RESPONDER
Linking SCP and Growth Debates

Press release

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Green ICT for Sustainable Consumption in Europe: Experts Explore Potentials and Trends

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) may enable greener life-styles // more than 50 international specialists discuss mega-trends, including Smart Grids and Cloud Computing // Knowledge brokerage consortium RESPONDER calls for an enhanced dialogue and knowledge sharing between science and policy to activate potentials

Vienna, 22 January 2013 – Modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can have a great influence on shaping a more sustainable world. The mega-trends Cloud Computing and Smart Systems in the areas of energy, transport and housing, have the potential to substantially reduce environmental impacts and, thus, green Europe's future. The time to adjust the future development of these technologies is now, say Europe's leading ICT-specialists. Last week, more than 50 professionals from 20 countries across Europe, the US and Australia discussed in Vienna how ICT can increase energy and resource efficiency and make consumption more sustainable. In an ever faster digitizing world, the positive potentials of ICTs are great, say the experts. Yet, using the chances involves substantial challenges for policy makers and Europe's regulatory institutions. The event "Green ICT for Sustainable Consumption?" was organized by the Institute of the Environment and Regional Development of the Vienna University of Economics and Business. It is one of several events taking place in the course of the European Knowledge Brokerage project RESPONDER.

Enabling Sustainable Consumption, Reinventing Consumer Behaviours

Used in a clever way, information and communication technologies can be deployed for triggering sustainable effects in various spheres and, hence, lead to green growth which is decoupled from carbon use. "Green smart phone apps, for example, can inform consumers and promote behavioral change", comments André Martinuzzi, coordinator of the consortium RESPONDER and director of the Vienna-based Research Institute for Managing Sustainability (RIMAS). "The idea of sustainable lifestyles can spread rapidly by modern technologies. Alternative consumption concepts and business models such as sharing, bartering and renting are emerging rapidly. And we are convinced that we are just seeing the beginning. The new consumption concepts, which are enabled by ICT, have the potential to reinvent consumer's market behaviours."

Hot ICT-Topics: Smart Grids and Cloud Computing

Among the latest trends in ICT for sustainable consumption are the potentials of ICT-use in the energy sector, often shortened in the magic words "Smart Metering" and "Smart Grids". The intelligent combination of electricity production and consumption is at the heart of arising concepts which address the transformation of the fossil energy system towards a low-impact, renewable energy scheme. The experts stressed that activating the potentials in this domain calls for a closer cooperation between the energy and the ICT sectors.

With regard to the new trend of Cloud Computing the ICT-specialists on the one hand agreed on the sustainability potential of shared use of resources and facilities in clouds. Cloud

Computing can enable smarter, cleaner and more efficient process in many different areas of the economy. "Moreover, if cloud computing advances as we expect it will, there could be as many as 7 million cloud-related jobs in IT worldwide by 2015", said Ray Pinto, Government Affairs Manager of Microsoft, one of the keynote speakers of the event. On the other hand, the increased demand for energy in cloud solutions is not yet sufficiently analyzed in order to quantify the net environmental effects. "When we talk about enabling effects of ICT, we should not forget that ICT may also enable unsustainable behaviours", stressed Inge Røpke, an ecological economist from Aalborg University, and another keynote speaker at the event. In addition, the technical standards and safety regulations are yet far from making Cloud Computing a broadly operable option. European cloud rules are a must-have for advancing Cloud Computing.

RESPONDER – Linking Science and Policy

The European consortium RESPONDER aims at advancing sustainable consumption by closing the gap between science and policy. "Coming up with up-to-date policy instruments requires a systematic integration of the latest scientific knowledge", says Martinuzzi. "Networking and community building are critical, especially in domains that evolve as rapidly as information and communication technologies."

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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

Contact

Dr. André Martinuzzi
Associate professor and director of the
Research Institute for Managing Sustainability
Vienna University of Economics and Business
phone: +43-1-313 36 46 98
email: andre.martinuzzi@wu.ac.at

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