; Power and Mont 2010).

- **To date, research priorities have not yet been reconciled with practice that emphasises on the aspects of people and lifestyles.** The European Commission's DG Research has begun to support Social Platforms. Societal networks engage different stakeholders in the development of research agendas and strategies.

**Policy**

- **Effective policy and governance set the framework conditions for business and societal innovation.** There is a considerable body of evidence that hard policies such as regulatory and economic instruments can be effective at achieving policy objectives. Governments are beginning to take responsibility for discouraging or limiting unsustainable consumption options and are looking to develop new governance approaches to support effective implementation of sustainable lifestyle measures.
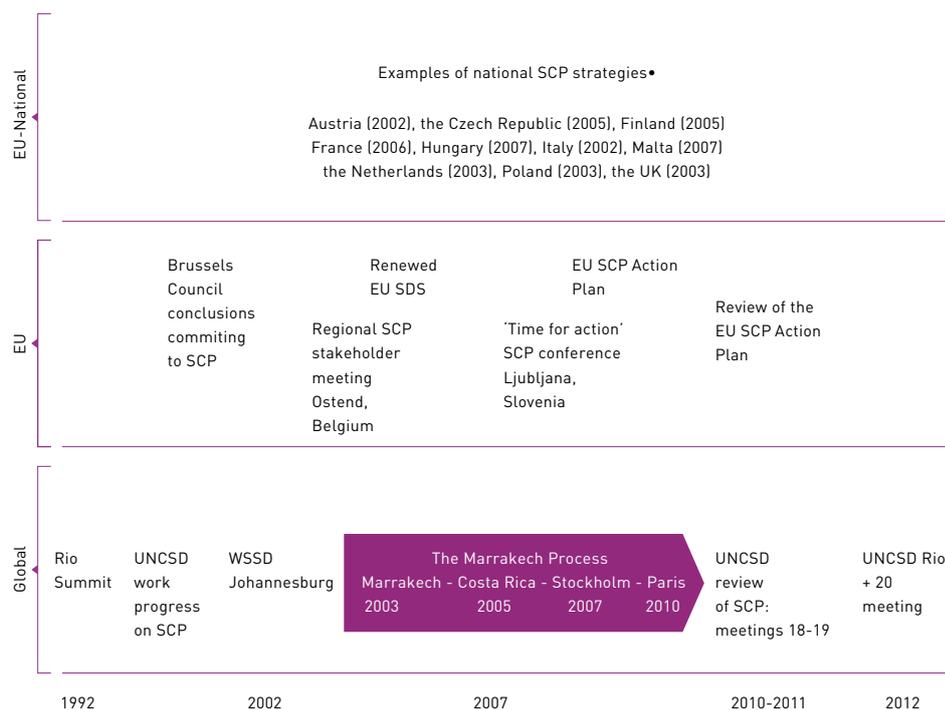
**Table 5** Megatrends and European lifestyles

| Section | Global trends | EU trends | Challenges for more sustainable ways of living | Opportunities for more sustainable ways of living |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Population trends and urbanisation** | ▪ global population growth<br>▪ growing middle class<br>▪ urbanisation | ▪ aging societies<br>▪ shrinking household size<br>▪ increasing number of households | ▪ increased demand for health and social services<br>▪ stress on public finances in Europe | ▪ dense living in cities can support more efficient living (e.g. smaller living spaces, less car use) |
| **Climate change and health** | ▪ extreme weather events<br>▪ resource shortages<br>▪ migration and conflict | ▪ rising health risks | ▪ negative impact on mental and physical health<br>▪ people with low incomes are at higher risk | |
| **Economic growth, jobs, time and well-being** | ▪ economic growth helps eradicate poverty and disease | ▪ economic growth and subjective well-being have decoupled in many European countries | ▪ higher incomes coupled with less free time can drive consumption-intensive lifestyles and higher stress levels | ▪ sustainable economy<br>▪ "green jobs"<br>▪ providing alternatives to "consumer culture" |
| **Accumulation of "stuff" and marketing** | ▪ household consumption is encouraged to drive economic growth | ▪ debt levels are increasing<br>▪ labour costs are increasing, while product cost are decreasing | ▪ sustainable and durable design, repair and reuse are not economical<br>▪ advertising instils desires for new products and services<br>▪ "greenwashing"<br>▪ proliferation of eco-labels is confusing | ▪ need to rethink social costs of using personal credit to stimulate consumption<br>▪ green and sustainability marketing is a growing field |
| **Technological and social innovation** | ▪ technological innovation at an unprecedented speed and level | ▪ technological innovation at a high level and speed, contrasted with a slow speed of social innovation | ▪ technological innovation drives consumer culture | ▪ technological innovation drives energy efficiency and sustainability developments<br>▪ sustainable business models and social innovation support more sustainable ways of living |

