

Consumers in Confusion: Want Sustainability but Fall Victim to 'Green' Misinformation

At a time when the environmental crisis is a global challenge, consumers are becoming increasingly aware, albeit not fully informed, about sustainability issues. According to the preliminary results of a survey by EKPIZO, consumers express concern about the state of the environment, due to the information they receive from the media. Although they have basic knowledge of the effects of carbon dioxide (CO₂), recycling and sustainability, their understanding of more complex issues – such as greenwashing, sustainable materials and digital product passports – remains limited.

The majority of consumers recycle materials such as plastics and clothing, have heard of the concept of slow fashion, show interest in environmentally friendly products and believe that the clothing and footwear industry can contribute positively to protecting the environment. However, there is confusion about the reliability of labels and understanding of the terms used on products. Furthermore, while they want to choose products that have been produced in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, they often do not know how to evaluate them and seek guidance on what is truly 'green' and what is not.

In this environment of information and misinformation, the phenomenon of greenwashing – the misleading use of 'green claims' by companies – is a significant challenge. When companies present false ecological identities, they undermine the sincere efforts of others who are genuinely investing in sustainable practices. This not only harms consumers financially but also delays the transition to a green economy.

In contrast, true sustainability can deliver significant economic and environmental benefits. Choosing products with a reduced carbon footprint, sustainable materials and transparent production methods contributes significantly to reducing environmental impact. Although sustainable products are often more expensive, their long-term durability and quality make them a more advantageous choice in the long run.

However, the responsibility for promoting a sustainable market does not lie solely with consumers. Training professionals in trade, production and marketing is equally important.

Through specialised training programmes, such as the VETting Green programme run by EKPIZO together with partners from Spain Italy, Portugal and Belgium, professionals can

gain knowledge about the circular economy, international certification standards, sustainable product design and the responsible presentation of environmental information. Only through such coordinated efforts can we create a market where 'green' claims are accompanied by environmentally conscious and transparent processes.

In conclusion, the path to sustainability requires the participation of all of us: informed, aware and action-oriented consumers, responsible professionals and active control bodies. Through proper education, transparency and collective effort, we can overcome the pitfalls of greenwashing and create a more sustainable future for all of us.