

**Consumer citizenship education**

# Guidelines

Vol. 1 Higher Education

**The Consumer Citizenship Network  
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## **Codes:**

Ω = web-links

▶ = cases

▣ = references

Φ = examples of curricula

⌋ = didactic methods

■ = didactical resource material

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# Introduction

## Consumer Citizenship Education

### Guidelines

#### Vol. 1 Higher Education

*A consumer citizen is an individual who makes choices based on ethical, social, economic and ecological considerations. The consumer citizen actively contributes to the maintenance of just and sustainable development by caring and acting responsibly on family, national and global levels.*

This is a set of guidelines about consumer citizenship education compiled by The Consumer Citizenship Network<sup>1</sup>. The target groups for these guidelines are teachers in higher education in general and teacher trainers in particular. These guidelines provide a pluralistic approach to consumer citizenship education. A number of models are presented and suggestions are made as to competences, learning outcomes and methodology. References to theoretical research and practical materials, as well as web links are also included.

#### **Discourse**

During the recent years since the start of the Consumer Citizenship Network the partners have discussed, debated and carried out research about concepts and practices related to sustainable development and consumer citizenship education. The network partners have consulted in thematic group meetings, at conferences and in online discussions. A curriculum survey was carried out which mapped topics related to consumer citizenship taught at the moment in CCN institutions throughout Europe. The cumulative impressions, in brief, have been that numerous aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> The Consumer Citizenship Network (CCN) is an interdisciplinary network of educators, researchers and representatives of non-governmental organisations who share an interest in how the individual's role as a consumer can contribute constructively to sustainable development and mutual solidarity. The participants develop interdisciplinary approaches to central issues dealing with the balance between material and non-material well-being and how one can translate ethical values into everyday practice through conscientious participation in the market. The Consumer Citizenship Network brings together expertise in the fields of citizenship-, environmental- and consumer education to develop good practice for teaching and accessing consumer citizenship education. The Network consists of 135 institutions in 35 countries and includes UNESCO, UNEP and Consumers International. CCN provides channels for dialogue and cooperation in research and development work related to consumer citizenship education. The Consumer Citizenship Network is an Erasmus 3. thematic network supported by the European Commission Socrates- Erasmus Programme and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

sustainable development and consumer citizenship are taught but that there is a general lack of cohesiveness and innovation. On the conceptual level, the understanding of the vision of sustainable human development is often vague or lacking. On the level of course content, some of what is presented is fragmented and occasionally based on outdated theories and models which have proven to function poorly in real life. On the didactical level, teachers struggle to combine theory, research and practice, finding it difficult to connect the course content to the everyday lives of the students. And on the level of student motivation, teachers encounter disillusionment, passivity, fatalism and a sense of powerlessness.

### **Strategies**

By bringing together the various elements which constitute consumer citizenship education, the guidelines highlight the universal need for common reflection on the implications of “improved quality of life” and of the consequences of present consumption patterns. The guidelines emphasize the value of developing quality modules/courses in higher education which support the European Bologna process by enhancing the relevance of European higher education to society’s present needs as well as being compatible with the Lisbon strategy by contributing to the adaptability and responsiveness of higher education. The main intention of the guidelines is to stimulate education which facilitates students’ ability to analyse, understand and cope with real, everyday life problems and to empower them to be active participants in modern society. Active participants are individuals who not only make selective, reflected lifestyle choices in the market but who also effect changes by engaging as stakeholders in the dialogues and debates which determine policy, contribute to transparency and guarantee accountability.

### **Diverse approaches**

Far from attempting to support the idea of a stereotype consumer citizen, these guidelines support the conviction that although there are central principles which define consumer citizenship, specific knowledge which is necessary to have and certain competences to be acquired, there are many ways of exercising consumer citizenship. The varying approaches require, nonetheless, in-depth, up-to-date understanding and awareness of the constantly changing conditions which create the landscape in which the consumer citizen must function. Though it is impossible to find definite answers to many questions related to consumer citizenship, it is possible to provide students with basic tools which enable them to better deal with these questions.

### **Tools**

Science and values are two complementary knowledge systems that provide the tools for consumer citizenship, and both should be part of any educational program. Consumer citizenship education is not only about instrumental competences--it is also about the merging of scientific methods and information with social values. The scientific approach should be used by every enlightened consumer: thinking in terms of process, cause and effect, experiment and analysis, can help to guide consumption and lifestyle choices. Learning to think in terms of process can give people the means to understand the dynamics of natural and human systems. Yet science without values leads to unsustainable materialism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Science and values as complementary foundations for consumer citizenship.* by Arthur Lyon Dahl, International Environment Forum and Consultant Adviser, UNEP Geneva, Switzerland



### **Multidisciplinary content**

Consumer citizenship education is multidisciplinary – elements are to be found in different subjects in the curriculum. Central topics of civic training, consumer education and environmental education provide the backbone of consumer citizenship education. Consumer citizenship education can also be viewed as an integral part of the general educational promotion of generic competences or life skills (knowledge about and skills for coping with life): ‘bildung’. Consumer citizenship education can even be considered as a didactical approach to teaching in general rather than a specific discipline even though it includes certain subject specific competences and skills. To be a consumer and citizen is something that everybody, per definition, is. It is a part of their lifeworlds or everyday practical existence and it includes experiences in relating to other people and to society. By taking the daily lives of the students as consumers and citizens, and the problems which they are confronted with, as the point of departure, the teachers can assist in making the student’s education more complete, relevant and meaningful.

### **Topical foci**

Consumer citizenship education includes a wide variety of issues which can be identified within the following general categories: life quality and lifestyles, consumerism, personal finances, consumer rights and responsibilities, advertising and persuasion, consumption and environment, diet and nutrition, information, safety, international awareness, and future perspectives. The present global discussion about sustainable development highlights the interconnectedness of these topics. It also brings to the forefront the impact which the choices the individual makes have on the direction which changes in this era take.

### **Practical examples as well as theory**

This set of guidelines emphasizes the importance of theoretical knowledge as a foundation for consumer citizenship while at the same time emphasizing the use of exemplary material in the learning process. The daily lives of the students contain problems which can be used in the educational process (as the core of case studies, project learning, etc). Likewise, the global community in which the students live also contains examples of different solutions to these very same problems. By examining why and how innovations have solved problems, students can become acquainted with ways of dealing with the intricate challenges of today’s society instead of falling into a pessimistic pit lined with reminders of the disasters awaiting humankind. By being encouraged to consider alternative paths of development—personally and collectively—students can learn social and practical entrepreneurship characterized by critical awareness, innovativeness and global solidarity.

### **Lifelong learning**

Consumer citizenship education is not only an activity for teachers and students alone. It is an important part of informal life-long learning and is carried on in numerous informal educational settings in the contexts of civic training, environmental education and consumer education. There exists a wide variety of partners (governmental and civil society organizations, media, etc) with which the educators at institutions of higher education can cooperate in order to improve the quality of the consumer citizenship education which they provide for their students.

### **A work in progress**

As a holistic approach dealing with the complexities of modern society, consumer citizenship is still in its early phases of development. This set of guidelines represents an initial attempt to create a brief selection of didactical suggestions for higher education on the subject. The CCN would like to thank all who have contributed in the process so far. The CCN also hopes to be able to provide a revised edition of these guidelines and adapt it to online use. It is a “work in progress”, the future development of which will hopefully provide even more clearly defined suggestions.

Victoria W. Thoresen  
editor

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*“The new social movements, especially ecological movements, have already worked out a concept of environmentally conscious consumption to which socially and politically conscious consumption has been added. What may have begun as a drive towards consumer sovereignty in advanced capitalism can also move in the direction of consumer citizenship in which individuals consider consumption as an active political, social and ecological practice.”*

*(Isin & Wood, 1999)*

# A. Principles

## 1. *What is consumer citizenship education?*

Consumer citizenship education encompasses attitudes, knowledge and skills connected to functioning in today's society. It is responsibility learning which aims to contribute to the individual's ability to manage his own life as well as participating in the stewardship of the global society's collective life. Consumer citizenship education is interdisciplinary and cross curricular.

### **Training in the art of value-based behaviour**

Consumer citizenship is an essential element of liberal education and is part of the on-going values debate, which institutions of higher education also participate in, to define the "quality of life." How principles of equity, equality and social justice are best expressed in the machinations of society has been the crux of national constitutions, declarations of human rights and religious and cultural traditions throughout the ages. Applying values to contemporary conditions has become continually more arduous due to the increased interrelatedness and interdependency of societies today. The rapid transformations in technology add to the complexities of this process. Consumer citizenship education is about stimulating the individual's ability to make choices, manage resources, solve problems and contribute to the future on the basis of conscientious, principled reflection and scientific knowledge.

### **Exercising critical thinking and scientific investigation**

Consumer citizenship education encompasses knowledge and skills needed to become independent, critical and aware consumer citizens. This involves gaining insight into social and economic development in one's own and other's society and the processes and systems affecting such development. Consumer citizenship education requires competence in acquiring and analyzing available data about products and services, considering possible consequences and identifying alternative solutions.

### **Optimizing opportunities**

Lack of financial literacy<sup>3</sup>, media literacy, and awareness of what contributes to personal health and safety, limits the individual's possibilities for experiencing "good life quality". Consumer citizenship education attempts to optimize the opportunities each person has by developing the student's financial literacy, media literacy and understanding of what leads to a safe and healthy life. It serves as a preventive measure against the growing problems of indebtedness, fraud, commercial exploitation and lifestyle related illnesses.

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<sup>3</sup> Financial literacy is a process of mutual learning by both purchasers and providers of financial services about the merits but also the pitfalls of money-related social functions in the marketplace. By Udo Reifner adapted by Karen Beyer; iff – institute for financial services, Germany

### **Practicing participatory democracy**

Consumer citizenship education contributes to the individual's integrating of democratic ideals with personal aspirations thereby assisting in the evolution of a civilized international market. It involves knowing about and being able to exercise the basic rights and responsibilities of a citizen as well as the specific rights of a consumer which are:

- The right to health and safety protection
- The right to protection of economic interests
- The right to reparation and damages
- The right to information and education
- The right to representation

Consumer citizenship education is a means of stimulating constructive social activism. The consumer citizen is trained to use for example: policy instruments, public consultation, market responses, etc. as instruments with which to initiate change. It is through his/her personal lifestyle choices and social involvement that the consumer citizen contributes to greater transparency, better policies, and increased advocacy. Informed consumer citizens can be instrumental in the globalization of civil society concerns. Ultimately such involvement can potentially contribute to the correcting of the imbalance of voices and influences and the changing of power constellations.

### **Relearning**

Consumer citizenship awareness, as well as the corporate social awareness in a region, often reflects the outcomes of past patterns of development. Traditional ways of viewing and managing social and economic relationships can hinder the implementation of new approaches. Consumer citizenship education is an opportunity for relearning—for reorganizing information and how this information is understood in larger contexts. It provides a chance to reconsider such central questions as the meaning of life, the value of material and non-material prosperity, and the significance of service to one's fellow human. It also opens for reflection about the positive and negative aspects of accepted economic and social systems. It analyzes the scope and speed of technical and commercial innovations. In other words, consumer citizenship education encourages the re-examination of the means which individuals, business and organizations use to achieve their goals.

### **Moving towards global solidarity**

There are definite connections between our lifestyles and other's survival. The relation between poverty and the just distribution of the world's resources are central themes in consumer citizenship education. Cooperation for the community's sake, making an effort to attain consensus about where the global society is headed and how humanity will get there, is an unavoidable part of consumer citizenship education.

Consumer citizenship education is intended to help students gain insight into the processes and systems of human development on a global scale. Which systems and processes must be maintained and which are defective and in need of alteration? What is the individual's role in relation to the larger mechanisms of governments and the private sector? How can the citizen-consumer influence production, distribution, marketing and sales? Which rights and responsibilities exist and which are lacking for oneself and for others? How can changes be made, by whom and when?

### **Contributing to sustainable development**

Consumer citizenship is an essential part of future studies and peace education. Future education can be described as democratic, experimental or functional, humanistic and holistic. It gives learners a sense of their responsibility to one another, to the whole society and to our planet. It incorporates meaningful activity into the learning experience and relates academics to the real world. With regard to humanistic ideals it heightens self-esteem and allows the whole personality of the learner to develop in an affective way. The holistic perspective provides for an integration of subject matter, giving the learner a sense of humanity's relationship to the whole, and incorporating the knowledge of how everything on earth and the universe is interdependent and interrelated.<sup>4</sup>

#### A New Framework for Education

<b><i>Principle</i></b>	<b><i>Goal Summary</i></b>
<b>Democratic</b>	To give learners a sense of their responsibility to one another and to the planet.
<b>Experimental</b>	To incorporate meaningful activity into the learning experience and to relate academics to the real world.
<b>Humanistic</b>	To heighten self-esteem and to allow the whole personality of the learner to develop in an affective way.
<b>Holistic</b>	To provide for an integration of subject matter and to give the learner a sense of humanity's relationship to the whole, incorporating the knowledge of how everything on earth and within the universe is interdependent and interrelated.

● Gang, P. 1991. The Global-Ecocentric Paradigm in Education. In *New Directions in Educations. Selections from Holistic Education Review*, (Miller, R. Ed.). Brandon: Holistic Education Press. pp. 78-88.

*“Consumer citizenship education is by no means merely a matter of happy cows, clean pigs and uncaged hens!”*

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<sup>4</sup> *Consumer Citizenship Education in Finland --Comparisons between comprehensive school curricula in 1994 and 2004* ; by Kaija Turkki, Professor, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, Department of Home Economics and Craft Science, University of Helsinki, Finland

## 2. Why is there a need for consumer citizenship education?

### Historical developments

The need for more systematic and thorough consumer citizenship education in higher education can be ascribed to the following developments and the conditions which have arisen as a result of them in the world today.<sup>5</sup>

1. Globalisation
2. Mutual interdependence
3. Technological innovations
4. Availability of information
5. Improved communication
6. New modes of governance in the global world
7. New power constellations in trade and commerce
8. Transition from planned economies to free market economies
9. Speed of changes in employment, services and legislation
10. Increasing complexity of society
11. Greater access and control of market changes
12. Environmental degradation

The impact of globalisation is the most commonly given response to the question of why the need for consumer citizenship education has arisen. The term “globalisation” is used to describe a number of phenomena such as the world becoming a physically smaller place due to increased mobility and communication; the emergence of a single global market; the proliferation of multi national corporations, and the growing commitment to the family of humankind and the emerging world civilization.

### Social conditions and disparities

These general developments of the last centuries have lead to more specific conditions and disparities which have direct bearing on the establishment and growth of consumer citizenship education. Some of the most significant of these are:

- gross imbalances of wealth between both peoples and countries
- unjust use and distribution of natural resources
- economic and political insecurity
- unsustainable consumption
- marginalization of individuals and groups
- extensive and aggressive commercial persuasion
- financial overextension and dependency
- increasing physical and mental health problems related to lifestyle choices
- growing dominance of greed, fraud, excess, crime and violence
- difficulties acquiring and interpreting information about products and services

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<sup>5</sup> It is beyond the scope of these guidelines to give a detailed description of what these categories cover but references to articles and books dealing with these topics can be found in the final chapter of these guidelines.

- lack of awareness about the consequences of one's actions
- declining involvement in traditional civic activities

### **International and regional concerns**

As early as 1985 the United Nations, emphasized the importance of consumer education, civic training and environmental awareness. According to the United Nation's Commission on Sustainable Development, "education is the forgotten priority of Rio." This is despite the fact that in 1992 governments as well as non-governmental organizations attending the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro gave education a central position in Agenda 21, the plan of action for attaining sustainable development. Article III/14/d of the "Plan of Implementation" of the Johannesburg WSSD (Sept. 2002) highlights the pressing need for sustainable consumption and points out that work towards this goal cannot be postponed. The U.N. recently emphasized the need for renewed commitment on the issue of sustainable development and focused specifically upon the vital importance of changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Research, higher education and civil society all have important roles in this process.<sup>6</sup>

The international community initiated the Millennium Goals in order to eradicate extreme poverty, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development. As a part of this the International Marrakech Process (A 10-year framework of programmes for sustainable consumption and production) (2003-20013) was begun and has identified the need for raising awareness on the benefits of sustainable consumption and the importance of education as a tool for spreading information.

