

Case Study // Round Table SDG 12: Towards a circular economy: innovation for sustainable value chains

Nordsyn – a project of the Nordic cooperation council for green and compliant products
Nordic Council of Ministers
Level: national

Summary

The European Union's Ecodesign Directive facilitates the transition towards a circular economy by ensuring that products can be repaired, reused and safely recycled. Together with supporting implementing regulations it will generate savings of 500 TWh electricity and 5% energy use per year by 2020.

A condition for this result to be achieved is that products put on the market comply with the Directive's requirements. In the EU, it is the national market surveillance authorities (MSAs) that are tasked to monitor products on the market. Effective market surveillance contributes to a fair and level playing field for the industry and protects consumers from inefficient products and misleading information. Alarming, a 2011 Commission review estimated that 10–20% of products covered by the directive were non-compliant.

Nordsyn was then set up by the Nordic cooperation council in 2013, and is now a continuing project. It has led to better cooperation among market surveillance authorities, generating savings of EUR 28 million for a cost of EUR 2 million. This shows convincingly that enforcing ecodesign and energy labelling requirements pays off, especially within the context of a regional coordination effort.

Situation

In order to realize the benefits of any given regulation, authorities must ensure that it is complied with, in particular through market surveillance actions which are costly and difficult.

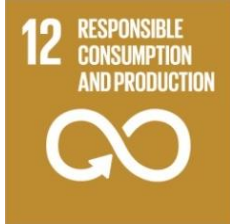
Strategy

Nordsyn contributed to multiply the outcome of market surveillance costs of each country, by effecting better cooperation among authorities (i.e. by sharing market control plans, test results, results of documents' control). It has also made market surveillance actions more preventive through the development of hands-on material, such as information sheets and guidelines.

Results and impact

The Nordsyn Project– with its EUR 28 million in savings - is one of the success stories of the Nordic Council. It continues to secure good market surveillance in the Nordic countries and also gives valuable input to policy discussions by specific studies on heat pumps, windows, fans etc.

Extending good practices learned on the project to the European Union market is essential to ensure that the ecodesign and energy labelling regulations achieve their stated objective of saving 500 TWh electricity and 5% of EU energy use per year in 2020.



Challenges and lessons learned

Market surveillance is a challenge for all the countries in the UNECE region, especially in the context of tight budget constraints. This is especially true in the field of circular economy because resource efficiency requirements like reparability, recyclability etc. are hard to measure and robust methods are still to be established. Market surveillance of systems, built-in products etc are very complex fields.

Nordsyn offers the possibility to study and explore these difficult areas.

Potential for replication

Nordsyn is a Nordic cooperation on market surveillance of ecodesign and energy labelling, and similar cooperation projects have been initiated at EU level, though the continuous active Nordsyn cooperation is rather unique. So replication is possible, and might be explored also beyond the EU borders. Nordsyn established contacts with the UNECE Advisory Group on Market Surveillance to ensure that best practices can be shared with other UNECE Member States.

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