PROMOTING OF SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION WITHIN THE EUROPEAN REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

CZU: 366.1:502.1:340.13(4) **https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7549626**

Lucia NEPOTU, ORCID: 0000-0001-5306-7346
State University of Moldova
Pietro IANQUINTA
University of Calabria, Italy

Abstract: *Global consumption and production, a phenomenon reflected in the European economic space caused by the massive concentration of population, is based on the use of the natural environment and resources in a way that continues to have a destructive impact on the planet. These have led to the intensification of activities to reduce this consumption and to move towards a sustainable one. The mass and excess consumption of the last period has led to the emergence and intensification of the European regulatory framework that makes it possible to actively promote a sustainable consumption by final consumers as well as organizational ones. The European normative framework, adopted by the European Parliament, includes a set of laws, provisions and normative acts that regulate the activity of sustainable consumption, in order to support, encourage and promote it. In this article, the promotion of sustainable consumption through the application of the European normative framework is researched, as well as the analysis of the degree of alignment of the national legislative infrastructure in the context of the harmonization of European normative-legislative aspects.*

Keywords: *regulatory framework, sustainable consumption, European.*

The sustainable economy emerged in the sixties with the birth of modern environmentalism and the development of new scientific knowledge and proposals to move towards sustainability. One of the fundamental objectives of the European Union is sustainable growth. Doing more with less has become one of the main challenges for both producers and consumers, the main cause being the scarcity of natural resources at the global level. Sustainable consumption and production means using natural resources and energy more efficiently and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts.

The ability of future generations to meet their own needs is not compromised in the process of sustainable development, which satisfies present requirements.

Within the European Union, since 2006, the concept of sustainable development has been integrated into the Strategy for an Extended Europe, in a unified and coherent strategic vision, with the general objective of continuously improving the quality of life for present and future generations, to create sustainable communities, able to manage and use resources efficiently and harness the economy's ecological and social innovation potential, with a view to ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion [5, p.16].

After the European Union continued to develop sustainably, the Europe 2020 Strategy was adopted in 2010 to foster smart growth based on education, research, and innovation that is sustainable and inclusive by generating new employment and eliminating poverty, among other things. Together with the member states and respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the European Union is committed to becoming a leader in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and, implicitly, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. On 11 December 2019, the Commission published its Communication entitled "A Green Deal for Europe" [2]. Within the Sustainability Forum, which takes place once a year, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the updating of the strategy are intensively discussed.

In accordance with Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union, which strives to create an internal market that promotes Europe's sustainable development and is based on balanced economic growth and a high standard of environmental protection and improvement [2].

The action plan on funding sustainable growth was released by the Commission in the Communication of March 8th, 2018, marking the beginning of a bold and all-encompassing policy on sustainable financing. Redirecting capital flows toward sustainable investments is one of the

goals of that action plan in order to promote equitable and sustainable growth. The most significant and urgent activity envisioned in the action plan is the creation of a unified classification system for sustainable activities. The Action Plan acknowledges that shifting capital flows 5 towards more environmentally friendly activities requires a common, comprehensive understanding of the environmental viability of investments and activities. In order to tell investors about investments that finance ecologically sustainable economic activities, it is important to first set clear standards on actions that are thought to contribute to environmental goals. Further guidance on activities contributing to other sustainability objectives, including social objectives, could be developed at a later stage [3, p.14].

Sustainability and the transition to a secure, climate-neutral, more resource-efficient and circular economy are essential to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the European Union economy. Sustainability has long been at the heart of the EU project, and the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) reflect its social and environmental dimensions [3, p.13].

Sustainability is becoming more and more important in our society. A Eurobarometer survey shows that 77% of Europeans try to repair items before buying new ones. And according to a 2018 European Commission study, consumers are three times more likely to buy a product if it is labeled as durable and repairable, and around 79% of EU citizens believe that digital device manufacturers should be required to facilitate the repair or replacement of individual parts [5].

The European Parliament has frequently said that it supports the Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and all of its constituent parts in this case. When revising the Ecodesign Directive in 2009, the European Parliament successfully reinforced the concept of life cycle analysis, especially the concept of resource and material efficiency. Additionally, the Parliament was successful in passing comprehensive rules regarding consumer information and small and medium-sized businesses. The inclusion of energy goods in the directive's purview also enjoyed considerable support from the Parliament.

The European Commission has put out the Green Deal for Europe, a package of legislative proposals with the main objective of achieving Europe climate neutral by the year 2050. The benefits of this Deal are:

- Clean air and water;
- Renovated and energy efficient buildings;
- Healthy and affordable food;
- Competitive industry and global resilience;
- Sustainable jobs;
- More public transport;
- More durable products that can be repaired, recycled and reused, etc. [6].

