



Press release

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A “Green Economy” for Europe: Experts Discuss the Transformation of the Concept into a Policy

Leading sustainability experts debate the path for greening Europe’s economy // Knowledge brokerage consortium RESPONDER brings together 50 experts from science and policy // Experts call for more policy experiments

Brussels/Vienna, 5 November 2012 – For two days European science and policy experts convened last week in Brussels to discuss Europe’s sustainable future. The “European Dialogue on Sustainable Consumption and Economic Growth” addressed the challenges of the concept of “Greening the economy” in order to enable the formulation of adequate policy strategies. More than 50 professionals from 13 countries across Europe took part in the discussion.

The experts agreed that there is no time to lose, and that enough existing knowledge justifies kick-starting a transition. “Many policy experiences from the last 20 years have revealed what works and what does not work”, comments André Martinuzzi, coordinator of the consortium RESPONDER and director of the Vienna-based Research Institute for Managing Sustainability. As key pillars of the transition to a “true” green economy, the experts emphasized the importance of tangible visions and more policy experiments at all governance levels, from municipalities up to national and international levels.

Sustainable Jobs, Resources, Finance – experts address crucial policy areas

At the dialogue the discussions concentrated on the three key policy areas: jobs, natural resources, and finance. Promoters argue that greening the economy has to be a key strategy to reduce environmental impacts and to trigger new employment. They demand a transparent and long-term policy framework that fosters sustainable investments. Critics, however, label the concept as naïve, and argue that it ignores geopolitical realities and cannot be made compatible with today’s economic model.

Paul Ekins, Professor at University College London and keynote speaker at the event: “It is past time to intensify the debate about a sustainable future. A major challenge is the mismatch between the urgency of environment and resource problems and the political solutions that are put forward to resolve them. There are three key objectives which need to guide a new political approach to the problems: climate stability, resource security, and environmental quality. Either we find ways to achieve these basic objectives, or we put at risk fundamental and valuable aspects of our way of life.”

Green Economy on the rise

“Within recent years, and especially around Rio+20, the concept ‘Green Economy’ has experienced a rapid ascent”, says Martinuzzi. “Many people perceive the Green Economy as a new paradigm for achieving sustainable development. Yet, there are numerous questions unanswered, which we address in the European project RESPONDER.”

The project seeks answers by creating a common ground for two spheres that rarely interact: science and policy. “We can observe a gap between science and knowledge on the one hand, and political realities on the other. Therefore, networking and community building are decisive for coming up with new ideas on sustainability issues”, says Martinuzzi, “for ideas that are not only attractive in theory, but also pragmatic enough to be implemented in practice.”

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About RESPONDER:

The European project RESPONDER aims to promote sustainable consumption by assessing potential contradictions with economic growth. The project links four communities by facilitating a structured dialogue: science, policy, pro-growth, and beyond growth.

Further information: <http://www.scp-responder.eu>



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The RESPONDER consortium comprises ten partners from eight European countries. The participants are:

Organisation	Country
Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, Research Institute for Managing Sustainability (project coordinator)	AT
Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IÖW)	DE
Sustainable Europe Research Institute	AT
University of Barcelona, Institute of Environmental Science and Technology	ES
Technical University of Denmark, Department of Management Engineering, Innovation and Sustainability	DK
University of Surrey, Centre for Environmental Strategy	GB
Institute for Forecasting of the Slovak Academy of Sciences	SK
Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Center for Environmental and Sustainability Research	PT
Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development, Sustainable Development Section	CH
German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety	DE