In Europe both consumer education and environmental education have been on the agenda for a number of years. In 1973 the Council of Europe developed a charter for consumer protection and information which included consumer education. Similarly, citizenship training has been given high priority. The EU Agenda (Barcelona 2002) defined by the Heads of State and governments focuses on the goal of "sustainable growth and greater social cohesion"—two central issues in consumer citizenship education. This has been followed up by the Lisbon Strategy initiated in 2000 emphasizing the importance of a knowledge based, cohesive European society. More specifically, the European Community in Article 143 of the Amsterdam Treaty emphasized the need for consumer education.<sup>7</sup>

The U.N. Decade for Education for Sustainable Development began in 2005. The decade is a means of drawing the attention of educational institutions to the importance of sustainable human development. Universities and colleges in many countries have increased their focus on topics such as sustainable consumption, environmental protection and global economic development. Consumer citizenship education is a way of supporting and contributing to the UN Decade and to the

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<sup>6</sup> UNEP , News, *Report from UN secretary-general puts changing consumption patterns high on the agenda*, 31/01/02.

<sup>7</sup> For more detailed information about European policy relevant to consumer citizenship education see section on resources

process of transforming “sustainable development” from a concept into concrete behaviour.

*Globalization is integrating consumer markets around the world and opening opportunities. But it is also creating new inequalities and new challenges for protecting consumer rights ... Ever expanding consumption puts strains on the environment and turns the affluence of some into the social exclusion of many. (UNDP 1998)*

### **A better quality of life for all**

The world today produces and consumes more than ever before. Modern industrial workers now produce in a week what took their 18th century counterparts four years. Private consumption expenditures—the amount spent on goods and services at the household level—topped more than \$20 trillion in 2000, a four-fold increase over 1960.

One quarter of humanity—1.7 billion people worldwide—now belong to the “global consumer class,” having adopted the diets, transportation systems, and lifestyles that were once mostly limited to the rich nations of Europe, North America, and Japan. Today, China, India, and other developing countries are home to growing numbers of these consumers.

Yet the world is one of contrasts. While the consumer class thrives, great disparities remain. As many as 2.8 billion people on the planet struggle to survive on less than \$2 a day, and more than one billion people lack reasonable access to safe drinking water. The 12 percent of the world’s population that lives in North America and Western Europe accounts for 60 percent of private consumption spending, while the one-third living in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only 3.2 percent.

People must consume to survive, and the world’s poorest will need to increase their level of consumption if they are to lead lives of dignity and opportunity. But the world cannot continue on its current trajectory—the earth’s natural systems simply cannot support it. The economies of mass consumption that produced a world of abundance for many in the twentieth century face an entirely different challenge in the twenty-first: to focus not on the indefinite accumulation of goods but instead on a better quality of life for all, with minimal environmental harm.



State of the World Report 2004, Worldwatch Institute, Gary Gardner, Erik Assadourian, and Radhika Sarin



### **3. *Who* is responsible for consumer citizenship education?**

There is a constant debate in the realm of education as to who is responsible for changes in education and in society. “Top-downers” claim the original and most vital steps must come from regional and national governments, who place curriculum modifications on the agenda and provide legislation and resources for carrying them through. “Bottom-up’ers” view the task as belonging to teachers themselves on the level of the classroom where they are expected individually to integrate new ideas, knowledge and skills into their teaching. “Outsiders” consider the job as belonging to civil society (media, interest organizations, parents, business, etc) and express the conviction that representatives of these groups should be invited into the classroom to provide the missing training.

These guidelines encourage action from each of the abovementioned directions. Curricula adjustments are necessary. Therefore examples of modules and courses are provided throughout this publication. Cooperation with civil society, business, and media is also essential. Therefore a number of relevant links are included here. But these guidelines address, first and foremost, the quandaries of the individual university professor and teacher trainer as they attempt to include consumer citizenship education in their own courses.

#### **Interdisciplinary cooperation**

Another question consequently arises: which university professors and teacher trainers should take the responsibility of incorporating consumer citizenship education into their classrooms? Consumer education has traditionally been handled by those in Domestic Sciences or Home Economic Departments. In countries near the Baltic Sea, it has often been the teachers of handicrafts and food sciences who have had this task. Civic training throughout Europe has generally been relegated to the social sciences while environmental education has belonged to natural scientists. If, however, as indicated in the previous chapter, consumer citizenship education is to be holistic and future oriented, including even such topics as financial and media literacy, health and lifestyles, etc, then it is logical to induce that staff from all departments will necessarily be involved.

Even in business education consumer citizenship courses (as opposed to consumer behavior courses with the intention of training future business managers how to better make a profit) should be included. One cannot draw a demarcation line between managerial education with corporate social responsibility topics woven ‘in-between’ various business issues, and education on social responsibility with its consumer-citizen perception of the environment. Learning about the interactive relationships between business, social organizations and individuals must also become a focus point of curricula within the economic sciences.

The partitions between departments in universities and colleges are in many cases quite firm, separating staff from one discipline from having interaction and cooperation with those of other disciplines. The challenge of establishing interdisciplinary collaboration may be the greatest one in the process of developing

consumer citizenship education. Sharing responsibility for teaching consumer citizenship education will prevent fragmentation of the subject area. In the legend of the elephant and the blind men, each blind person identified a part of the elephant as something quite separate from the animal because they only received a portion of the information required to recognize the complete animal. A similar fate should be avoided for consumer citizenship education.

In the beginning of the process of integrating consumer citizenship education in one's institution one could raise a discussion inside one's institution concerning how different staff members understand consumer citizenship. Establishing a common understanding facilitates interdisciplinary cooperation. Such a discussion should keep in mind the holistic, future oriented, global dimensions of consumer citizenship education. In a growing number of universities around the world interdisciplinary courses focusing on "World Citizenship and sustainable development" are offered.<sup>8</sup> These can incorporate aspects of consumer citizenship in their teaching.

The following curricula examples show two diverse approaches. The first is generally applicable to most disciplines, whereas the second shows how aspects of consumer citizenship can be included in courses focused on specific topics.

<b>Φ</b>	<b>Active Citizenship Today</b>
<b>USA</b>	
To foster civic responsibility, Active Citizenship Today (developed by Close Up Foundation and Constitutional Rights Foundation) recognizes desired learning outcomes in three broad areas: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Each outcome is supported by a series of specific abilities.	
<u>Knowledge</u> Students will:	
Recognize characteristics and actions of effective citizens.	
Describe the community where they live.	
Describe local problems and their connection to state and national issues.	
Explain factors and institutions that influence public policy.	
Know how individuals can address community problems.	
<u>Skills</u> Students will:	
Develop and use effective questions.	
Acquire information from primary and secondary sources.	
Evaluate information for objectivity, accuracy, and point of view.	
Use information to help solve social problems.	
Assess personal action.	
Develop critical-thinking skills to make informed and responsible decisions.	
Develop communication and persuasion skills.	
Work cooperatively with others.	
<u>Attitudes</u> Students will:	
Recognize and respect human diversity.	
Develop a sense of effectiveness in the role of community advocate.	
Consider the balance between rights and responsibilities.	
Foster the value of service and continued involvement in the community.	

<sup>8</sup> GEHSP(Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership)  
[www.unesco.org/iau/sd/sd\\_ghesp.html](http://www.unesco.org/iau/sd/sd_ghesp.html)



## Consumers and Organic products

### Bulgaria

The Agro-ecological Center, a part of the Agricultural University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria, offers an example of training students and organic farmers in issues of civic and consumer responsibility. Students are trained to be skilled and informed consumers. In this way, they understand their rights and, more importantly, their responsibilities, within an increasingly complex market place. Following this course, more research via separate programs gives the opportunity to acquire specialized knowledge. Consumer values and behaviour, including the following directions:

- Making Responsible Choices (understanding who organic consumers are, understanding the needs of specific groups in society in relation to consumer choice)
- Managing Resources (understanding the need for effective and responsible use of organic resources, explaining the factors which influence choice such as availability)
- Consequences of consumption of organic products (understanding the relationship of the supplier and the consumer, analysing the environmental and social consequences, identifying the results of specific consumer behaviour and evaluating the costs of that behaviour, understanding the impact-locally, nationally and globally-of consumption of organic products)
- Consumer influence (recognizing consumer influence on how products are farmed, processed, and delivered)

Consumers in the marketplace (accessing, identifying and analysing of product information, of consumer information)

Advertising and sales techniques (knowing who advertises organic products, distinguishing between consumer information and advertising)

Sources of advice (knowing about governmental and non-governmental organisations which help consumers, understanding how new technologies like Internet can change the interaction between producer, consumer and retailer)

Using organic products (knowing the difference between organic and conventional products, being able to explain the reasons for making such choices)

- Consumer rights and responsibilities (knowing one's rights and responsibilities)
- Communicating satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Knowing what kind of serviced consumers expect, learning to solve conflicts and seek redress, recognize when complaints must be registered formally)

Yulia Dzhaharova and Nelly Bencheva; Agricultural University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

*Consumerism is not an inevitable stage in industrial development. Rather it has been a choice made within complex cultural, political and social contexts.*

*(Gary Cross)*

## B. Competences

### *1. What competences are taught?*

Consumer citizenship education is an interdisciplinary subject area focusing on contemporary events and conditions. Identifying the various elements is not as easy as examining traditional mono-disciplines which have long histories. One of the main reasons for this is that the technological, social and economic circumstances with which consumer citizenship education is concerned change rapidly. New issues arise with each new scientific discovery. New social and political constellations require reflection by the students of consumer citizenship education in order for them to understand the interrelationships of processes and systems. This does not mean, however, that consumer citizenship education is a vague collection of everything. With its concentration on the role of the individual, consumer citizenship education deals with how each person reacts and interacts with the marketplace in particular and the changes in society in general. The consequences of individual choices and actions are equally as important for consumer citizenship education. Thus, one can say that consumer citizenship education is basically concerned with the dialectics of the individual and modern society.

#### **Tuning Project**

The Consumer Citizenship Network initiated cooperation with the EU Tuning Project in 2004<sup>9</sup>. The Tuning project addresses several of the Bologna action lines for higher education in Europe, notably the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, the adoption of a system based on two cycles and the establishment of a system of credits. The Tuning methodology is intended to increase the harmonizing process of higher education in Europe by assisting institutions in identifying points of reference, convergence and common understanding. It does not seek to damage the diversity characteristic of European education nor to restrict the independence of academic specialists.

#### **Social needs**

Due to the fact that consumer citizenship education is still in its early stages of development and is not the core of specific degree awarding courses, the CCN chose to informally adapt as much of the Tuning methodology as possible, even though complete use of the entire methodology can not be accomplished at the present time. The first part of the Tuning Project concerns the identification of the needs of society in relation to the specific subject area. In the Tuning methodology these are defined by “employers and stakeholders” in society who regard students as a part of their future workforce. Consumer citizenship, however, trains students to function in relation to the global marketplace as critical, reflected consumers. It educates them to act as agents for change in the realm of civic participation. The social needs related

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<sup>9</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/TuningProject>  
<http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm>  
<http://www.let.rug.nl/Tuning Project/index.htm>

to consumer citizenship education must therefore be identified by social, natural and economic scientists in a larger context than merely that of potential employees. The CCN has concentrated on carrying out and collecting research about consumer citizenship since the network's start. Research has been completed and papers presented at international conferences while others have been and are being published.<sup>10</sup> As with numerous other sociological subject areas, there is ongoing controversy about the extent to which education can achieve significant attitudinal and behavioral change. At the same time there is a growing body of documentation indicating that students of consumer citizenship-related topics have altered their own habits and affected change in the larger arenas of political and corporate practices.

### **Learning competences**

The second step in the Tuning methodology is the identification of learning competences and outcomes. The Consumer Citizenship Network began this process by carrying out a questionnaire survey in October 2003 to which 93 institutions of higher education responded. A second, more specific survey was made in June 2004. Parallel to these surveys, the Academic Cooperation Association of Europe carried out, on behalf of the EU Commission's Directorate for Health and Consumer Protection, a similar curricula survey covering all institutions of higher education in Europe. The ACA survey did not include questions about citizenship or environmental education, only consumer protection education.

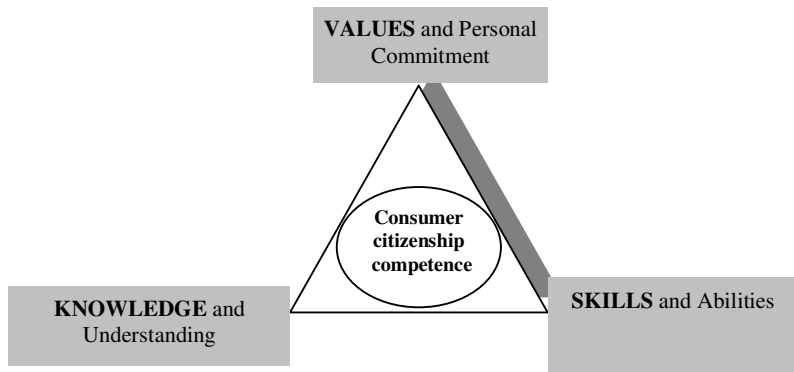
The results of these surveys were not sufficient for the establishment of a clear map of competences and outcomes connected to consumer citizenship education. It is evident that work on identifying generic and subject specific competences in this interdisciplinary subject area will take continued time and effort. The Consumer Citizenship Network has nonetheless compiled a tentative list which is included here in order to assist institutions of higher education in their efforts. The following list may be regarded as a kind of checklist or means of profiling what can be included in the totality of consumer citizenship education. The topics here can be used in the designing, planning and implementing of modules or courses on consumer citizenship education. An individual course can not be expected to cover all the mentioned topics.

Dividing teaching and learning goals into values, knowledge and skills has been the common approach to curriculum development for many years. Critique of this method is that it does not sufficiently indicate the dynamism of the learning process which constantly modifies previously acquired knowledge, values and skills. The following diagram describes the interaction of these elements in relation to consumer citizenship education.

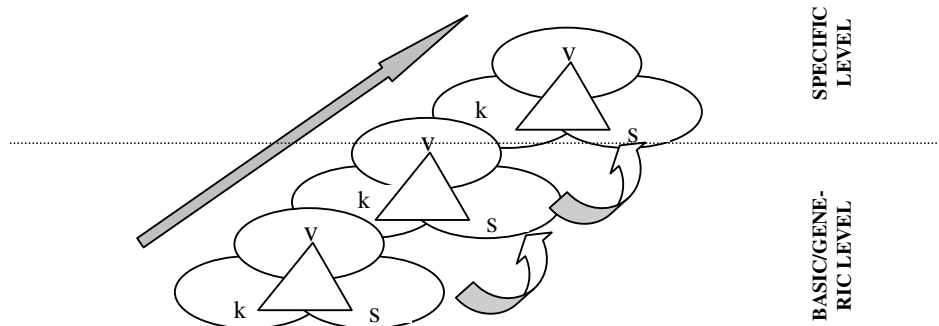
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<sup>10</sup> [http://fulltekst.bibsys.no/hihm/oppdragsrapport/2004/04/oppdrapp04\\_2004.pdf](http://fulltekst.bibsys.no/hihm/oppdragsrapport/2004/04/oppdrapp04_2004.pdf)

**A. Static View**



**B. Dynamic View**



K - Knowledge  
S - Skills  
V - Values

This model focuses on the three basic outputs which, when linked together, lead to sustainable competence in consumer citizenship. None is independent of the others (Model A), and it is the interaction among these that leads to sustainability of the learning process. The model suggests that during the process of citizenship education the student must (i) learn facts, knowledge, processes and procedures; (ii) learn new skills that are transferable to other situations; (iii) learn to behave in proactive manner; (iiii) learn to be responsible.

Bistra Vassileva, Varna University of Economics, Bulgaria

This set of guidelines for consumer citizenship education will use the Tuning categories of generic competences. “Competences” represent a dynamic combination of attitudes, abilities and attributes. Defining subject specific competences is at the moment premature, therefore, a list of subject specific topics is included instead.

