

Policy Research Alert

FROM FLASH-IT, A DISSEMINATION PROJECT RELATING EUROPEAN POLICY PRIORITIES TO EU-FUNDED RESEARCH IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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Toward a Green Economy: New Pathways for Europe?

Stimulating transition to a sustainable society is a vital priority of the Europe 2020 growth strategy. But what are the prospects for achieving that transition? And what are the main obstacles standing in our way? Two ambitious new research projects are expected to yield some answers to these compelling questions.

Over the next three years, the EU-INNOVATE¹ and GLAMURS² research consortia will explore the relationships between ecological systems, technology, economics and human behaviours. The joint aim of the projects is to deepen our understanding of these complex relationships and show how that understanding can be leveraged to shape Europe's trajectory toward more sustainable lifestyles and a greener economy.

A large-scale integrated project, EU-INNOVATE is examining how "end users" (consumers) help to innovate novel sustainable products and services. The researchers contend that end users have enormous potential to drive sustainable innovation forward, whether that be through participation in company-led processes or more directly through user-led innovation and entrepreneurship. Such potential, the consortium argues, is largely untapped and unexplored. Focusing on final consumption domains where the environmental impact is extremely high, EU-INNOVATE is looking specifically at how end-users affect sustainability innovation processes involving food, living, mobility and energy.

For its part, GLAMURS is concentrating on the way policy interventions affect lifestyle and economic transitions. Employing a multidisciplinary team of psychologists, economists and policy experts, the project is investigating economic, social, cultural and political factors that influence the emergence – or non-emergence – of sustainable lifestyles both at regional and European levels. Intending to provide recommendations for best governance designs, the researchers hope to shed light on how various stakeholders "come to know what it is they need to do to bring about individually, socially, environmentally and economically sustainable living".

Both projects kicked off at the beginning of this year and are scheduled for completion at the end of 2016.

¹ www.euinnovate.com (website under construction as of publication date)

² Green Lifestyles, Alternative Models and Upscaling Regional Sustainability: GLAMURS www.glamurs.eu (website under construction as of publication date)