The European Consumer Center Luxembourg highlighted in March 2022 the best sustainable practices in Europe which include:

1. 1. Austria tackles tons of e-waste with repair vouchers. These vouchers cover half of the repair costs for consumers up to a maximum of 200 euros, so citizens are motivated to invest money in repairs instead of throwing away faulty electronics and buying new ones. This program, which has been very successful in the capital Vienna since 2020, has been extended to the whole country in 2022.
2. In Belgium, you can find the famous second-hand shops "Les Petits Riens", spread all over the country. Anyone can deposit furniture, kitchen utensils and similar items they no longer need there. Or they can be purchased at a much lower price.
3. A multinational clothing company in Bulgaria encourages consumers to bring their used clothes to its stores. With the aid of the website, the clothes is returned, and the retailer takes care to reuse or recycle this apparel. By returning old clothes to the store, consumers receive vouchers that they can use on their next purchase from that store.
4. The Croatian online platform "Burza otfada" (waste exchange) promotes the exchange of information regarding the demand and supply of secondary raw materials from a

production process or results from waste management processes. The initiative, which was started in 2017, has an indirect effect on consumers because it strives to improve everyone's quality of life by reducing garbage disposal and using sustainable resource management practices.

5. Cyprus encourages incentive sponsorship for the purchase of a new bicycle and a subsidy for the repair and maintenance of a bicycle. The country also bans the free supply of thin plastic bags at points of sale.
6. In recent years, there have been an increasing number of grocery stores in the Czech Republic and Slovakia where customers can purchase goods like rice, pasta, coffee, tea, and other items and ask for them to be packaged in the containers and packaging they brought with them in order to prevent waste. from packaging made of single-use plastic.
7. A mobile app called "Too Good To Go" was created in Denmark in 2015 to combat food waste. Food scraps or unsold meals that restaurants or retail establishments would otherwise throw away are posted. Customers can use the app to search local offerings and pick up groceries at frequently extremely affordable pricing. A condition that benefits customers, eateries, and the environment all at once.
8. France encourages consumers to chose to fix damaged products rather than replace them with a new product. This practice is promoted by suspending the legal warranty of conformity while a product is being repaired or by extending the warranty by six months if a customer requests that a trader restore the item.
9. Germany intends to end overproduction, the waste of new items, and pointless returns by amending the law governing the circular economy. Until the law was changed, electronics and clothing in particular often ended up in landfills. Manufacturers and retailers are now held to a far higher standard of accountability. They ought to be explicit about their policies about unsold goods, such as whether they give them away or sell them for less.
10. The NeXt-Nuova Economia per tutti platform in Italy offers a national overview of sustainable best practices. Whether they are created by big businesses, small businesses, towns, or schools. They encourage customers to assume responsibility and make wise purchase decisions by providing the Vote Your Wallet tool.
11. In Latvia, several gas stations encourage customers to bring their own reusable coffee cups. A 10-15% discount on coffee is offered to customers who bring their own cups. The goal of this initiative is to lower the nation's cup waste.
12. The first nation to provide free public transportation is Luxembourg. From 2020, locals and visitors won't need to purchase a ticket to ride a train, tram, or bus. The goal is to increase public awareness of ecologically friendly transportation.
13. By imposing a 10 cent refundable deposit on the sale of beverages like water, soft drinks, beer, and ready-to-drink coffee, Malta's beverage container refund program promotes the return of single-use beverage containers. Malta will begin using the reimbursement mechanism on April 1, 2022.
14. The first circular internet supermarket in the Netherlands launched in Rotterdam sans packaging. Consumers order their goods in returnable glass jars and have them delivered in bulk. It is possible to return used jars to the supplier for cleaning and refilling. Supermarkets without packaging could reduce annual plastic consumption by each customer by up to 20 kilograms.
15. All Norwegians are accustomed to the recycling bottle and can storage system that exists in their country. All supermarkets in Norway have recycling machines at the front door. In Norway, recycling rates for bottles and cans exceeded 92% in the previous year.
16. A mobile hotel proposal made out of an insulated refrigerated truck was designed by an architecture studio in Poland. They employ trailer trucks, which have historically been used to transport food and are therefore equipped with the necessary features to do so. Project goals include raising the material's value and repurposing refrigerated trucks into hotel rooms.

17. A program was started by the Portuguese government to address energy poverty. It provides financial support for home energy efficiency improvements. As an illustration, consider improving windows and doors, sustainable heating, or building insulation.
18. Reduce, repair, reuse is the motto of the Center for Reuse, a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable consumption in Slovenia. For instance, they show customers how to properly maintain a product and give them the chance to help with repairs. Additionally, they turn old products into brand-new ones.
19. For repair services for bicycles, shoes, leather products, apparel, and home linen, Sweden cut its VAT rate from 25% to 12%. Major electrical appliance repairs may be performed by craftsmen for up to 50% less than the actual cost; the state covers the difference.