## 2. What generic competences are to be learned?

### Ethical competences (values)

- Appreciation of nature
- Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism
- Concern for quality
- Concern for justice, peace and cooperation
- Appreciation of the interrelatedness of individuals and society

### Instrumental competences (personal)

- Capacity to learn
- Ability to reflect critically
- Ability to be self aware
- Capacity for empathy/compassion
- Ability to serve to others
- Ability to apply knowledge in practice
- Capacity to adapt to new situations
- Capacity for generating new ideas
- Ability to make critical, reflected decisions
- Ability to work autonomously
- Capacity for self motivation

### Interpersonal competences (organizational and communication skills)

- Information management skills
- Oral and written communication skills
- Ability to use logical reasoning and evidence
- Capacity for analysis and synthesis
- Research skills
- Capacity for innovation and entrepreneurial initiatives
- Ability to recognize global perspectives
- Ability to work in a team
- Leadership

### System competences (transferable skills)

- Planning and time management
- Electronic communication skills



### Who are these new consumers?

#### Bulgaria

The new powerful driving force in the economy is the emergence of consumers who use information far more intensively to meet their economic needs. These new consumers are influencing a spectrum of business and economic decisions and transforming a variety of societal precepts. In its simplest definition, the new consumer is someone who has higher educational qualifications than ever before; who lives in a household with discretionary income; and who has access to new information technologies. New consumers are replacing the "old" consumers, who tend to be less educated, less affluent, less informed, and less demanding in their purchasing activities. The new consumers are a heterogeneous social group, but they are more prepared to exercise foresight and caution.

Fani Uzunova, Technical University, Varna, Bulgaria

### **3. What subject specific topics are relevant?**

The courses which at present focus on consumer citizenship topics are those related to economics and business administration, home economics, consumer sciences, citizenship and civics, environmental education, sociology, psychology, mathematics (personal finances), health, agriculture, biotechnology, trade and commerce. Subject specific topics within consumer citizenship education are many and diverse. The following list is a composite selection of general themes of which the student should have some knowledge.

#### Life quality and lifestyles:

History of social development  
History of economic development  
Present social conditions  
Human needs and rights  
The symbolic roles of consumption  
Family responsibilities  
Civic involvement  
Social services  
Recycling, reusing, repairing products  
Alternative lifestyles

#### Consumerism

History of consumption  
Present consumption patterns  
Economics (basic knowledge of classical, humanistic and functional economical theories)  
Technology (particularly new technologies and consumption)

#### Personal finances

Savings, loans, investments  
Payment systems  
Contracts and obligations  
Employment, wages, pensions, taxation  
Financial instruments which guide purchasing (eco-tax ,vat, road taxes, tariffs)  
Financial services

#### Consumer rights and responsibilities

Laws and norms  
Agreements and contracts  
Ethical codes  
Local, national and international political systems  
Consumer protection policies  
Gender equality  
Transparency/accountability  
Complaints, redress, replacement, reimbursement  
Conflict resolution



### Advertising and persuasion

Media literacy  
Peer pressure  
Consumer behaviour

### Consumption and environment

Ecology, life cycles, ecological balance  
Eco-industry and design  
Water conservation  
Energy production and consumption  
Climate, soil and water protection  
Biodiversity  
Desertification  
Waste management

### Diet and nutrition

Health and illness  
HIV/AIDS  
Diabetes, fedme and sugar consumption  
Ecological, organic food

### Information

ICT and information handling  
Data based information systems (banks, libraries etc.)  
E-commerce  
Consumer support agencies  
E-democracy

### Safety

Product safety  
Labeling and quality control  
Genetically modified organisms

### International awareness

Global interdependence  
Production processes  
Trade, commerce, agriculture, land use  
Distribution of resources, poverty  
Multinational companies  
Corporate social responsibility  
Fair trade  
Tourism, eco-tourism

### Future perspectives

Sustainable development and particularly sustainable consumption  
Millennium Goals  
Alternative sources of energy  
World citizenship  
Ecologically friendly transport  
Precautionary principle

## C. Outcomes

### 1. *What* learning outcomes can be expected?

Learning outcomes stand in direct relationship to the generic competences and subject specific areas. When learning outcomes are described for professional training, the outcomes are usually concrete and easily identifiable. A surgeon should be able to carry out a medical operation; a policeman should be able to uphold the law. A consumer citizen, however, should per definition: be an individual who makes choices based on ethical, social, economic and ecological considerations. The consumer citizen should actively contribute to the maintenance of just and sustainable development by caring and acting responsibly on family, national and global levels.

Simply put, the basic outcomes of consumer citizenship education could be defined as:

- knowledge of one's rights and responsibilities as citizens, consumers and workers.
- skills to function as informed and reflected consumers and citizens.
- socially responsible behaviour including:
  - ✓ Critical awareness;
  - ✓ Action and involvement;
  - ✓ Social responsibility;
  - ✓ Ecological responsibility;
  - ✓ Global solidarity.

Another way of describing expected learning outcomes is:

#### **Attitudinal outcomes:**

fairness, tolerance, respect (for oneself and others and for gender, religion, ethnic and cultural diversity), empathy, sense of responsibility and service to others, caring, commitment, optimism, global solidarity, integrity.

#### **Cognitive:**

- realization of the complexity and often controversial nature of consumer citizenship issues
- knowledge of the market system and the role of business
- insight into the practicalities of both the supply and demand sides of production and consumption and their outside-of-the-market relationships to community development (their common input into the whole society's sustainable economic and social well-being and growth)
- insight into how the individual influences social, economic and environmental development
- awareness of a commodity's intangible and symbolic characteristics
- knowledge of how the production processes are linked to the consumption system
- knowledge of one's rights and responsibilities as a consumer and as a citizen

- tacit knowledge of social networks responsible for shaping consumption patterns (peer pressure, status, etc)
- explicit knowledge of networks supporting the marketing chain of commodity flows and the interaction of pricing mechanisms with the consumer's attitudes and behaviour.
- consciousness of the civil society and its power to propose alternative ways of thinking and acting
- individual and collective understanding of consumer social responsibility in relation to the corporate social responsibility
- familiarity with the use of knowledge resources for business's and individual' collaborative involvement into community development programmes

**Behavioural:**

- compassion
- generosity
- social cooperation ( reducing the demand for products reducing the demand for transport ,promoting decentralised, flexible forms of organisation , etc)
- constructive social activism
  - change initiation and management
- maintenance and preservation of nature (recycling, reusing, renewing products and resources (reducing the need for new))
- proper money management
- well-reflected choices in the marketplace
- global solidarity
- use alternative energy sources
- ability to access, evaluate and use information
- communication
- ability to work in an interdisciplinary and holistic manner

*Goods assembled together in ownership make physical, visible statements about the hierarchy of values to which their chooser subscribes. Goods can be cherished or judged inappropriate, discarded and replaced. Unless we appreciate how they are used to constitute an intelligible universe, we will never know how to resolve the contradictions of our economic life*

*(Douglas and Isherwood 1978)*

## D. Methodology

### 1. *How* can consumer citizenship education be taught?

Although different approaches to teaching consumer citizen education are presented in this chapter, there are some basic didactic principles which characterize them all. These principles emphasize the development of action competence rather than teaching methods which focus on the mere transferral of factual and normative instructions to the learners. The intention of these underlying principles is that the student should not only gain knowledge but also be empowered to act, to function responsibly in everyday life. A few of the most important principles are:

- Problem orientation; coping with real problems
- Action orientation; dialectics between action and reflection
- Facilitation of student's active participation, critical and creative thinking
- Facilitation of co-operation and dialogue with other agents; in order to develop action competence and in order to facilitate a transgression of the student's own lifeworld experiences.
- Confrontation of the local and global perspectives
- Dialectical/dynamic thinking; focus on contradictions (as tensions), dilemmas, ambivalences and ways of coping with them.<sup>11</sup>

The abovementioned principles find expression through activities within the following main categories:

1. Curriculum modifications
2. Staff responsibilities
3. Methodology
4. Student involvement

#### **Curriculum modifications**

In some universities and colleges an expert group has been organized to screen the courses which are taught and to offer ideas as to how the content can be adjusted to the requirements of consumer citizenship. Other institutions of higher education have appointed a teacher with special responsibility for consumer citizenship. This teacher works in cooperation with the other teachers and arranges interdisciplinary, cross curricular modules and activities. Together the teachers plan strategies dealing with which topics each teacher is in charge of and how the connections between them can be highlighted. This kind of teamwork enables institutions to more easily maintain an overview over what topics actually are covered and which are not ( due to time schedule overloads or other problems).

Another curriculum modification which has proven successful has been to devote significant parts of practical teacher training to consumer citizenship topics. This has

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<sup>11</sup> Jeppe Læssøe, Danish Pedagogical University

been done, for example, by choosing a relevant, overall, “umbrella” theme for projects which student teachers have to carry out during their practice teaching. An important element in this approach is that time is allotted for presentation by each student to their fellow students of the work they have done. Such presentations bring into the foreground the connectedness of the different aspects (as seen through varying disciplines) of the same general consumer citizenship related theme.

The format of interdisciplinary workshops/seminars has also proven useful as it provides a forum for searching for common solutions through cross curricular discussions. Planning and carrying out such seminars in an intra-institutional or intra-regional context adds even greater opportunities to present similarities and contrasts surrounding the topics of focus.

Research and development work is an integral part of staff work in institutions of higher education. Some institutions have encouraged staff to do research and development work on topics within the field of consumer citizenship. Similarly, final thesis can be assigned on consumer citizenship topics.

Below are two examples of curricula. The first is based on staff participation from a wide variety of different disciplines. The second reflects cooperation between two specific subject areas.

Φ	Needs and desires
Norway	
<u>Consumption in the past and present</u>	
Students should become acquainted with the positive and negative definitions of consumption throughout history and the connections between consumption and changes in society. They should look in more detail at the conditions during the age of “mass consumption” (1945-2000). Students should work with the following themes: human rights, life quality and fundamental needs, development of technology and media, sustainable development, eradication of poverty, and the debate on the limits to growth. They should identify which ethical norms and values form the basis for “conscientious consumption” which can contribute to a change of direction in which environmental and social development are given priority. Students should be expected to have a general understanding of central concepts and processes connected to personal, national and international consumption in relation to sustainable development. They should have a basic knowledge of the different central schools of economic thinking such as the classical, neoclassical, humanistic and Marxist theories of economy. They should become acquainted with some of the transformations which occurred in society due to market economies based on reciprocity, redistribution and free market systems. Students should also know about the differences between feudalism, mercantilism, industrialism, and super industrialism. They should also consider how basic needs and definitions of life quality have altered through out the centuries.	
<u>Making choices – practical and ethical aspects of making choices as a consumer</u>	
Being able to choose between several alternatives is a skill which is needed in all aspects of life. As a consumer it is necessary to be able to pose relevant questions and master the art of making decisions. Students should learn about the external factors effecting choice making (social, political, economic, ecological and technological) as well as the personal factors effecting choice making (values, ambitions, resources, age, health, civil status, needs and desires, and lifestyle). In addition the decision making process itself should be examined. This involves the process from the act of collecting information to the evaluation of the consequences of the decisions which are made. Students should be able to express what values direct our choices and be able to describe what they themselves consider to be high life quality. The students should be aware of the role of the media in society and be able to identify advertising and understand the difference between information and advertisements. They should be capable of recognizing how the media creates different lifestyle models which reflect distinct gender roles and physical ideals. Students are expected to be able to carry out basic critical analysis of commercial pictures, messages and language use. In addition they should be acquainted	

with the role electronic media (such as tv, video, computers, etc) play in transferring information and entertainment. They should be able to use electronic information services in a reflected and critical manner. In connection with choices in the marketplace, students should be able to compare prices and evaluate quality. They should be aware in general of how consumption affects the environment.

#### Managing resources – planning, using and protecting resources

Sustainable human development is a central goal of the global society according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This means managing resources in a way which makes it possible for all people to participate in forming their own lives. Ecological considerations, economic reciprocity, cooperation and equal market opportunities, so that fundamental material and non-material needs can be met, are central factors in managing resources on the international level. The responsibility for managing resources encompasses planning, using and maintaining the resources which each individual has at his/her disposition in their private lives and in relation to the world community's collective life. The ability to set goals and see the connection between ends and means is essential to resource management. Other practical sides to resource management which should be examined include: budgeting, saving, investing, taxes, and fees. Resource management involves capacity to protect and care for resources through effective control, maintenance, re-usage, and replacement. Students should be able to recognize relationships between the economy of the society and that of the individual household and the importance of planning their personal economy. They should be able to set up a budget, keep basic accounts and use modern technology such as data based bank and library services. The participants should be able to acquire information on what consequences consumption has for the environment and be acquainted with central consumer protection laws. Resource management also involves realising the need for safety controls and the students are expected to recognize safety precautions and be acquainted with safety equipment for children.

#### Solving problems – diverse strategies for conflict resolution for the consumer

The criteria for coexistence and cooperation between people are based on cultural norms and, in a state governed by law, through laws and regulations. There are numerous informal and formal ways of solving problems between individuals, between organisations or businesses, between regions and countries. Good communication is a prerequisite for conflict resolution as well as knowledge of local customs and what rights a person has and which responsibilities he/she has. Consumer citizenship should deal with conflict resolution in general and in particular in relation to consumer related situations such as product safety, liability, compensation, redress and restitution. Students should be acquainted with consumer rights and responsibilities and the central laws governing these. They should be aware of the elementary rules regulating finance and forms of payment in the household. This includes debt control and debt assistance. Students should know where to seek help and advice in financial conflicts. They are expected to be able to decipher labels on products, particularly in relation to safety. In addition students should have a basic knowledge of how international trade laws influence our rights and responsibilities as consumers.

#### Contributing to the future – change management and social involvement

Being able to deal with the challenges of daily living is important, but it is not sufficient in a world in constant modification. As citizens in a democratic social system, be it local, national or global, it is our responsibility to participate in constructing the future. It is necessary to be conscious of the need for change and of how different processes occur. It is also essential to develop critical thinking, creativity and active participation in influencing systems and initiating change. This means that the students need to know how to get and interpret scientific information and learn how to express their opinions for others. They need to know how to find the acceptable channels for creating changes. Consumer citizenship education should deal with the individual's and society's responsibility for participating in changes which have as their goal improved human development. Students should be able to define what they consider to be high quality of life and identify the values which they mean will direct lifestyle choices leading to such a life quality in the future. At the same time they should be expected to cooperate on the task of preventing environmental damage as much as possible from households, transport, agriculture and industry. The students should have a reflected attitude to their lifestyle choices and continuously develop knowledge about the consequences these choices have on a sustainable future. This includes being aware of the existence of and being able to participate in discussions about alternative economic systems. Students should be expected to develop the ability not only to envision alternative futures but to create reasonable paths of action leading to these.

Victoria W. Thoresen, Hedmark University College, Norway



## The power of consumer education

### Malta

AIMS: Students will be able:

1. To recognize the importance of the role played by the consumer.
2. To evaluate consumer protection and consumer rights on a national/European level.
3. To assess the importance of consumer education in schools.
4. To develop ways of educating the consumer through Home Economics or other cross-curricular means.
5. To assess the psychological pressures enforced on consumers by advertising and manufacturers, salespersons, etc.

CONTENT:

1. Consumer Rights
2. Consumer Education - ways and means in schools
3. Advertising and the Consumer - with particular emphasis on young children as targets
4. Common Situations and Problems
5. Labelling - Shopping Wisely
6. Buying Healthy and Safely
7. The Green Consumer
8. Consumer Credit
9. Resources and Materials in the Classroom
10. Conclusions

Example unit: Family Resource Management

Unit Objectives:

Following this unit students will be able to:

- a) evaluate the various resources available to family units and outline their contribution to a 'better quality of life' keeping in mind the local and global implications of such resource management.
- b) analyse and appreciate factors affecting management of resources (values, goals and standards, decision-making styles, etc...).
- c) outline and evaluate various family resource management frameworks
- d) manage better their own human and non-human resources and transmit these skills to their future students.

Unit Description:

This unit outlines various concepts and frameworks in the management of family resources. It then focuses on the changing perspectives and the re-orientation of family resource management in order to empower individuals and families to manage their resources within changing local and global contexts. Discussion then evolves around the use and interdependence of human and non-human resources to satisfy the basic needs of individuals and families.

Content:

1. Definition of family resource management and an exposition of the various family resource management frameworks. The role of Family resource Management is outlined.
2. Factors affecting the management of resources.
3. The changing perspectives and re-orientation of Family Resource Management.
4. Human resources and non-human resources: the management of
  - a) Time use
  - b) Stress
  - c) Household work and Human energy
  - d) Human energy: improving work place
  - e) Economics resources
  - f) Environmental resources.

