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Sustainability Policy and the Law

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Growing awareness of environmental and social concern and the pressing issue of climate change have forcefully re-established sustainability policy as a part of consumer policy. The need for change in consumer behaviour and for more responsible lifestyles on the demand-side of the economy is challenging conventional concepts of consumer law and policy. While in particular EC policy traditionally relied on information and other 'light-touch' instruments, it appears timely to reflect on the effectiveness of this policy and the expediency of measures intended to overcome persistent barriers for sustainable consumption. Pending policy initiatives about to be taken by the Community, this paper intends to identify some of these barriers and depict the growth of sustainable consumption policy in Europe. It presents the existent tools of Community law and seeks to show the recently enhanced position of sustainability policy in European politics. Beyond this descriptive purpose the paper thereby purports to frame the debate on sustainability policy and the law on the eve of a new political cycle of the European Union.

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