The least harmful products for the environment must be the acknowledged standard if modern society is to be long-term viable.

The goal of sustainable development is to raise people's living standards by giving them meaningful options, fostering an enabling environment, facilitating the spread of knowledge, and improving information. A situation where we live well, within the boundaries of the earth, via smarter use of resources and a modern economy that serves our health and well-being" should follow from this.

Among the tools that Europe has chosen to rely on to fulfill its Green Deal is the taxonomy of sustainable activities. This classification was the subject of a report published on March 9, 2020. In actuality, it evaluates the viability of 70 economic activities that account for 93% of the greenhouse gas emissions on the Old Continent. It should allow an end to the famous "greenwashing", which consists of a company re-branding itself through ecologically oriented communication actions. In the end, these businesses ought to be forced to alter their business practices in order to satisfy European standards for combating climate change. This taxonomy should also allow investments to be targeted more towards the most sustainable investments [7].

The Covid-19 pandemic has sparked a global social and economic crisis that has prompted the European Union to decide to spend more money to continue executing the Green Deal. Thus, it suggested on May 27, 2020, to increase the traditional European budget by €750 billion for the years 2021–2024 in order to hasten the transition to a green economy. These funds should be used by national public authorities, avoiding any negative impact on the environment.

Earth's natural resources must be cared for at a rate that supports life if we are to live sustainably. However, our consumer society exerts enormous pressure on the planet. The European Union ratifies the key international environmental accords and takes part in the majority of summits on sustainable development.

The European Union's measures about sustainable production and consumption aim at four main goals: better products, smarter consumption, more economical and greener production and supporting global efforts.

The European Commission started the SWITCH-Asia program in response to the demand for a greener and more energy-efficient sector in Asia. The initiative promotes the employment of green technology and practices, as well as a change in consumer patterns toward less damaging goods and services, and is aimed at small and medium-sized businesses. By raising incomes and employment rates (as a result of greater output and competitiveness) as well as indirectly by enhancing living conditions, the program helps to reduce poverty. Therefore, the European Commission encourages the organization of national roundtables on sustainable production and consumption with the purpose of sharing knowledge and best practices. Such roundtables have already been held in South Africa, China, and India.

Most of these producing countries experience economic growth and population growth over time. The demand for global resources and energy rises as they become more rich. The utilization of resources effectively for long-term development is an alternative provided by sustainable consumption and production policies. To do this, the EU closely collaborates with other nations to encourage the switch to low-carbon and resource-efficient economies on a global scale.

This involves actively participating in the Marrakesh Process, which aids nations and kingdoms in formulating plans and regulations for sustainable consumption and production. In the Marrakesh Process Advisory Committee, which provides guidance on the creation of the proposed 10-year framework of programs to connect various projects, the EU also represents the European Region. As a regional action plan, the EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy makes a significant contribution to both the Marrakech process and the programs' 10-year framework [1, p.23].

Conclusion. When properly reflected in investment and growth opportunities, a sustainable development plan 2 for the European Union may be much more than a limited response to the limitations brought on by energy scarcity. Based on new indicators of well-being and income distribution, promoting services related to maintenance skills and sustainable consumption behavior, expressing solidarity with less energy efficient regions and much more open to cooperation between territories, could inaugurates a new European style.

The international community has gradually come to understand over the past 20 years that the idea of sustainable development is the only viable solution to guarantee the survival of humanity. It now discusses environmental and climate issues rather than only discussing economic growth. He is able to design a full series of action plans for both the richest countries and developing ones that are targeted at reaching this goal through discussion and contemplation. This objective requires improved targeting of investments and savings as well as accountability on the part of the economic community in addition to politics.

The European Union's member states are increasingly encouraging sustainable consumption and adopting strategies, legislation, and policies to support it. The European Union does not necessarily demonstrate a strong enough commitment to sustainable development, especially not rapidly enough, while having a complete and effective institutional framework in concept.

Bibliography:

1. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Smarter and greener. How to consume and produce sustainably, 2010. ISBN 978-92-79-15753-0doi:10.2779/28918.
2. Regulation (EU) no. 2020/852 of 18/06/20 on establishing a framework for promoting sustainable investments and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088, Accessed www. aida.ineris.fr on 04.10.2022.
3. Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investments and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088, Official Journal of the European Union, Accessed: www.eur-lex.europa.eu on 04.10.2022.
4. The national strategy for the sustainable development of Romania 2030– Bucureşti : Paideia, 2018 ISBN 978-606-748-261-4.
5. The official website of the European Parliament www.europarl.europa.eu Article: How to promote sustainable consumption? Accessed on 04.10.2022.
6. The official website of the European Commission www.commission.europa.eu Article: A green deal for Europe, accessed on 04.11.2022.
7. The official website www.agipi.com Article: 20 years of initiatives, efforts and regulations worldwide and in Europe, accessed on 04.11.2022.