Example of unit: Managing Personal and Family Finance

Unit Objectives:

Following this unit students will be able to:

- a) determine means of income for the individual or a family unit.
- b) outline and discuss the need and importance of budgeting.
- c) plan effective financial plans for families and individuals with different income levels and at different stages of the life cycle.
- d) evaluate the different saving and investment schemes available locally and overseas, including insurance schemes, assurances and private pension schemes.
- e) outline different banking services offered by local commercial banks.
- f) explain the role and functions of the Malta Stock Exchange and stockbrokers.
- g) identify debt management and repayment schemes.

Unit Description:

This unit focuses on the development of effective financial plans, for different individual and family situations. The need to plan for short-term and long-term financial security including retirement will be discussed. The increasing variety of savings and investment schemes will be outlined and the need to manage investments throughout the different stages of the life cycle will be emphasised. Easily obtainable credit facilities as well as the pressures and influences leading to debt and the effect on different family members will be discussed. The management and repayment of debts will also be discussed.

Introduction. Means of personal family income. Classification of income.

1. Budgeting and developing effective financial plans.
2. Saving money and planning for financial security
3. Using credit wisely.
4. Debt
5. Financial planning for retirement years
6. Banking services available.

Karen Mugliett, The University of Malta

### **Staff responsibilities**

Consumer citizenship education is a part of the shift of paradigm from staff oriented education to student centred approaches. Traditional “frontal” lectures are not considered to be the most advantageous method of teaching consumer citizenship. Dialogue between the teacher and the students as well as between the students themselves is essential. This means encouraging open discussion which allows the expression of conflicting opinions. Controversial issues are not always easy to handle but should not be avoided. When appropriate, the students’ prejudices should even be challenged.

To begin with, the teachers should try to involve the students in planning the learning process. This can be done by initiating reflection over which consumer citizenship related issues the students find relevant to their lives. Mapping the students’ knowledge, experience and expectations creates a useful platform for organising the subsequent teaching and learning processes. Questionnaires, mind maps and interviews are helpful.

Experimental, participatory, cooperative learning should be given a significant portion of the course time and this requires that the teacher spend some time and energy making preparations. There are several categories of preparations. One concerns the accumulation of background information (printed, web-based, audio-visual, etc). Collecting, sorting and disseminating relevant information is a



demanding task. But it is not only the teacher who does this. Learning to access, evaluate and use information is a part of consumer citizenship which students must learn through hands-on activities. Project work, small research assignments, case studies, and product analysis are methods which involve the handling of information. It is, however, the responsibility of the teacher to work with the institution's library or mediatek to make sure that reference material is available.

Another form of preparation which is the teacher's responsibility has to do with developing contact with governmental organisations (such as consumer protection councils), civil society interest organisations (such as civic and environmental groups), and business organisations (such as chambers of commerce). These and other organisations can offer information, reference materials, opportunities for student's to visit or to do internship, and they can assist in arranging fieldtrips/site visits. Guest speakers can be invited from some of these organisations or students can interview them directly.

Training, information, field trips, games and other activities are not a matter of decoration or simply a way of drawing attention to the phenomena that create social or environmental problems. It is also necessary in each process, in each type of activity, to include strategies that motivate the students to taking personal action (helping them choose to buy and live with ecological issues in mind) and group action, influencing decisions, making a stand against contaminating phenomena, and becoming socially committed towards the environment. Simply being aware is not enough if no action is taken.<sup>12</sup>

One more challenge which the teachers of consumer citizenship education face is that of moralizing or paternalizing. Without freedom and the process of using one's own judgement, there are no citizens. To be a citizen is to act on values and causes which one believes in, using the rights and possibilities of citizenship. Public policy dealing with consumers has a long tradition of paternalism. Different agencies with different agendas are often convinced that they know what is best for the consumer, best for society and the common good. The problem seems to be one of exercising influence through the use of educational and legislative power. This can be dangerous for many reasons. History shows that many agendas hide inside attempts to alter consumer behaviour for the benefit of a national producer or the most powerful lobbyist. The paternalist problem is serious in the consumer area, because of the low level of organization and institutional representation of consumers, and the tradition of paternalistic practice. A guideline for dealing with this problem is to avoid having a passive attitude, and instead maintaining active respect for the student. Give information, argue for the values one considers most important and admit that you are talking to actors, stakeholders, to consumer citizens who in the long run will have to make their own decisions.

One more influence on students by the teacher's own attitudes needs to be mentioned here. This concerns the teacher's approach to the problems of world in general and to consumer citizenship specifically. If the teacher is convinced that the future of humankind is unavoidably dark and that nothing can be done to change things, then

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<sup>12</sup> Nieves Álvarez Martín, European School of Consumers, Santander Spain

pessimism will colour the pedagogical process. Giving space to encouragement and optimism in the learning process provides a significant incentive for the acquisition of action competences.

The teacher is also responsible for choosing the evaluation criteria and methods. The evaluation itself can be carried out in collaboration with the students using self-evaluation, peer evaluation and other evaluation methods.

Sharing with colleagues the experiences of teaching consumer citizenship can prove to be an inspiration and help to others. This has been done in different ways in varying institutions of higher education. Some contribute to national journals, newsletters, or websites. Others offer reports at conferences, seminars and staff meetings. One relatively simple way of raising awareness about the importance of consumer citizenship is by including one's institution's website links to local/national consumer information agencies so that staff and students will have easy access.

#### ☐ Optimistic and pessimistic views of the consumer

##### Norway

There is fundamental disagreement about how consumer should be regarded. The most usual view of the consumer is simple and pessimistic. In the role of a consumer, people will mainly show and nurture values of ego-orientation and hedonism. From this simple assumption the consumer is seen to be easy to manipulate by commercial actors as long as they stick to promises of individual instant happiness. Critique of over-consumption, environmental problems, sexual harassment of women in advertisements and cultural and political decline often assume such a pessimistic picture of the consumer.

Both classical marxist and some modern marketing people have developed theories of the consumer as a kind of puppet. The consumer's behaviour and values are found in the structures they belong to, their class background, district, family and education. When all factors are taken into account, there is not much of interest left. This structural approach has had strong position in many social sciences and comes in several strengths and variants.

Both these positions seem pessimistic, with most of the explanatory factors lying outside the consumers. The next two positions are both more optimistic and more centered on factors inside consumers. The first one concerns taking up the challenge of postmodernism. Here the consumers have no special values in their core, but they are actors in a fast-moving presentation of themselves where the main point is to have an individual and new project. The fundamental trait of modern consumers may be the individual longing for the authentic, the "self" and the genuine products and values in addition to the processes around fashions and changes in all areas.

And finally the most optimistic perspective sees the consumer as basically a subject, an actor for values and politics. The basic level is that of the processes in the daily life where the role of being a consumer is put into the struggle for love, the care for family and the project of forming an authentic self and family representing values and tastes one has chosen. On a more collective level the consumer behaviour will also be guided by ambitions and values regarding society. And on both these levels the idea and feeling of being a (responsible) actor has a significant value of its own.

A definite conclusion about which view is most valid since each perspective has both theories and data to support it. They may even all be simplifications of a complicated world.

Thor Øyvind Jensen, University of Bergen, Norway



## Working with a staged plan in value-based education

### Belgium

The process of coming to a well-balanced opinion and a sound decision typically involves asking oneself a number of important questions the answers before any decision can be made. To take the all important factors into account, you have to answer the questions one by one. Such a staged plan or scheme is a practical aid and does not automatically provide standard solutions. It prevents rushing into things or doing things which later will be regretted. Such a scheme forces people to stop and strip the problems they are emotionally involved in of their tension, by systematically analysing them and looking at them from different angles.

Moreover, with such a scheme, you can explain to others why you have come to certain conclusions and made a specific decision and rather than another. It enables a person to become answerable to himself for his own actions. People are explicitly required to translate their decision making process into words and to justify a number of choices they usually make from a personal or professional point of view, because these justifications often remain unspoken. Putting your rationale into words gives a clear indication of how you have handled your freedom and responsibility. At the same time, a staged plan also offers a structure in which decisions are made together with other people, because in a work environment important decisions are seldom made by a single person, but rather by teams. This can take quite a lot of deliberation and discussion.

The following four-stage plan covers the decision making process and ends in the assessment of the whole process. The staged scheme presented below is based on several other staged plans that can be found in the literature, including those of Ebskamp and Kroon (1990), De Jonghe (1995) and especially Houdart (1997)... I would like to point out that, in order to have a satisfactory ethical discussion several preconditions have to be fulfilled. In this case satisfactory does not mean ideal or unanimous, but rather a discussion and an outcome that all participants can live with; i.e. a discussion that invites people to move on. An essential precondition is to be able and to be willing to speak freely. A second precondition is that the participants know which discussions they can and cannot have. At the end of the process I have included a mandatory assessment stage. This is a necessary stage but it does not necessarily have to take place immediately after the decision making process is finished. Indeed, it will often prove more productive if there has been some 'time to reflect' before assessing.

#### *The four stage plan*

*Stage 1: What are the facts and whose interests are at stake?*

*Stage 2: What are the alternatives?*

*Stage 3: What is the conclusion?*

*Stage 4: How to carry out the decision?*

#### Evaluation and reflection

Henk Goovaerts, Faculty for Social Work and Special Education, Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg (Association Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Belgium



## Don Quixotes of modern society

Civil society organisations consisting of “concerned citizens” have long been referred to as the Don Quixote’s of modern society. However, as Mats Karlsson (1995) states, “Ngo’s have revolutionary potential”. Indeed their efforts have transformed the role of the worker, given the vote to women, and modified many practices around the globe. Nonetheless they face the challenges of reorientation and remodelling as well. Some are one-issue, marginal groups which lack sufficient accountability. Others are emotionally lead reactionary groups rejecting scientific support. The great majority have committed themselves to channelling civic activism into constructive efforts for change. This has required a delicate balance between autonomy and cooperation with government and market. Especially in relation to consumer issues and consumer agencies the dilemma of independence has been a difficult one to deal with. One alternative in use some places is to secure more open and reciprocal channels of communication which would allow civil society organizations to contribute to envisioning goals, providing alternatives and information about consequence-analysis. A prerequisite for this is increased collaboration with research and education. Civil society organizations can press into the mainstream research on consumer issues related to sustainable human development. They can raise the profile of issues which might otherwise be ignored. Most importantly, civil society organizations can fill the role of being a supplement, not an alternative to political involvement or legislation.

Victoria W. Thoresen, Hedmark University College, Norway



## Network Education

### The Netherlands

#### *Inviting stakeholders in to the classroom*

Networking learning is a new and rewarding concept in teaching students on professional university level (BSc – level). HAS Den Bosch (Agricultural University of Professional Education) in The Netherlands developed the concept. What you need first is insight in the passions and motivations of the students (and teachers!). How do they look at the world, what are their dreams, who are their heroes, what kind of lifestyles do they prefer? Within school students (and teachers) are encouraged to form multidisciplinary working/projectgroups. So, in this way, an internal network of key-figures and supporters is established. The dream they want to fulfil, or the sustainable problems they want to solve (i.e. problem-based education) needs to be translated into a real-life, encouraging and workable project (i.e. project-based education).

Stakeholders in the region, with whom HAS Den Bosch has close contacts, are encouraged to act as an assignment giver for the projects, or bring in sustainable problems they would like to have solved by HAS students and teachers. In this way, the external network, in a public-private agreement, is coming into action. The external network – the assignment givers – have to pay for the work done by students and teachers in the project. But the money earned by students is given a Social Responsible destination. The student earned money is put into a study fund. The study fund is financing their study/field/exchange trips to Second and Third World countries. In future the fund will make it also possible for poor Third World students to come over to Holland to study at HAS Den Bosch and have a BSc-degree.

Students (and teachers alike!) learn a lot from this concept. Not only their knowledge about sustainable development is improving, but – more important – their skills and attitudes are developed in a rewarding and encouraging way (i.e. competences- based education).

Important “sustainable” competences are:

- a broad view on global issues and a sense for other cultures and insights,
- social responsible entrepreneurship,
- client, market and network orientation
- creativity and innovation
- project management skills

Up to 20/30% of the students involved in this concept have changed their lifestyle, behaviour and

attitude for ever. They go further in dept in their practical period and look for jobs in which they can further practise the above mentioned competences. They have become the real "change agents" of this world.

Peter van der Baan, HAS Den Bosch, The Netherlands, [BaP@hasdb.nl](mailto:BaP@hasdb.nl)

## Methodology

As with most topics, consumer citizenship issues deserve to be analyzed by:

- 1) identifying the problem/condition/challenge;
- 2) recognizing the immediate causes
- 3) finding the underlying causes
- 4) clarifying the principles/values guiding action
- 5) considering initiatives for change
- 6) reflecting on immediate effects
- 7) reflecting on long term effects

There are ways of carrying out this process which can make the learning process relevant and interesting. Some examples are given her:

- *Project learning*: Project learning, either individually or in groups, is a means of involving students actively in the learning process.

- *Collection of cases*: Investigation of creative scenarios and alternative solutions which are available within or outside the students' neighbourhood brings experiences into the classroom. As with project learning it is not enough to merely identify the cases. It is essential that they be examined and reflected over.

- *Publish*: Results of project work, case work etc. can be useful tools for other staff and students.

- *Showcase*: Exhibiting what has been done so far, giving positive models, success stories, best practices etc. is another important tool for sharing the learning process with others. It also helps the students' describe their findings and thereby often gain better insight themselves.

- *Invert analysis*: Students can be requested to consider the cost to society (expenses which are being paid by every person for the negative consequences) of actions in the market based on uninformed and unaware consumer behaviour.

- *Changing perspective*: Exercises where students are asked to identify an argument or standpoint about consumer citizenship related topics which is the opposite of their own. They should be topic from this "opposing perspective".

- *Role playing*: Expose students to situations where there is a conflict of interest - the closing of a village school or post office, the erection of a mobile phone mast. Then distribute the roles of the involved stakeholders.

- *Examine court cases*: Documentation of cases brought by the consumers against the companies and the consequent verdicts provide a basis for further analysis and discussion.

- *Test specific products*: physically, as well as in terms of the social and economic claims and impacts the product has. This leads to reality-based risk assessment and management

- *Carry out practical consumer citizenship work at the university/college*: Focus on for example, energy use, waste disposal, transport, pollution, recycling, reusing, etc. Initiate changes if necessary.

- *Field trips*: On site learning is an especially valuable way of developing consumer citizenship awareness. For example: Visit a product testing laboratory, advertising

firm, dumping ground, garbage heaps, renovation plants, recycling companies, water cleaning systems, ecological farms and transport businesses, etc.

-*Use the media*: Search the local and national newspapers, radio or tv reports for real case histories.

- *Expose the global connections*: Document the production processes of products and services by examining their global connections from social, economical and environmental angles.

- *Use music*: Music and songs are an important part of commercial world. They can also be a valuable part of the learning process as means of describing either dilemmas, information or suggested solutions.

- *Oral histories*: Collect sociological data by asking the man on the street or one's own extended family about consumer citizenship issues.

- *Stimulate imagination and creativity*: "Fantasy journeys" to "utopias" then compare the descriptions to the statistics available on the different aspects in one's present real society.

- *Future workshops*- a learning workshop which enables the students to recognize important issues and by means of games, fantasy, visualising, drawing and discussing in order to gain greater self awareness as to their own attitudes to these issues. Future workshops provide not only cognitive knowledge but the opportunity to deal with emotions and attitude modification.

- *Create "mock ups"*: Drafts such as a *painting, a collage, a play or performance* – using all the creative possibilities of expression to describe the issue being focused on.

- *Map alternative solutions* Consumer-related problems do not have only one correct answer. The students should have the opportunity to find different solutions, consider pros and cons, state the reasons both orally and written, and try out the solutions as much as possible.

-*Strategic questioning* Strategic questioning is a form of thinking about change. Change is often accompanied by a range of uncomfortable emotions, including denial, fear and resistance. However, change also provides opportunities for new ideas to emerge. Strategic questioning assists the integration of new ideas and strategies into the development of individuals and communities in such a way that people can feel comfortable.



Portugal

### Commercial persuasion

Here are some suggestions for panel discussions, radio interviews, and articles for newspapers. Does the citizen have the right to "commercial free zones"? How can this be guaranteed? Should there be legislation which limits marketing to children and young people of lifestyles characterized by, among other things, excessive sugar consumption, insufficient time for sleeping and use of addictive substances? Is there any value in keeping natural and cultural areas free from audio, visual or other forms of advertising?



Estonia

### Controversial issues

Debate such questions as: Should the vending machine selling crisps and coke be removed from the educational institution's premises? Should it be possible to purchase ecologically grown food in the cafeteria? Can fruits be served instead of cakes at meetings? Should game machines be removed from general public places to enclosed areas and the age and conditions of those who use them monitored?



### Financial literacy

Germany

Examples of some existing programmes of financial literacy: the Individual Development Account, where learning is associated with subsidies for savings; games in which capital market investments lead to real gains through additional inputs by banks; start-up programmes which are linked to access to low interest loans; school programmes in which children can use direct bank facilities for their own benefit at school; education for over-indebted persons giving certain advantages to programme participants.



### Photographic safari

Spain

Today digital pictures abound. Many students have their own mobile cell phones with built-in cameras. Merely asking students to go out and observe and photograph an environment is in itself necessarily conducive to learning. However, a well-prepared session in which the students have in advance identified the specifics of what they are looking for can set the stage for valuable documentation of immediate conditions. Once pictures have been collected, sufficient time should be allowed for individual and collective reflection, sorting and presentation. Examples of topics for which photographic documentation can be a useful tool: shelter and housing, street safety, deceitful advertising, product labelling, public services.



### A prize for the best student project

Slovakia

Provide the possibility to cooperate with a student from another country and to work together either face to face or via internet. Their own experiences are very important. Students should tell about what happened and other students will refer how they would react in such situation. Then they should summarize all positives and negatives. They can analyse various situations from long and short term impact to their life, environment, society, and the world. Presentation in front of representatives of the educational institution and consumer organizations



### Consumer rights relay

Austria

Consumer rights are written on pieces of paper (one on each piece) and placed on walls/boards around the department/institution/seminar locality. A large sheet of paper entitled, "Consumer Rights" is placed at a central location. Students can work individually or in teams. They are requested to try and find all the sheets with the various consumer rights written on them, bring them back to the central location, categorize them, and stick them onto the large sheet as a display and write a comment to each right they have collected.

Ingeborg Schettle, Graz, Austria



### A practical evaluation of care homes for the elderly

England

Young people need clear objectives that they can understand, that are relevant to their own lives. For example, personal concern over the health of an infirm and elderly grandmother can lead to a practical evaluation of care homes in the locality coupled with an appraisal of society's attitude to old age - and who should bear the cost of supporting older people. Particularly for less able students, it is always essential to be able to answer the question, "What's the point?" Teachers have to be opportunist and in tune with their students and draw out relevant experiences, sensitively and tactfully.



### Finding jokes

Spain

Humour, as expressed in jokes and sarcasm, often reflects social norms, pressures and criticism. Humour often deals with issues which are awkward to address directly or which have become so deeply ingrained in the culture that they are assumed to be “natural” or “inherent”. An enjoyable and interesting exercise is to have students collect jokes and humorous remarks on topics related to consumer citizenship. Once the collections have been made and the contexts documented, it is valuable to have a discussion about the reasons for and the implications of the remarks. Do they provide any insights into modern values and lifestyle choices? Are there any jokes or remarks which can contribute constructively to increasing the awareness of the consumer so he/she becomes more critically aware? Examples of topics for which this exercise can be suitable: health, product safety, global solidarity, corporate social responsibility, ostentatious consumption, debt and overextension, fraud and identity theft.

## ⌌ Strategic questioning

### USA/Canada

Six families of questions are used in strategic questioning. These move from introductory documentation questions through to more dynamic and reflective questions. These question families are:

- Observation questions
- Feelings/affective questions
- Visioning questions
- Change questions
- Personal inventory and support questions
- Personal action questions

#### Observation questions

- What is the issue that concerns you now?
- What are the three main things you know about it?
- How did you learn these things?
- Is this information you can trust?

#### Feelings/affective questions

- How do you feel about this topic/issue?
- How has this issue affected your physical or emotional health (that you know of)?
- What sensations do you feel in your body when you think or talk about this topic/issue?

#### Visioning questions

- What is the meaning of this issue in your own life?
- How could this issue be addressed/changed so that it would be as yu wish it to be?

#### Change questions

- What will it take to bring the current situation towards the ideal?
- What exactly needs to be changed here?
- How might these changes come about? Name as many ways as possible.

#### Personal inventory and support questions

- What would it take for you to participate in the change?
- What would you like to do that might be useful in bringing about these changes?
- What support would you need to work for this change?

#### Personal action questions

- Whom do you need to talk to?
- How can you get others to work on this issue?

Fran Peavy, *Creating our common future*, 2000

*We need more examples to show that we have the means to apply the cleaner production concept, to let consumers make*



*informed choices and to demand and provide environmental information*  
(Worldwatch Institute, State of World 2004).

### **Student involvement**

*Students' experiences:* The students' own experiences can be used as a frame of reference for many learning activities. This is a good starting point, but requires sensitivity on the part of the teacher. There cannot be intrusive ferreting into students' private affairs. The experiences must come voluntarily from them.

*Identifying their own case studies:* Students should be encouraged to themselves identify relevant topics and cases which then could be analyzed in smaller work groups which could also suggest problem solutions.

*Creation of consumer magazine* for their coevals

*Creating student clubs* for consumers citizenship

*Initiating consumer citizenship competitions and games*

*Developing personal indicators* of responsible, sustainable lifestyles. Creation of personal "report cards".

*Traineeship or voluntary service* in the companies or organizations

*Participation* in Youth Parliaments or have as a local council member.

Be trained and function as *student counsellors* to deal with situations like gun culture, bullying, drug and alcohol abuse.

#### ■ *"Is the Future Yours?"*

##### UNESCO

Research done by UNESCO on sustainable consumption. The project entitled: "Is the Future Yours?" was a survey of 10,000 middle class youth, 18-25 years old, living in 24 countries around the world. Responses indicated that young people have a relatively clear understanding of the social and environmental impact when they use and dispose of commodities, but they almost never consider environmental pollution or social implications linked to the manufacturing of the products they buy. Furthermore only 11% of those asked saw any connection between their food and clothes purchases and damage to the environment. Interesting enough, eco-friendliness was the most important motivating factor behind purchase behavior for youth from Cameroon (64%) and Kenya (40%), others considered price, quality and trendiness as more important. UNESCO, "Is the Future Yours", Paris, 2001

#### ■ **Ways to Get Out Your Message**

Distribute or post fliers

Distribute fact-based postal sized cards in public places or on windshields

Put up political signs on lawns and in home windows

Paint murals on walls which permit painting

Do a billboard or bus shelter display--place political messages on cards, mugs, calendars, scratchpads, stationary, order forms/invoices, business cards, matchbooks, etc.

Write letters to the editor or "chronicals" for newspapers

Take part in "speakout editorials" on local tv/radio

Have friends and acquaintances write letters

Insert cartoons, newsclippings, brief articles in correspondence

Place notices, articles, ads, inserts, classifieds, in church, club, or school newspapers, newsletters, or

"trading post" publications

Call/write elected officials  
 Get a newspaper to take up the issue in a political column  
 Utilize electronic mail/bulletin boards/home pages/blogs to organize, and to get word out to activists  
 Get local radio stations to sponsor music-related political events (concerts, dances, festivals)  
 Call radio talk shows  
 Prepare a public service announcement  
 Hold press conference with public figures  
 Present programs on public access TV  
 Have speakers give talks or show videos/films at service clubs, churches, schools, etc.  
 Give materials to schools and churches  
 Get a church to become involved in the particular concerns  
 Prepare pictorial or other displays for libraries, schools, museums, etc.  
 Set up literature boxes at schools, hospitals and other public places where allowed  
 Get local libraries to have a display or book collection on the issue  
 Seek the window/floor space of a business for displays  
 Stage unusual (but legal) events  
 Sponsor teams  
 Regularly send relevant materials and ideas to local media  
 Start a topical essay or poetry contest  
 Contact community or government officials  
 Stage community forums or debates  
 Have neighborhood potlucks and informal discussions  
 Perform street theater  
 Canvass a neighborhood  
 Have a table/booth in public places (malls, flea markets, street corners) to distribute literature Arrange  
 a parade or make a float for a parade  
 Set up topical fairs  
 List events in community calendars  
 Get textbook publishers and local libraries to cover a meeting agenda  
 Hold a house meeting and a meal to discuss issues with others  
 Get a cereal manufacturer to use the back of a box for the issue of concern  
 Distribute videos of talks, workshops and conferences  
 Get popular personalities to speak out

■ Consumer participation in public consultation-- voicing views, assessing risks, considering consequences has already been documented in cases where consumers are involved in participatory and accountable budgeting, monitoring performance, lobbying and e-mail governance. UNDP, Human Development Report 2002

■ Though membership in political parties and trade unions has fallen, there has been a dramatic increase in civil society organisations (from 1 083 NGO's in 1914 to 37 000 in 2000 nearly one fifth of which were formed in the 1990's.) UNDP, Human Development Report 2002

■ The American Federal Trade Commission received 516,740 consumer complaints in 2003, up almost 28% from 2002. Forty-two percent of these related to identity theft. Internet related fraud accounted for 55% of the reported complaints. The total losses reported exceeded \$437 million. Shoplifting accounts for 13 billion USD of losses yearly. Federal Trade Commission report on fraud, Washington,USA. 2003



On a worldwide scale, organically managed agricultural areas have increased in recent years to a current 24 million hectares and approximately 460 000 farms. Methods of control and inspection have not adapted to the new significance and growth rates. A thorough inspection system in order to protect the consumer does not yet exist nor is there harmonization of rules, efficiency of organizational structures or functioning information networks. Systems based on the principles of transparency, traceability, and credibility will determine considerably the consumer confidence and their perception for organic products.

Yulia Dzhubarov ,Nelly Bencheva, U of Agr. Plovdiv, Bulgaria



The industrial era scholars of economic organisations focused primarily on the supply-side phenomena, almost forgetting the role of consumer demand in the social construction of industrial processes and consequently, the social system structure. The exogenous origin of consumers' tastes and preferences was taken for granted. On the other hand, the demand-side perspective, exemplified mostly by neoclassical economic models and consumer behaviour theory, assumes the pure endogenous character of consumers' tastes and preferences, with a key factor of autonomous wishes of consumers.

The Kondratiev wave of "information era", which arrived in the 90s and brought about the new organisation of society based on codified knowledge as a prevailing resource and information processing as the main method for its exploitation, provided the fresh perception of the corporate and consumer social responsibility. It raised the question how the social construction of consumer demand affects industrial organisation. The influence of social factors on the forms of industries and their organisations were considered crucial, beyond the individualistic rational action and economic efficiency.

With the turning point on 11 September 2001 when it became obvious that the social construction of industry could not be fully comprehended in isolation from the social construction of consumer demand for these are two sides of the same social development process. It has become obvious that the knowledge-capital pool embraces not only human capital related primarily to explicit knowledge (information) but also the structural capital based mostly on tacit knowledge generated and stored in the interactive social relations. Thus, it obviously correlates with the social capital embracing the norms and values characteristic of the particular society.

Jolanta Gora, University of Wroclaw, Poland

## Cases

Below is a selection of brief descriptions of cases which can be used in consumer citizenship education. They exemplify a variety of approaches and are not to be considered either exhaustive or exclusive.



### New barter organisations

New forms of barter are appearing all over the world. Organisations that advocate such dealings are known by various names: LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems, [www.ithacahours.org](http://www.ithacahours.org)), SEL (Système d'Echange Local.), BdT (Banche del Tempo.), but they are based on the same principle, i.e. solidarity, reciprocation and exchange (of goods and services, but also time and skills). These organisations constitute the contemporary, metropolitan evolution of the mutual help that neighbours have always given each other to accomplish everyday life activities of taking care of the house. Ezio Manzini, Francois Jegou *Sustainable Everyday. Scenarios of Urban Living*. Milan, Italy



### Distance working centres

The spread of Information and communication technology is changing the way we work and the places where we work. This has led to a request for new support services. Consequently, we see the opening of the neighbourhood offices (tele-cottages) and support services for people who work from

their own homes. Examples come from *Mizen Telecottage* in Ireland, *Proxima* in Italy and *Virtual Office* in Brazil.

Ezio Manzini, Francois Jegou *Sustainable Everyday. Scenarios of Urban Living*. Milan, Italy

#### ► Transport - Using cars better

Car sharing (a way to optimise the use of cars) and car-pooling (a way to optimise each car journey) are initiatives that have developed in the field of alternative mobility over the past few years, giving rise to a real international movement. Just to give an idea of the size and the scale of this movement we can name Statauto in Germany, I Go in Chicago, City Car Club in Finland, Autoshare in Canada, Mobility in Switzerland, ICS in Italy.

Ezio Manzini, Francois Jegou *Sustainable Everyday. Scenarios of Urban Living*. Milan, Italy

#### ► Energy use

Many cities have developed plans to exploit various renewable energy sources and construct bioclimatic buildings. The Kronsberg case in Hannover can be quoted as a first example: on a neighbourhood scale, it integrates solar panels, wind generators, co-generations systems and bioclimatic building with high standards of environmental performance. Other similar examples are in Vauban, Freiburg; Goteborg in Sweden; Vikki in Finland, Las Gaviotas in Colombia and Pefki in Greece.

Ezio Manzini, Francois Jegou *Sustainable Everyday. Scenarios of Urban Living*. Milan, Italy

#### ► Community gardens

The local answer to the lack of vegetation can be seen in self help organisations that aim to recuperate run down or marginal urban areas and turn them into shared gardens. In these gardens, residents have the opportunity to cultivate allotments of land and while doing so exchange expertise and share gardening experiences. In Great Britain alone, there are 1.200 cases of community gardens, members of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. However, it is possible to name many other examples e.g. Alice Griffith Community Garden in San Francisco, Clinton Community Garden and Green Guerillas in New York, US and Orti del Tempo Libero in Milan, Italy. Further, the Canadian association Evergreen, which develops programmes for the naturalisation of urban areas with direct citizen participation, should also be included in this perspective.

Ezio Manzini, Francois Jegou *Sustainable Everyday. Scenarios of Urban Living*. Milan, Italy

#### ► Organic and seasonal produce

Some organic fruit and vegetable home delivery organisations offer solutions that enable farmers to establish direct connections with the urban end user, providing a delivery service for seasonal fruit and vegetables. In practice, they supply the subscriber with a weekly crate of fruit and vegetables, the contents of which vary according to the season and what has actually been harvested. This is the case of *Odin* in The Netherlands, *Le Campanier* in France and *Aarstiderne* in Denmark. A similar service is also provided by *Handan Organic Vegetables* in China.

Ezio Manzini, Francois Jegou *Sustainable Everyday. Scenarios of Urban Living*. Milan, Italy

#### ► Slow Food Movement

“ A firm defence of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of fast life” (Slow Food Manifesto p1, 1989)

The “Slow food” organization is paradoxical and important from a consumer perspective. It started in 1986 with a demonstration against McDonalds’ establishing an outlet just alongside the famous “Spanish Stairs” in Rome. It was followed by discussions on culture, tradition and values, what is really happening to culture, lifestyle and environment if fast food replaces old traditions? Formal establishment as organization came with a manifesto in 1989. It may look like a gourmet network for

traditional food. The core practical activity is wine tasting, recipe discussion, eating, making and approving standards for food and information activities. But from the start they made strong political relevant claims on how fast food and industrial food should be avoided, pointing to McDonald as a symbol. They also argued that locally and slowly produced traditional food will be sustainable; containing very small amounts of chemicals, don't need to travel far to get sold and don't need imports to be produced. It uses a lot of work and few other resources. At the same time it is fashionable and very good food, making "slow" meals a great pleasure, a social event and a cultural experience.

The Slow Food movement is a great success. The organization have reached around 100 000 members and have fought interesting and even victorious battles with the EU-bureaucracy, allowing traditional food to be approved in spite of regulations and even negotiated for special kinds of rules for local and traditional food. Again they have an interesting argument: products with very long traditions are tasted by time and do not need to conform to the rules of the big industry for food commodities. Even if there is an accident and bacteria contamination it will be temporary and local and not exported globally in a large scale. And they remind us that the Mad Cow Disease was created by big industry in a way that is impossible in local traditional production. Several other food-related health and environmental problems have the same logic. Their impact can also be seen in all the producers and communities that try to be approved by the organization. The Norwegian minister of agriculture will often mention the organization and their claims in a positive way. This attempt to combine pleasure, expensive food and values like environment, authentic culture and sustainability are fascinating. The significant political impact of a network that is mainly a kind of life-style and gourmet network is also interesting and reminds us that the new political systems evolving may have room for and adapt to other kinds of collective organization compared to the old dominant interest organization, political parties and trade unions. It should on the other hand be mentioned that this situation and organisation may be unique in the sense that we can not count on expensive pleasures always combining in a good way with sustainability.



### Speculative marketing or children's fantasies?

Sweden

*Rubber bracelets = secret sexcode ?*

Rubber bracelets were for a period popular throughout Europe amongst children and young people. They were sold at a moderate price in major fashion shops and kiosks in numerous colours—each colour related to a level of interpersonal behaviour and sexual contact. The bracelets have been most popular with young people in their early teens but have also been sold to children as young as 5-6 years old. Teachers and parents were told by the young people that the most commonly accepted colour code was an indirect way of indicating that one was willing to:

- white = be a friend
- green = give a flower
- yellow = kiss
- orange = make out
- red = striptease and lapdance
- blue = have oral sex
- black = have sex

The trend comes from the USA. Media there described "sex bracelets" already in December 2004. Schools in various countries have forbidden such bracelets.



### Sensitive data and the right to privacy

Poland

*"Happy Birthday"*

In April, 1999, a newly married couple from Warsaw decided to buy a flat. In order to negotiate a mortgage loan, they turned to LG Petro Bank. They submitted an application form with detailed information about their financial status and life conditions, including their home address, together with a copy of the pre-contract, where the address of the flat they intended to purchase appeared. After

a month, however, they decided to give up the bank's services. Only then were they informed that returning all the submitted documents was not possible. A bank clerk explained that it was impossible to retrieve forms filled in on papers with the bank's logo on them. On hearing that, Mr and Mrs D. asked that no papers be mailed to them at their new address and demanded that all documents concerning their data be destroyed in their presence. Surprisingly, this turned out to be impossible, since paper shredder was next to the treasury – in a room no stranger is allowed to enter. The clerk promised, however, that she would see to the removal of all documents concerning the D. couple. Unexpectedly, on 9<sup>th</sup> July, Mrs D. took out of the mailbox in her new flat a card saying "Happy Birthday to You" which had been evidently sent by the bank. She sent then a written application to the bank, sharply demanding it to stop interfering with her right to privacy and using her data. She asked for PLN 100,000 compensation. The bank sent written apology to her and promised never to send her any kind of greetings. Mr and Mrs D. found the apology insufficient and complained to the Bureau of General Inspector for the Protection of Personal Data. It ordered a thorough control of the bank, which resulted in issuing a statement that the data of Mr and Mrs D. had been used improperly, contrary to the initial purpose (intended by Mr and Mrs D., while submitting documents with their personal data). It was decided, however, that the case should not go straight into the court. The control determined that the disputable card had been sent by mistake – simply because the message of Mr and Mrs D. decision to terminate their co-operation with the bank never got through to the bank headquarters from its local branch which handled Mr and Mrs D. application. Then, the couple decided to claim their rights in the court of law. The court admitted that their claims were justified, supporting its decision with the statement that every individual has the right to privacy and to retaining his/ her anonymity to as much as possible. The ultimate verdict announced that the bank should stop its processing data concerning Mr and Mrs D.; send them a written letter of apology, and pay them PLN 20,000 compensation.

\* \* \*

It is against the law to process so called "sensitive data", i.e. the sort of data revealing one's religious or ethnic background, his/her religious, political or philosophical beliefs, affiliation with a particular political party, trade union organization or religious denomination, as well as data concerning their physical state, genetic code, addictions or sexual preferences. Only in exceptional cases, a selected group of subjects are allowed, according to the bill, to process such data. It is also possible for employers, if it is necessary for performing their duties in the recruitment process of new employees, and the scope of using the data being processed is specified in the bill. The existence and activities of modern companies utterly depend on their having access to adequate information, concerning both their customers and employees alike. Not all methods of collecting information about workers and clients of a company are justifiable, even if the ultimate aim of their having been stored in data banks is considered acceptable in general perspective. The very act of collecting and processing data in vast majority of cases is being conducted using the means of modern computer technology. It is worth remembering, however, that it does not constitute an ordinary set of tools, reinforcing only human activities. An instrument by itself cannot be regarded as either ethical or unethical. It is the man who decides whether to make proper or wrong use of it, in the second case depriving us, members of an organization of our inherent right to privacy. The machinery is being set in motion by somebody searching for a particular kind of information; it merely assists in the act of data storing and processing. The final goal of data collecting and processing can be determined by people only, and it is human factor which is solely responsible for setting the standards of compliance with the employee and customer right to privacy. Excerpted and adapted from *Principles for promoting social change*, Neil Wollman, Margaret Lobenstine, Maria Foderaro, & Stephen Stose

Barbara Mazur, The Technical University in Bialystok, Poland



## Mobile phones

### Italy

In addition, among the future themes in CE there are "mobile phones", a growing source of conflict within the family according to opinion leaders and families as well (see Rinaldi, Webley, Mora 2003). In the last decade, in fact, the amount spent on mobile phone usage has significantly increased in European families. Consequently, costs of mobile phones (and land-to-mobile phone expenses) have become a hot-issue, especially in families with teenagers, who are heavy-users of mobile phones.

With regards to the emotional ties to mobile phones, young people attach more and more importance to it as if it was real«*extension of self*» (see Belk, 1988) absolutely necessary to communicate. Feelings for mobile phones are much various and sometimes ambivalent, ranging from a detached, cold and functional relationship to one of extreme dependence, where the appliance is anthropomorphized and defined as a “faithful friend” (for a collection on papers on mobile phones see Katz, Aakhus 2002; Brown, Green, Harper 2001). Teenagers need to be helped to adopt a more critical and aware attitude towards these types of new technologies and the strong marketing pressures that promote them.

Emanuela Rinaldi, ANCC-COOP, Italy

### ► Soil biodiversity an the Manchester airport

Poland

The document setting rules for expanding the airport in Manchester is the example of an attempt to develop more effective methods of protecting the soil fauna during the translocation of soil. The document has been described as “the most comprehensive programme for eco-development in UK” and it may serve as a stimulus for considerations and sound solutions in other construction works all over the world (Kostecka & Butt 1999). During construction of the second runway at Manchester Airport, environmental awareness was at the forefront. Top soil was being collected for use elsewhere on site, and species- rich grassland turves have been translocated gently to the adjoining sites. One major concern was for colonies of amphibians, themselves relocated away from areas where air traffic would soon take-off and land. In order to ensure adequate food for newts, and even for a badger colony, Manchester Airport were obliged to assess earthworm populations over a range of habitat types affected by the runway development. Researchers were approached, and have conducted an initial survey of 4 translocation sites. Results show that earthworm community structure, number and biomass are strongly influenced by the technique of translocation employed and the habitat created. Monitoring of existing earthworm communities will now continue at the airport over the next decade. Also, introduction of earthworms into grassland beside the new runway is set to occur and will itself need to be assessed (Butt 1998).

Joanna Kostecka, University in Rzeszow, Poland

### ► The Other Economy

Italy

The Municipality of Rome has initiated a project entitled: “*The town with another economy*”. In 2006 a part of the city will be dedicated to the development and promotion of “Another Economy”. Enterprises and organizations are working to produce functional criteria for environmental sustainability, equitable value distribution, and respect for people. This space will become an instrument for promoting a real district of “solidarity economy”, fostering integration and innovation of economic relations both at a local and global level. In the city we will find exhibitions and permanent sales of ecological and environmentally friendly products. The areas focused on will be: ethical finance, design and environmental-friendly systems, and responsible tourism. The guests will have the possibility to enjoy food and drinks produced through biological agriculture and equitable commerce. “The Other Economy” includes initiatives regarding critical consumption, responsible tourism, renewable energy, non - monetary exchange systems, open information systems (as “free software”). This is an experiment resulting from the work of cooperative societies and associations which, for a long time, have been trying to build an alternative economy in Rome, to increase the value of relations instead of capital, and to guarantee respect for environment and society.

Marino Melissano, CCTRCE, Italy

*I slept and dreamed that life was happiness.  
I awoke and saw that life was service.  
I served and discovered that in service happiness is found.*  
Rabinranth Tagore

## **2. *How* can consumer citizenship education be a part of education for sustainable development?**

The achievement of sustainable development requires both major changes in consumption in the North and addressing poverty in the South. Consumer citizenship is a fundamental contribution to more sustainable development, both through modifying excessive consumption, and through creating awareness of the wider social, economic and environmental impacts of that consumption. These impacts are largely demonstrated through scientific evidence and statistics, requiring a larger role for science in consumer education. The role of science has too often been neglected in consumer education. Science is perceived by the public as a complex body of technical knowledge divorced from practical everyday concerns. Yet the environmental, social and economic impacts of unsustainable development are largely demonstrated through scientific evidence and statistics. Everyone uses an indicator like GDP (Gross Domestic Product) even though it is in fact a very poor indicator of development. Unemployment statistics make news headlines. Environmental impacts are reflected in hectares of natural forest lost to development, levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and concentrations of pesticides in foodstuffs. It is possible to define indicators for many aspects of sustainable development (Moldan et al. 1997), and these can in turn build public awareness. Yet a basic scientific literacy is necessary to understand and respond to such information, requiring a larger role for science in consumer education.

Scientific evidence, when properly interpreted in a framework of values, can be a powerful motivating force for changes in behaviour. This should be at the heart of education for consumer citizenship. An agreement on essential values for sustainability such as justice and moderation can also lead to questioning the basic assumptions of Western material civilization, such as Adam Smith's invisible hand of self-interest, that are at the heart of many unsustainable characteristics of the present economic system (Dahl, 1996).<sup>13</sup>

"Sustainable development" is difficult and abstract concept for many students to understand. Participation in continually updated political and private discourse about how production and consumption can constructively contribute to sustainable development aid in improving the student's understanding. Additionally specific and concrete examples also help.

Some successful attempts at integral approaches to education for sustainable development can be mentioned, for example: The Education for Sustainability Forum (UK) and Harvey's Education 21 model. The international Globetree project which created the series of "Alternative futures" campaigns attracted schools and teachers from throughout Europe. The criticism these and similar projects have received is

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<sup>13</sup> *Science and values as complementary foundations for consumer citizenship*. by Arthur Lyon Dahl, International Environment Forum and Consultant Adviser, UNEP Geneva, Switzerland



that they have generally “depended upon the efforts of talented enthusiasts working as volunteers far beyond the call of duty” (3) Smyth,John; “Are educators ready for the next Earth Summit?”, *Journal of Environmental Awareness*; Oct. 2001.

Another didactic challenge Education for Sustainable Development has had to face has been how to relate abstract scientific fact to the learner’s everyday life experience. Principles 9 and 17 of the Agenda 21 Declaration call for international cooperation between scientists for the creation of efficient environmental impact measuring instruments. At the moment a variety of such instruments exist. The Environmental Sustainable Index (ESI) (with 61 indicators), Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Global Stewardship, and the Commission for Sustainable Developments Index (with 56 indicators), and others. Understanding the results of tests carried out by these and equivalent instruments is not always easy. There are several international eco-marking/labeling systems which attempt to simplify and inform the public on the environmental impact of products. A Consumers International study, funded by the European Commission and the German and Dutch governments has confirmed the fact that green-labelling is often more confusing than helpful. The study calls for uniform labelling. (Consumers International, *Green claims: Environmental claims on products and packaging in the shops*. UK, 2000)

<b>Φ</b>	Ecology right here
<b>Spain</b>	
- Observation of behaviour and phenomena (for example: saving energy in the education institution, use of waste paper baskets and containers for different kinds of waste products, lack of ecological food products)	
- Identification of problems (for example: how to dispose of waste, to recycle and reuse. How to acquire ecological foodstuffs)	
- Launching informative campaigns offering alternatives (for example: using school or local radio, newspaper, bulletin boards)	
- Practical application of alternative solution: (for example: appropriate containers for waste items or re-using discarded articles (as in art, making toys, recycling paper, soap-making). Creation of an institutional greenhouse with ecological growing techniques)	
<i>Special Education Centre “Pintor Martin Sáez”. European School of Consumers, Santander Spain</i>	

<b>●</b>	Financial literacy
<b>Germany</b>	
Financial literacy can serve different purposes. Most financial literacy programmes start from the unquestioned assumption that less spending, more savings and less credit would be the best solution for people in difficult financial situations. These programmes therefore focus on saving, teaching its merits and the mechanisms for increasing assets by using interest-bearing savings facilities. State programmes like the Individual Development Account (IDA) in the US or the 470 EUR Law Savings Plan in Germany as well as the savings-into-loan schemes for homeownership in many countries have such educational functions. Some other functions may be:	
- Financial literacy may support the marketing of new financial products such as a shift from simple savings towards the stock and bonds market. In this context, providers are already targeting young people in order to overcome knowledge barriers which are hindering people from buying new products.	
- Financial literacy may also be used by state agencies to further certain policy objectives such as, for example, private homeownership in the context of the use of mortgage loans.	

- Another function of financial literacy may be general political education in the context of a general trend to further competition and markets and to counter the welfare mentality and social care.

- Many financial literacy programmes also have a substantial ideological role in economic education. They aim to make 'money and markets' not only a real but also a seemingly religious basis of modern economic life, which may be inadequate for those who have relatively limited access to financial services.

- To the extent that financial literacy programmes are restricted to household finance and promoting book-keeping virtues, they may form part of a general strategy to teach young people or people at the poverty level to become responsible for their spending behaviour by teaching them how to bring order to their finances. Discipline may be the dominant educational goal. The state in particular provides numerous incentives for asset building, self-employment and individual homeownership. Use of such programmes normally also implies direct use of financial services by people who otherwise have limited access to them. Financial education is therefore often focused on the success of such programmes.

In 1992 in the UK Noctor, Stoney and Stradling defined financial literacy as 'the ability to make informed judgements and to take effective decisions regarding the use and management of money'. This definition was substantiated by Schagen and Lines in 1996 (p. 91) who proposed that a financially-literate person would enjoy a range of abilities and attitudes comprising an understanding of the key concepts central to money management, a working knowledge of financial institutions, systems and services; attitudes which allow effective and responsible management of financial affairs. The financial education as described above follows these definitions – at least partly. It has its merits as well, but we seek to avoid confining ourselves to one of these objectives alone on the premise that fully attaining that objective would of itself help to prevent exclusion and poverty. Nor do we automatically assume that knowledge about financial services, the individual's capacity for good book-keeping, dedication to saving instead of spending, as well as a deep-rooted belief in self-reliance and own efforts will in themselves help to abolish poverty and exclusion.

Udo Reifner adapted by Karen Beyer, iff – institute for financial services, Germany

## ■ Tips for sustainable consumption

Italy

### **Buy less**

Every product, even a glass of water, includes an invisible "ecological bag", made with nature, energy and work consumption

### **Buy light**

Choose products with a small package!

### **Buy smart**

Durable goods are too often changed and replaced before time. We could for example, change our car after 15 years instead of 7!

### **Buy easy**

Avoid product working with batteries and electricity if it is not necessary. Simplicity and soberness are a sign of beauty!

### **Buy close**

Buying local products reduces environmental damages due to transportation and make economy stronger.

### **Buy healthy**

Buy fresh and local products, produced by biological methods, with no preservatives or colorants.

### **Buy fair**

Buy product coming from solidal markets and equitable marketing associations. To us, it means paying a little more, to the small producers it means to double their income.

### **Buy carefully**

Avoid synthetic products or materials produced by big industrial enterprises. Too often, the legislation is created according to economic lobbies, hiding environmental and healthy problems.

### **Buy honestly**

Avoid products that are too much advertised. Remember that you pay for advertising as well.



## Health and safety—the CE mark

### Portugal

“The New Approach” determines the role of the harmonized European standards as fundamental documents, and in compliance with them is taken the EC Council Decision to adopt procedures for conformity estimation. In conformity with that decision rules were established to set and use the CE mark. The CE mark means that each product indicated in the New Approach Directives corresponds to the requirements for safety and innocuousness for human health and life. That symbol is not a sign replacing the mark for the product’s quality, but it is put next to it. Products, without a CE mark have to comply with the requirements for labeling and certification, indicated in the relevant Directives.

