

Challenging individual consumption patterns in Ireland in the areas of: **Energy | Water | Food | Transport**

Consensus is a four-year collaborative research project involving Trinity College Dublin and the National University of Ireland, Galway. It examines four key areas of household consumption that currently impact negatively on the environment and inhibit our ability to achieve sustainable development across both Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The focus of Consensus is on four key themes:

1. How to measure and evaluate consumption
2. How incentives for sustainable behaviours can be developed
3. Identifying the links between consumption, health and wellbeing
4. How matters of household consumption are being governed through institutional practice and participation

GOVERNING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

This Consensus research involves an overview of EU Directives on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and a catalogue of international best practice models in the area of SCP. Building on this, Ireland's performance in SCP policy formulation and implementation is assessed. To encourage cooperation in the important field of SCP, an all-island network for sustainable consumption research is being established among state and non-state actors. To join this network, please contact: consensus@nuigalway.ie

SUSTAINABLE LIVING SURVEY

This research is exploring individuals' attitudes and behaviours through the lens of sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles. A large-scale extensive questionnaire survey is being conducted with 1500 households across Derry, Dublin and Galway. The in-depth survey explores a range of themes including: what do people perceive to be the environmental effects of their own households? What would encourage more sustainable household consumption? The research will result in the production of a large Irish specific baseline dataset on patterns of consumption.



FOOD

- The aim of the Consensus food research is to examine technological and social factors that have an impact on the shopping, cooking and eating behaviour of household members and to create normative scenarios that might be realisable by 2050. The ultimate goal is to elaborate strategies to bring about the most promising environmental, economic and culturally acceptable solutions for more sustainable food consumption in Ireland.



ENERGY

- The residential sector accounts for a quarter of Ireland's total energy use. This research is examining the potential of participatory visioning techniques for the conception and promotion of social, technological and organizational innovations for more sustainable home heating practices in the future. These innovations will be evaluated with stakeholders and action plans will be developed to work towards their achievement.



WATER

- In Ireland, water consumption per person per day is estimated at 160 litres per capita, the majority of which (c.33%) goes towards personal washing. Participatory visioning techniques represent an innovative means for developing and evaluating sustainable innovations and will be applied in this research in the search for sustainable personal washing solutions and practical measures towards their achievement.



TRANSPORT

- Ireland's car dependency has been linked to many social, economic and environmental problems that require effective policy responses. This part of the Consensus project focuses on how people's everyday travel patterns can be made more sustainable. International examples of successful policy initiatives to promote smarter, more sustainable transport options can be useful in informing future responses to Ireland's prevailing car culture.

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

- Davies, A., Fahy, F., Rau, H. and Pape, J. (2010) Sustainable consumption: practices and governance, *Irish Geography* 43, (1)
- Doyle, R. (2010) 'Future visions for heating and washing practices in Irish households: a discussion of the methodological framework employed by the Consensus research project', paper delivered at the *European Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production (ERSCP) conference*, Delft University of Technology, October 2010
- Pape, J., Fahy, F., Davies, A. and Rau, H. Developing Policies and Instruments for Sustainable Consumption: Irish Experiences and Futures, *Journal of Consumer Policy* (forthcoming).
- Rau, H. and Hennessy, C. (2009) 'The Road to Sustainable Transport? Rural Transport Programmes and Policies in Ireland', in J. McDonagh, T. Varley and S. Shortall (eds.) *A Living Countryside? The Politics of Sustainable Development in Rural Ireland*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp.361-378