**Figure 5** Major SCP initiatives at the global, EU and EU Member State level[2]



EU-National

Examples of national SCP strategies•

Austria (2002), the Czech Republic (2005), Finland (2005)
France (2006), Hungary (2007), Italy (2002), Malta (2007)
the Netherlands (2003), Poland (2003), the UK (2003)

EU

Brussels
Council
conclusions
commiting
to SCP

Regional SCP
stakeholder
meeting
Ostend,
Belgium

Renewed
EU SDS

EU SCP Action
Plan

'Time for action'
SCP conference
Ljubljana,
Slovenia

Review of the
EU SCP Action
Plan

Global

Rio
Summit

UNCSD
work
progress
on SCP

WSSD
Johannesburg

The Marrakech Process
Marrakech - Costa Rica - Stockholm - Paris
2003          2005          2007          2010

UNCSD
review
of SCP:
meetings 18-19

UNCSD Rio
+ 20
meeting

1992          2002                2007          2010-2011      2012

Source: updated from EEA 2007

2    Explanation of abbreviations SDS = sustainable development strategy; WSSD = World
     Summit on Sustainable Development; UNCSD = United Nations Commission for Sustainable
     Development

- **Green growth, de-growth and "beyond GDP" discussions suggest the viability of different models of measuring and creating wealth and prosperity** that rely less on resource and energy intensive consumption. However, to date EU and national level policy making has not meaningfully reflected these developments.
- **The emergence of integrated and cross-sectoral approaches to policy making aims to overcome policy silos** to address social equity, health, infrastructure as important elements for promoting sustainability.
- **An emerging trend in policy approaches to behaviour change is "nudging".** Policy can support the development of thoughtful architecture that influences choice and can "nudge" consumers in the right direction without restricting their freedom of choice (see also Table 3).

## CONCLUSIONS

This report seeks to provide a baseline of existing research and practice to support the development of a vision, action and research roadmap for sustainable lifestyles in Europe by 2050. Key challenges and impacts have been identified in four lifestyle impact areas: (1) consuming, (2) living, (3) moving and (4) health and society. Promising examples that minimise unsustainable lifestyle impacts while improving health and well-being have been compiled. The analysis of these promising practices and research findings has revealed useful patterns of innovation at the society and community levels, in the business and policy domain as well as in urban spatial and infrastructure design.

The "Sustainable Lifestyles: Today's Facts and Tomorrow's Trends" report agrees with previous research that most current European lifestyles are not sustainable. In addition, this study finds that many stakeholders call for and are starting to take more coherent action regarding the economic, environmental and social impacts associated with the current ways we live, move, eat, and use products and services.

EU and national policy programmes have made progress on the eco-efficiency of production processes and products, but less has been achieved on policy programmes that directly target consumption levels and lifestyles (see Figure 5). Similarly, business approaches have also shown improvements and are benefitting from new efficiencies in production and products. However, business models that question rising consumption patterns and promote sustainable lifestyles remain scarce. The growth in collaborative consumption business models (sharing, swapping, lending, etc.) is a promising exception. The connection between production and consumption (involving consumers in production) is another notable practice that is beginning to influence what and how people consume.

This study also identified a number of examples of neighbourhoods, communities and cities that are taking common responsibility and action to create environments and infrastructure that improve quality of life and enable more sustainable living. Social entrepreneurs, CSOs and NGOs often act as catalysts for such change processes by performing important intermediary actions to align the goals, interests and expectations of the diversity of involved stakeholders.

From a people-centred point of view, research has highlighted that gaps remain in our understanding of how to meet the diverse needs and desires of people across Europe in a sustainable manner and without compromising quality of life.