*Our biggest challenge in this century is to take an idea that sounds abstract—sustainable development—and turn it into a reality for all the world’s people...This is essentially an educational enterprise. (Kofi Annan UN press release 15/03/01)*

### **3. *How* can consumer citizenship education be assessed?**

Evaluation of consumer citizenship education is an area which is still under development. In some institutions of higher education the forms of evaluation are established, often bound to traditional written individual exams. Such methods only partly suit consumer citizenship education. They do not give feedback on the extent to which the student is actually able to function as a consumer citizen in society. Neither do they reflect the student's ability to apply the knowledge the student has gained. If the final goal of consumer citizenship education is to develop critical, aware, consumer citizens, alternatives to the usual exam might be more useful. A combination of obligatory participation in class activities and fulfilment of all required tasks can serve as a prerequisite for receiving credit points without a formal final exam.

*Portfolio assessment* is means of evaluating the student's progress and is a highly recommended technique.<sup>14</sup>

*Group examinations* Group examinations are a positive tool for assessment. Because many consumer citizenship issues are controversial, a group examination demands that students move from opinion to a meta cognitive level of understanding.

*Showcasing* Producing a (school) newspaper, making an exhibition or creating "professional" presentations: boards, video, tapes are ways of making concrete summaries which can be used for evaluation of the learning process.

*Using the internet* Test the student's ability research and use the internet as a communication platform for consumer citizenship.

*Research* and direct trials analysis of products, production and services can also be used as the basis for assessment.

*Self evaluation:* This is the students' own evaluation: during the course, at the end of the course and after some time (maybe one month after the end of the course) which examines if the learning process had any impact on the way of life of the student.

*Pass/fail status:* In many cases the assessment can be trickier than in "traditional subjects" – there are not so many final truths and everyone has a right to own opinion. One can assess participation, open-mindedness, and understanding of the main problem areas. Classes can be on a pass/fail course, not graded at different levels.

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<sup>14</sup> [www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/literacy/assess6.html](http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/literacy/assess6.html)

## E. Resources

### 1. *What* kinds of materials are suitable?

There are many sources of didactic materials, reference resources and online materials available which can be used for teaching consumer citizenship education. These are to be found in a variety of languages though English is the most prevalent. This publication cannot provide at the moment an extensive review of all of them. The list which follows includes two types of resources. The first set is particularly useful. The others which are mentioned are included because they have been referred to in the text of these guidelines.



*YouthXChange*, Training kit on responsible consumption – The Guide; UNESCO/UNEP 2002, ISBN 92-807-2128-3; website with up dated cases and information: [www.youthxchange.net](http://www.youthxchange.net)



UNESCO's *Teaching and learning for a sustainable future*, A multimedia teacher education programme, UNESCO 2002 (available free of charge from UNESCO in Paris)



*The Sustainable Everyday Project* is a platform of knowledge and actions for creative communities and innovative citizens. It proposes a catalogue of promising cases, a lab of scenarios-in-progress and a program of travelling exhibition to stimulate the social conversation towards a more sustainable future. [www.sustainable-everyday.net](http://www.sustainable-everyday.net)



*State of the World Report 2004* Worldwatch Institute  
In the 2004 edition, the Institute examines how we consume, why we consume, and what impact our consumption choices have on the planet and other people. With chapters on food, water, energy, the politics of consumption, and redefining the good life, *State of the World 2004* asks whether a less consumptive society is possible—and then argues that it is essential.



Annual *United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report* which provides the updated Human development index and additional topical references. For case studies and projects the HDR has a wealth of relevant facts. (Particularly the HDR from 1998 which deals with consumption)



*CiCe: Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe*, A Thematic Network whose publications deal with citizenship education. See Trentham book series and handbook series on planning university and college provision for educating professionals who will develop citizenship education across Europe. [www.north.londonmet.ac.uk/cice/start.ht](http://www.north.londonmet.ac.uk/cice/start.ht)



*Consumers International* maintains a website and an online newsletter which provides many updated references to activities connected to sustainable consumption. [www.consumersinternational.org](http://www.consumersinternational.org)



The *International Journal of Consumer Studies* provides an international forum for academic and research papers with a focus on how consumers can enhance their security and well being. It publishes articles of interest to an international audience and at the leading edge of consumer research throughout the world. <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=1470-6423&site=1>



Nordic Council of ministers' consumer research database contains information about research within consumer sciences by over 360 researchers. The database is in five languages:  
<http://www.norden.org/konsumentforskning/> or <http://www.norden.org/konsument/2/start.asp>  
Their newsletter can be found at:  
<http://www.norden.org/konsument/doc/nh0401.doc>



The Division for Sustainable Development promotes sustainable development as the substantive secretariat to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and through technical cooperation and capacity building at international, regional and national levels. [www.un.org/esa/sustdev](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev)



The Consumer Citizenship Network publications:  
-Using, choosing or creating the future? CCN Conference proceedings 2004  
-Nice Mail # 21 [www.norden.org/nicemail](http://www.norden.org/nicemail)



Service Learning is a didactical method of teaching civic education which combines service with structured opportunities that link the service to a defined learning process. [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)



*The Earth Charter* is being adopted and used by educators around the world in a diversity of educational settings' schools, institutions of higher education, community and professional development. Educators are finding the Earth Charter a useful resource to incorporate into courses dealing with themes such as ethics, environment, social justice, sustainable development, globalisation, and international relations.  
[www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)



The Ideas Bank database includes over 300 examples of projects promoting ecology, global justice, sustainable consumption and community development.  
[www.idebanken.no](http://www.idebanken.no)

The following references are related to models and references made in this set of guidelines.



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*Taking Post-16 Citizenship Forward: Learning from Post-16 Development Projects*; National Foundation for Educational Research, UK, 2005 Publisher: DfES.



Ω [www.yomag.net](http://www.yomag.net)  
 Ω [www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)  
 Ω [www.stattauto.de](http://www.stattauto.de)  
 Ω [www.i.go.cars.org](http://www.i.go.cars.org)  
 Ω [www.citycarclub.net](http://www.citycarclub.net)  
 Ω [www.autoshare.com](http://www.autoshare.com)  
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 Ω [www.icscarsharing.it](http://www.icscarsharing.it)  
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 Ω [www.selidaire.org/logitheg/intal/sec.htm](http://www.selidaire.org/logitheg/intal/sec.htm)  
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 Ω [www.virtualoffice.com.br](http://www.virtualoffice.com.br)  
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 Ω [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)  
 Ω [www.cantierisola.org/bio/altre/schede/boscoincitta.htm](http://www.cantierisola.org/bio/altre/schede/boscoincitta.htm)  
 Ω [www.evergreen.ca](http://www.evergreen.ca)

<http://www.spssi.org/ppsc.html>

## 2. *What* terminology is useful to know?

- *Ethics*. Reflections on how to act based on fundamental values
- *Values*. Ideals from which behaviour may or may not be derived
- *Social accountability*. Personal ethics based on a sense of solidarity with other (consumers)
- *Media responsibility*. The medias role in sharing knowledge and influencing consumer choice
- *Data*. Unspecified information
- *Knowledge*. Conventionalized information
- *Wisdom*. Personalized knowledge
- *Responsibilities*. A natural limit to individual freedom based upon social and environmental requirements/values
- *Needs*. Basic needs for survival: food, shelter, clothing, water, security (general needs and luxury needs) See references to theoreticians dealing with “Needs theories”
- *Well being*. Personal and social as well as physical conditions of need fulfilment
- *Responsibility learning*. Education that develops the students’ ability to assess situations, take initiatives and generate change

- *Information.* Internalized data; what we construct in our minds with the data we have acquired
- *The digital divide.* The increasing gap between those communicating via the internet and those who do not
- *The information society.* Modern society in which large amounts of data are rapidly spread to a wide public
- *Labels.* Standardized, condensed information carriers such as The White Swan, Trans Fair, Bio, Trusted shops
- *Semantic web.* Technology which allows users to browse the web not only through words, but also through concepts
- *ICT.* Acronym for Information and Communication Technologies. The present technologies which are characterised by a stronger integration of information processing with communication technologies
- *E-commerce.* Any commercial activity which is carried out remotely by means of information and communication technologies
- *E-learning.* Any learning activity which is carried out by means of information and communication technology tools
- *E-zine.* Information sources available on the network
- *Distance learning.* Any learning activity where the teacher is not physically close to (not in the same physical space of) the learner
- *Digital divide.* The gap between individuals or communities who do have access to information and communication technologies and those who do not
- *Networks.* A set of computers which are connected by a local or a wide-area or a geographical net. The actual net may consist of cables and/or wireless connections.
- *IP.* Acronym for Internet Protocol. It is the protocol used in the transmission of data through Internet
- *TCP.* Acronym for Transmission Control Protocol. It is the protocol used for controlling and ensuring the right transmission of data through Internet. The terms are used in combination since they are the basic data transmission mechanisms adopted in Internet
- *IP address.* A number code which uniquely identifies an electronic device connected to a TCP/IP protocol based network
- *Domain name.* A nickname for identifying some IP addresses logically related to each other
- *Spam.* Unrequested e-mail messages or pop-up windows sent to the network by systematic or random production of IP addresses
- *Synchronous.* It is referred to a process where both the information sender and the information receiver (not necessarily human beings) are simultaneously present
- *Asynchronous.* It is referred to a process where both the information sender and the information receiver (not necessarily human beings) are not simultaneously present
- *Interactive.* It is referred to a process of information exchange where the human being plays an active role in selecting the information provided by an electronic device
- *Interactive TV.* A process of information exchange where the human being plays an active role in selecting the information provided by the a TV broadcasting channel

- *Interactive video network* A process of information exchange where the human being plays an active role in selecting the information provided by a video specialised network
  - *Cable TV*. Television programs diffused by means of cables instead of antennas.
  - *Listserv*. Information service provided to a set of subscribers through the net
  - *Multimedia*. A set of media for conveying information in different formats (typically text, sound and image)
  - *Hypertext*. A text containing links to other texts allowing a non-sequential reading of its contents.
  - *Internet*. A geographically-wide network connecting different networks
  - *WWW*. Acronym for World Wide Web. A set of information services supported by Internet
  - *Provider*. A commercial organisation providing easy access to Internet to its customers
  - *Browser*. A program tool for the visualisation of electronic documents
  - *Research engine*. A program tool for finding textual information efficiently in a huge (possibly spread over different physical locations, i.e. www sites) data container
  - *Semantic Web*. A particular organisation of the information available on the Web where information are accessed by means of semantic associations instead of simple text matching
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- *Consumer rights* The right of choice, to information, safety, health and consumer education
  - *Citizen rights*. Civic, political, social/cultural, environmental, gender
  - *Sustainable consumption*. The responsibility to learn about the social and environmental consequences of his/her choices
  - *Ecological footprint*. An analytical tool devised in the 1990s by Bill Rees and Mathis Wackernagel. It focuses on the demands which we make on nature in four major areas of consumption: food, goods and services, shelter (housing, water and energy use) and mobility. In each of these areas, it takes account of the entire chain of production, delivery and waste disposal.
  - *Global solidarity*. The responsibility to know about and empathize with the needs and desires of others
  - *Cooperation*. The responsibility of preparing and carrying through discussions and collective initiatives
  - *Social involvement*. The responsibility of knowing how to influence the systems affecting corporate and consumer behaviour
- 
- *Globalization*. Not a new phenomena but distinctly different than earlier forms of globalization based on trade, slavery, empire building. Modern globalization is significantly commercial as well as personal.
  - *Global solidarity*. Loyalty, cooperation on personal, national and international levels in order to ensure the human development of all
  - *Overconsumption*. Consumption which adversely affects the environment or the well-being of others
  - *Underconsumption*. Standards of living which do not allow people to meet the basic needs for survival

- *Invisible markets.* The exchange of goods or services which is not a part of the market system and does not appear in statistical figures indicating sales and purchases
- *Functional economy.* Economic system based not on the production and sale of commodities but rather on the sale and maintenance of the function the commodity is intended to carry out. (f.ex: selling the function of “washing” rather than selling washing machines)
- *Sustainability.* “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains two concepts:- the concept of “need”, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given and - the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs” (Our Common Future p.43)

Or possibly:

“learning how to live better (with less negative impact on the social and physical environment) by consuming less and regenerating the environment and taking care of each other”

- *Social involvement.* An expression of commitment to collective human development; participation in democracy; social activism; “selfless action for the common good”
- *Scenarios for behaviour modification.* Proposals and descriptions of possible future situations/conditions and the consequences which might result thereof.
- *Future workshops.* A learning workshop which enables the students to recognize important issues and by means of games, fantasy, visualising, drawing and discussing in order to gain greater self awareness as to their own attitudes to these issues. Future workshops provide not only cognitive knowledge but the opportunity to deal with emotions and attitude modification.
- *Brainstorming.* An associative method of presenting ideas without counter-arguments or other forms of restraints
- *Scheme of social innovation.* “a positive cycle where signals from society are reexpressed and reincorporated in design and put back into society”

1) Society emits signals → 2) Signals are detected →

3) Promising signals are reinforced → 4) Re-enforced signals are reemitted

→ 5) Society is reoriented

# F. Appendix

## 1.

### Consumer protection in Europe

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This article provides relevant historical and contemporary references for teachers in higher education about consumer rights and responsibilities in Europe.

#### Introduction

In order to identify the first references to the consumer, it is necessary to look at the **Treaty of Rome of 1957**, the deed establishing the European Economic Community; in paragraph number 2, within the essential aims of the Community. There one finds a declaration about the goal of improving life and employment conditions of citizens. It is also specified that EEC has to promote harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, better stability and faster improvement of our standard of living. A reference to the consumer can be discovered also in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the treaty, which deal with the discipline of competition; “The limitation of production, outlets or technical development which could cause damage to consumers” is set as an example of reactions expected to unlawful practices.

In 1973 the Advisory Assembly of the European Council passed the **resolution n. 543 of 1973**, which presents the definitive text of the **European Consumers Protection Charta**. In the Charta for the first time the definition of the consumer is given. The consumer is considered to be “each person, physical or moral, to whom are sold goods or are provided services for private use”.

In the Charta the consumer rights were enumerated for the first time:

1. the right of consumer protection and assistance. (ensuring the consumer against economical and material damage caused by goods and guaranteeing easy access to justice, in order that recognized rights become real)
2. the right of compensation for damages that affect the consumer (because of the circulation of defective products or on account of the diffusion of deceitful messages)
3. the right to information and education;
4. the right of representation.

Afterwards, through the **resolution of the Council of Ministers on 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1975** (OGCE, C 92/1, 1975) the EEC defined a preliminary programme for a consumer’s protection policy, identifying lines of action and assembling consumers rights in five major categories:

1. The right to health and safety protection;
2. The right to protection of economical interests;
3. The right to compensation for damages;
4. The right to information and education;
5. The right to representation.

The problem was that the resolution lacked political-institutional recognition. Therefore it was necessary with an intervention of institutional Treaties in order to legitimize activities and programmes.

In the Treaty of Rome there was no mention of consumers. The Recording of the **Single European Act**, through which integrated and modified the Treaty of Rome, especially paragraph 100A, foresees that the Commission in its proposals on matters of health, safety, environment and consumer protection, will adopt “a high level of protection”.

Afterwards, **The Treaty of Maastricht**, signed the 07.02.1992, foresaw a proper article dedicated to consumer protection. By title XI, paragraph 129A the Commission was attributed specific competences. It is written that the European Union “contributes to achieve an elevated level of consumer protection through measures adopted in accordance to paragraph 100A and promotes specific activities of support and integration of the policies of the member States, in order to protect the health and the economical interests of consumers and to ensure them an adequate information”.

If the Treaty of Maastricht recognized consumers protection on a higher level, the **Treaty of Amsterdam** (02.10.1997) developed this aim further and moved forward in order to adopt measures in the favour of consumers. The article 153 of the Treaty of Amsterdam did in some ways rewrite paragraph 129A of the Treaty of Maastricht by affirming that “for the promotion of consumers interests and in order to ensure them a higher level of protection, the Community contributes to the protection of the consumer’s health, safety and economic interests and to the promotion of their rights to information, education and organization for the safeguarding of their interests”. The Community “contributes and promotes”: this is the definitive step of the European Union in favour of consumer protection. In fact, in the Treaty of Amsterdam European Union does not just set rules, but acquires a propulsory role.

