

## INTRODUCTORY MEMO

15 October 2019 EESC (VMA3)

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Science is warning us that there are only two political cycles of the EU institutions left in which to bring about a profound change in the way our societies produce and consume. At a time when there is a visible and strong shift in public attitudes to urgent climate and environmental issues, and with the new Parliament and Commission in the process of developing their goals and work plans, the Consumers and Environment Category of the EESC sets out to examine how the political concept of sustainable development is evolving at EU level.

The relevance of the topic is reflected in the [programme of the current Finnish presidency](#), entitled "[Sustainable Europe – Sustainable future](#)", whose flagship initiative is to make the EU completely climate-neutral by 2050. Finland leads by example, having already committed to net carbon neutrality by 2035. Other actions envisaged by Finland include expanding the circular economy to new sectors, promoting the sustainable use of natural resources and protecting biodiversity.

Sustainable consumption and production are about promoting resource and energy efficiency, sustainable infrastructure and access to basic services, green and decent jobs and a better quality of life for all. Many aspects of consumption can, with simple changes, have a significant effect on society. A better understanding of the environmental and social impacts of products and services is needed.

Consumer trust is a crucial factor for the economy and development and plays a key role in economic progress. Consumer policy is an important means by which countries can support the implementation of many, if not all, of the [17 sustainable development goals](#): promoting sustainable consumption and education on the environmental, social and economic consequences of our choices.

What are the EU's priorities and policies for the implementation of the sustainable development goals that can form a "[Green New Deal for Europe](#)" and catalyse a just transition to a "[One Planet Economy](#)"? What is the best way forward for the future of Europe, one that takes into account the demonstrations of children and young people calling for climate change and the wider green wave seen in the European elections?