## THE SPREAD SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES 2050 PROJECT

The SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 project is a European social platform that will operate between January 2011 and December 2012. Stakeholders from business, research policy and civil society have been invited to participate in the development of a vision for sustainable lifestyles in Europe in 2050. This process will develop a roadmap and pathways for immediate actions necessary to enable lifestyles with a reduced impact on the environment, while also delivering  improved life quality and well-being for all by 2050.

The project aims to identify opportunities and innovation spaces for policy makers, business and society to enable sustainable living options that support a more sustainable future for all Europeans. Based on the outcomes of the social platform process, the SPREAD project will also formulate a research agenda that identifies further sustainable lifestyle research needs.

Input to this report was drawn from SPREAD social platform participants representing the research, policy, business, social entrepreneurship and civil society communities. In the coming months, the SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 project partners and social platform participants will co-create their vision of, and pathways towards, sustainable lifestyles in 2050 for research, policy, business and society.

Several key issues for further discussion have been identified in this report. The SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 social platform plans to take these issues forward (see Table 6).

**Table 6** Taking key themes forward within the SPREAD project

| Key theme | SPREAD project output |
| --- | --- |
| Unsustainable lifestyle trends and impacts | Vision and futures scenarios for sustainable living in 2050 |
| Promising practices for sustainable ways of living | Project emerging promising practices into the future and visualise resilient future practices |
| Understanding people's diversity and framing lifestyle changes | People's Forum |
| Technical, social, policy and business innovation that enables sustainable ways of living | Vision, pathways and action strategies for different stakeholder groups |
| Policy solutions and economic systems that foster prosperity and healthy, sustainable lifestyles | Agenda for future research needs for sustainable lifestyle solutions and (large-scale) implementation |

**To contribute to the vision of sustainable lifestyles in 2050, please visit our online community www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu/community.**

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## STATEMENTS FROM OUR PROJECT ADVISORS

*"We need fresh visionary thinking on new sustainable living models that break current barriers. We need the thought leadership that can accelerate social innovation before 2020. The SPREAD project's multi-stakeholder engagement and involvement of entrepreneurs provides a unique opportunity to question business as usual and scale new solutions."*
*— Kirsi Sormunen, Vice President, Sustainability, Nokia*

*"The unsustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles are since many years a challenge and a contributor to climate change, resource depletions and biodiversity losses and are becoming the new aspirations of emerging economies. Europe has the responsibility to show the world that we can live and live very well within environmental limits. The SPREAD project can deliver a new view of sustainable lifestyles that all global citizens can aspire to and achieve as well as showing the paths on how to do this."*
*— Gunilla Blomquist, Swedish Ministry of the Environment*

*"In emerging markets we find ourselves in a unique position with the responsibility to foster the growth that will enable us to meet the basic needs of our people on the one hand with the awareness that this growth must happen while respecting environmental limits and social responsibilities. The SPREAD project puts people at the centre of sustainable growth, which will provide very important learnings for creating sustainable change and futures in Turkey."*
*— Engin Guvenc, Executive Director, Turkish Business Council for Sustainable Development (TBCSD)*

*"Unilever is committed to develop new ways of doing business that will enable us to grow while reducing our overall environmental impact and while increasing our positive social impacts. The SPREAD project provides an important platform for organisations such as ours to share knowledge, understanding and ideas as well as to learn from others, in order that together we can accelerate the transition to sustainable living for everyone."*
*— Thomas Lingard, Global Advocacy Director, Unilever*

*"Young people around the world are well aware of environmental challenges, but the connection between such challenges and their lifestyles is not clear to them. There is a great need to translate these challenges into actions and opportunities at the local and individual level, as well as to create a holistic and pragmatic vision of what a sustainable society is. We must work together to better understand, educate and empower young people worldwide so they can become actors of change. The SPREAD project is clearly contributing to the work that is needed to advance sustainable lifestyles."*
*— Fabienne Pierre, Programme Officer, UNEP*

*"Creating the conditions that enable more sustainable lifestyles, making it easy, is most important. For this we need to go beyond the middle class bias to understand the living conditions, needs and desires of all citizens. The SPREAD social platform provides the opportunity for a bottom up vs. top down approach."*
*— Prof. Dr. Kim-Patrick Sabla, University of Vechta*

**SPREAD**
Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 CONSORTIUM PARTNERS: