

## Politics and consumption.

**What are the possibilities of politics to lead consumption? Which political instruments exist? How do these instruments affect the consumption patterns and how could they be improved?**

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Should consumers be allowed to consume ‘how and what they want’ even if they are destroying the environment with their consumption styles? Or should politics intervene in order to make consumption patterns change into a more sustainable way? And how should politics intervene?

These are still leading questions of the research field of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). This research field is inherently interwoven with politics. Since the UN Conference on Sustainable Development 1992 in Rio a political action field on SCP was established. Simultaneously an international research field on SCP emerged. This *international political action and research field* will be described very briefly.

Against this backdrop a general overview on the possibilities of politics to lead consumption into a more sustainable way will be given. This overview relates to politics on national level (European countries including EU politics). Which model of consumption stands behind this? Which understanding of politics? Who are the actors of politics? What are the limits of politics? In this part some basic understandings and critical thoughts regarding the role of ‘consumer sovereignty’ and consumer politics will be presented.

In a second part an overview of political instruments which are already implemented to change the consumption patterns will be given. Hereby, we distinguish different classes of political instruments: regulatory instruments, economic instruments, information instruments and education instruments. By the collected examples we shall discuss more concretely pros and cons. Hereby we reflect not only the instruments but also how they are implemented. On this basis we develop proposals to improve them.