Since then, the European Commission has adopted lines of action and sectional normative interventions in order to regulate specific ambitions or even to standardize sets of rules existing in various States of EU. The last triennial action-plan (2002-2006) focuses on three priority lines:

1. a higher common level of consumers protection;
2. an effective application of consumer protecting laws;
3. an adequate involvement of consumers organizations in community politics.

*Legislative interventions in favour of consumers: the problem of the variety of national disciplines, the tools used to legislate and the necessity of a single corpus of rules.*

In the European market there exist common rules in order to allow citizens and European consumers to circulate freely and to benefit from one single market, particularly after the introduction of the common currency. In matters regarding consumers the EU mostly legislates by means of directives that need a national legislation act in order to acquire validity as law inside each individual State. The choice of the directive-tool allows to adaptation of the law of the individual member States, by giving to each State some margin of action, even if limited, in adopting several approaches.

Paragraphs 100 and 100A of the Treaty of Rome constituted the juridical base of the community directives on matters of consumer protection. Without pretending to be of complete as the legislation, the set is quite extensive. The following should be noted:

- the directive 84/450 in matter of deceitful advertising;
- the directive 85/374 in matter of responsibility of the producer for damage caused by defective products
- the directive 85/577 in matter of consumers protection in contracts dealt out of commercial rooms;
- the directive 87/102, modified by directive 90/88, in matter of credit to consumption....;
- the directive 87/357 concerning products which, having another appearance as they really are, compromise consumers health and safety;
- the directive 89/359 and 89/396 concerning labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuff products.
- the directive 89/398 concerning foodstuff destined to a particular alimentation;
- the directive 90/314 concerning travel, holidays and “all inclusive” circuits;
- the directive 92/59 about general safety of products;
- the directive 93/13 in matter of unlawful clauses;
- the directive 94/47 in matter of time-sharing,
- the directive 97/7 in matter of contracts on distance;
- the directive 97/55 in matter of comparative advertising;
- the directive 99/34, which modified directive 85/374, extending responsibility of producer to primary agricultural products;
- the directive 99/44 about some aspects of warranties on consumption goods.
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On the initiative of DG Sanco, during the next months it will be realized a compendium and a comparative analysis of the Community corpus of laws in matter of consumers protection. I should stress that the tool of the directive will be substituted by the community regulations each time it will be necessary to secure

uniformity within the discipline of a specific sector. Such is the case for the foodstuff sector.

### **Some specific sectors**

#### ***Foodstuff***

During the last years, there have been several crisis in the field of foodstuffs (PVB, dioxin, BSE, etc) which reduced the trust of European consumers in the ability and will of the foodstuff industry and public authorities to warrant the safety of foodstuffs. Therefore the European Commission decided to become involved in foodstuff safety. This became one of its major priorities. The White Book of Foodstuff Safety of 12<sup>th</sup> January 2000 shows the general frame of a policy which is much more concerned with prevention: it is a modernization of legislation in order to obtain a coherent and transparent system of rules, enforcement of controls “from farm to table”, increase of resources and ability of the scientific consulting system.

Strategic priorities of the White Book are:

- To Create a European alimentary authority.
- As concerns alimentary legislation, to favour a more firm “farm-table” control.
- To establish a principle according to which the producers have the primary responsibility in the field of foodstuff safety; member States must ensure surveillance and control in this sector and the Commission has to verify through inspection the fulfilment of the control and the competence of member States.
- Promote information and dialogue with consumers.
- Ensure an international dimension by taking on an active role inside the international organisations.

Essential elements of the White book are:

- To warrant a high level of consumer health and protection: global supplemented approach, primary responsibility of the producing sector, traceability of food and ingredients, analysis of the risk, use of the precaution principle.
- To collect information and analysis: monitoring and overseeing, controlling by alarm systems, researching and cooperating in a scientific way.
- To create a European alimentary authority.
- To establish a new legal code by which a coherent and transparent law system can be created.
- To favour an accurate overseeing on food for animals.
- To favour health and wellness of animals as essential warranty of quality and consumers safety.
- To favour a coordinated and global approach for what concern the hygiene of foodstuffs.



- To favour a communitary harmony in establishing maximal limits of polluting and residual substances (pesticides, veterinary medicinal, etc....) and monitoring them.
- To regulate the “new food”.
- To approve an up to date legislation on additives, spices, compresses and therapeutical irradiations.
- To approve a law to take quick safeguarding measures in order to face up real administrative crisis.
- To make proceeding-start easier in order to ensure a major efficiency, transparency and rapidity.
- To succeed in satisfying several requests for control.
- To improve the diffusion of risk-communication through an interactive dialogue with all stakeholders.
- To modify directives about labelling, making them more informative for consumers.
- To increase the consideration of nutritional value of food and develop directives concerning dietetic food and alimentary interacting.

These initiatives must be integrated on an international level in order to respect a key principle: imported foodstuffs and food for animals must safeguard health demands, established in equal way in respect to what the Community established for internal products.

### ***Energy***

The liberalization of public services is very important for consumers as the opening of the market provokes a competition of several operators that could bring benefits to final consumer in terms of lower rates with the warranty of maintaining high standards of quality for the supplied services. The furnished electrical energy has become a compulsory service in every day life and because it is a universal service, the green book COM 2000-79 defines the aim of liberalization of this sector, fixing as goal the competition between several operators in order to allow to the consumer the choice between competitive and accessible prices. The contracts for the concession of the supply of the universal service should contain strict sanctions in case of violation of the standards for access, safety and continuity of the service of general interest.

It is necessary that from this liberalization also consumers could benefit. This means that those who use energy for family consumption and not only big industries should be able to choose between different operators as is the case for example for telephony. The advantage for consumers must be evident in the costs and the transparency of the invoicing. We must also evolve towards real competition and not only contribute to the shift from a monopoly to a oligopoly. Assuring quality and competition of price will move us towards a liberalization process which must be supported and accelerated. There must be particular attention to the weakest consumers (old and ill people, handicapped person). Access to public services is essential for consumers also in terms of human dignity because often it ensures them a dignified survival.

It is clear that all liberalization proceedings must warrant a universal service. By universal service we mean a whole set of measures directed to warranting the access to some basic services according to the following conditions:

- 1) Access in terms of prices and geographic location.
- 2) Quality and transparency of information about the service.
- 3) Continuity of the service.
- 4) Contractual transparency.
- 5) Safety of the service.

It is compulsory that the European legislation ensures the respect of application of the universal service standard from each operator.

This liberalization results in three areas of general-interest activities; these correspond to a different juridical regime:

- **Services of public utility** (of common law countries), which are the most comprehensive and include all activities such as trains, electric energy etc.; these activities are ensured by public or private subjects in competition;
- **Public Services** (far away from French “service publique” for extension and juridical regime) are a subset of services of public utility bound to the general interest which is defined by community.
- **Universal services** are an eventual subset of public services and correspond to a minimum of good quality services, which must be offered everywhere and to all subjects at accessible prices. The universal service is directed by the same rules of continuity, equality of treatment and adapting to needs, but must be offered also in areas and to subjects which, in current rates, do not allow coverage costs. Universal aims are ensured by a reserved or liberalized administration, which is also responsible to do so.

In connection with the project *The Consumer Citizenship Network* it will be useful to also study the deregulation processes of the energy-market that will take place, or is taking place, in different European Countries and which may point out the correct application of the law-set established by the European directives drawing particular attention to the duty of public services imposed on enterprises in favour of socially or economically disadvantaged citizens.

### ***Transport services***

The White Book 2001 produced by the European Commission introduced an activity plan in order to improve the quality and efficaciousness of European transports, looking also out for resources in order to separate the gradual increase of mobility demand from economical growth, and this way reducing pressure on environment and congestion. The proposed measures, about sixty, are intended to development transport politics so as they become a service for European citizens.

Here are a synthesis of the principal steps of intervention:

1. Protection of passengers (ex. indemnity for flight overbooking).
2. Increase of street safety
3. Sustainable mobility (clean fuel, sensible zones).

4. The institution of a harmonized duty on fuel for professional use for street-transport.
5. Warranty of transport quality.
6. Realization of big infrastructures.
7. Control of globalization by increase of the role of EU in international organisations.

### ***Financial administration***

The issue of financial administration, as it concerns consumers, acquires more and more importance in the framework of Internal Market Policies and Consumers protection policies. In particular, it is necessary to point out that there is still a lot of work to be done to set up efficient tools to assure consumers rights connected to clear information, fair loans, warranty-efficiency, and the establishment of authority that will take charge of controlling the financial and bank-system, to safeguard consumers.

Meanwhile it is important to add that in 1999, the “**Dow Jones Sustainability Index** (Djsi)”, was established, the first global share index of Sustainability, into Financial Markets. In 2003 the Italian firms became more sustainable, more ethical and respectful of the environment: they reduced water and energy consumption, gas emissions and garbage production; the score of the environmental performance has been 23 on 100, compared to 18 of the last year (the European average is 35). But also the Corporate governance of the Italian firms grew, with a score of 58 on 61 of the European average and in 2003 grew to 15-20% the number of firms that have department concerned with sustainability. The last December, thanks to Luiss University, the Permanent Forum, Sam (Swiss Society of financial analysis) and the Socially Responsible Italy (marketing society), born the OSIF, the first Italian Observatory on the Sustainability of the Firm and Finance that works jointly with the Djsi. The next April, for the first time, some firms are going to sit down together with the Syndicates, Environmental associations, Consumers associations and Volunteers associations to discuss how to render the Italian industry more concerned with sustainability and environment.

The first place of the Djsi 2003-2004 sustainability list, sector of consumers electronic, is occupied by the firm “Philips Electronic”, that has reduced of the 8 % the gas emissions, of the 9 % the water consumption, of the 4 % the energy consumption and of the 36 % the refuses bad for the environment.

### ***Housing***

The right to have a home is important in European policies: about 70 million people have bad accommodations, cohabitate or live in unhealthy lodgings; over 3 million people are homeless (migrants, women, old and young people). The Community laws corpus increasing emphasizes housing-policy (duty, public competition, quality of the product, services of general interest, etc.), considering the house as a good, with a controversial impact on the model of social cohesion that the European Union tends to assert. Respecting the EU accordance criterions, without appropriate community precautions, could lead to negative effects on national and local social policies (privatization of the social sector, liberalization of rent), in particular on housing-policies which are in precarious conditions.

The European Parliament pointed out several times the necessity to conceive laws and policies at the European level as regards the right to have a house:

- 1) (June 1987) "... that the right to have a home has to be warranted by legislative texts, that the member States recognize it as a fundamental right"<sup>15</sup>.
- 2) (May 1996): "invites EU to include immediately the right to have a home in all Treaties and Chartas that regulate the activities and aims of EU"<sup>16</sup>.
- 3) (May 1997) "invites EU to include the right to have a home in Treaties and in the IGC (Inter-Governmental Conference)"<sup>17</sup>.

The access to a home is one of the eight priority aims of the action plan of EU against poverty. However, the draft for the future European Constitution provides only the "right to living assistance" which, if recognized, would mean a step backwards if compared with the right to have a home already recognized by the International Convention on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights and by the legislation of several European countries.

*Has the enlargement of the EU weakened the Community Laws corpus?*

The strategy adopted by the EU and the aims of the enlargement are not intended to weaken the whole of Europe. This is not a statement, but a specific duty for all involved actors. European politics is already aware of consequences of other States that will be members very soon. Electrical energy policies and infrastructure policies are a clear example of this awareness. The majority of the countries that from May 2004 will enter the new enlarged European Union have already adopted Community legislation on consumer's protection. A lot of work must be still done to harmonize the entry of the new States. In Latvia, as in European Countries, there has already been established a corpus of laws concerning toys safety, though to be sure only safe toys will reach the market, a specific control system on imports must be efficiently established. Other examples are of laws already acquired by Latvia concern labelling of foodstuff and consumers contract for consumption credit; for both examples the corpus of laws to which they refer is the European set of laws. If we look at the panorama of the new entry European Commissioners, the applicant of the Czech Republic, Milos Kuzvart, founded with other people a society for sustainable life; moreover, the applicant of Latvia, Sandra Kalniete, was ambassadress to UNO from 1993 to 1997 and represented her country at UNESCO.

"Man is what he eats" (Feuerbach) Consumers are what they buy.

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<sup>15</sup> [www.unioneinquilini.it](http://www.unioneinquilini.it)

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## 2. Relevant questions for discussion

The following is a selection of questions which can serve as the basis for discussions and debates in consumer citizenship education classes or in seminars. The list is not exhaustive or exclusive. It is a set of examples given in order to help reflect over ways of referring to issues. In general, questions fall into four categories: Informative questions seeking factual responses (how many, in what way...); explanatory questions seeking descriptive responses (how...); evaluative questions seeking assessment responses (could, should...); operational questions seeking responses as to what actions can be taken (what can be done...). In most learning situations it is important to maintain a balance between these different types of questions and discussions.

1. How can closer connections between business and consumers be developed to ensure communication, transparency and accountability?
2. As the consumer can never “know” all the details of production and consumption, what are the “limits of knowledge” necessary for making a responsible choice as a consumer?
3. Compassion and charity are often looked upon as outdated qualities in this age of egocentricity. How can students be taught to appreciate that these qualities are still at the foundation of civil society and form the core of social interaction?
4. Who is a “political consumer”? What characterizes a “political consumer”?
5. Is the “precautionary principle” universally important in terms of research, production and consumption?
6. What is the most comprehensive definition of “ethical consumption”?
7. How do corporate policy and marketing strategies create consumer values?
8. Is “ethical consumption” possible in a globalized society which does not have a central international governing body with authority?
9. How is information controlled so it is not misused to harm others (f.ex: US pentagon arms sales and terrorists)?
10. How does global marketing represent a form of “economic imperialism”?
11. How consumers can be better represented in decision making bodies (locally as well as nationally and internationally) in order to ensure their rights and responsibilities?
12. What consequences does the transferral of primary socialization from the family to the media and internet have on the younger generations?
13. How can information and communication technology assist in the development of consumer citizenship?
14. Is dependence on ICT widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots?
15. To what extent should ICT take into consideration the needs of the specially handicapped?
16. How can extreme dependence on the internet/computers be counterbalanced?
17. What are young peoples’ attitudes to, expectations of and use of music, text and images from the internet changing their perspectives as consumers?

18. To what extent is intellectual property which is available in the media and on the internet to be considered a general public commodity for all?
19. To what extent does information affect consumers' decision making? To what extent do emotional factors affect consumers' choices?
20. To what extent does "virtual reality" provide an escape from dealing with the challenges of everyday life?
21. How does information and communication technology open doors to greater participatory democracy?
22. What can be done to avoid information overload?
23. To what extent does the lack of international regulations for what is placed on the internet contribute to increasing impingement of human rights? (f.ex: child pornography, murder (access to information about lethal weapon building, terrorist activities,), invasion of privacy)
24. How can the consumer citizen put Agenda 21 into action in even more ways than at present?
25. How can local ownership of production guarantee increased social responsibility?
26. How can consumer citizens influence multinational corporations to become more socially responsible?
27. To what extent can labelling (fair trade or environmental labels) be trusted?
28. What kind of results does consumer participation in activities for corporate transparency have?
29. How can sales of expired or damaged commodities (especially foodstuffs and medicines) to the third world be stopped?
30. How can fair-Trade and biological labelling become used more and be better known by the consumer?
31. How can fair trade exist in a free trade system?
32. How can ecological considerations be a relevant factor in economic growth?
33. How can universal rights be guaranteed for consumers in the third world?
34. How can teachers avoid creating negative stereotypes when teaching about consumers, business, the market, development and global issues?
35. Do the multinational corporations have any responsibility to educate critical, aware, consumer citizens? If so, what?
36. How can promoting visions for systems innovation be encouraged? How can viable ideas be made accessible?
37. How can the fundamental principles of market economy be challenged?
38. How can resources be redistributed so as to lessen the gap between those who have little and those who have much?
39. How can all the social costs of production be included in the price of a commodity?
40. Is the concept of "less is more" viable in the world today?
41. How can the concept of "being a part of the solution instead of the problem" be taught?
42. What examples exist of students being taught social involvement by being given the opportunity to participate in decision making in authentic situations?
43. In order to distinguish between the areas of consumer concern in different countries in Europe, it was suggested that a comparative study be made of consumer disputes and that the results of such a study be used as the basis for selecting focus areas for teaching materials in consumer citizenship.

