The Ecological Footprint of Consumption

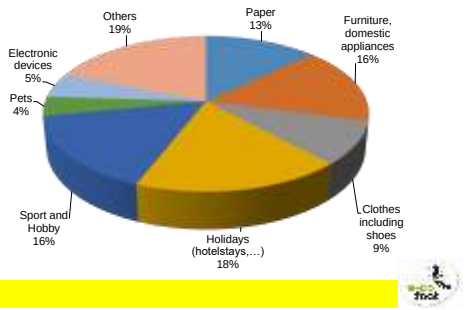
THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

The ecological footprint of an average Greek is 4.3 gha. It is very big, just as that of any developed country. If we think that the ideal Ecological Footprint for all human activities is 1.6 gha, we realize that it is necessary to reduce our Footprint drastically, in order to stop global warming. This entails a reduction in every aspect of human life such as housing, mobility, nutrition, consumption.

THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT OF CONSUMPTION

It includes the amount of productive land needed to produce and supply material goods and services for leisure and entertainment as well as to absorb the CO_2 emitted by the above activities.

Ecological Footprint of Consumption



Consumption is responsible for a great part of our Ecological Footprint: in Greece for 20%, in Austria for 25%, in Romania for 16% and in Hungary for 10%. This part of the Footprint is mainly caused by the consumption of **paper, furniture, domestic appliances, electronic devices, holidays, sports and hobbies equipment, clothes including shoes, as well as the ownership of pets.** In Greece, the compound structure of the consumption Footprint is: **paper 13%, furniture and domestic appliances 16%, holidays 18%, sport and hobbies 16%, clothes including shoes 9%, pets 4%, electronic devices 5%.**

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF CONSUMPTION

Our life attitude needs to change. There are ways to reduce our Ecological Footprint, provided that we decide to make the necessary changes to our everyday life. Especially for every aspect that constitutes consumption, much can be done.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF PAPER

- Follow the golden rule: think before you print.
- Use both sides of a sheet of paper.
- Avoid printing out single line e-mails or unnecessary copies of documents.
- Recycle the paper you have and ask for recycled paper products.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF FURNITURE

- Buy furniture produced by local industries reducing the transport footprint.
- Buy multifunctional furniture (one for many uses).
- Choose furniture that are recyclable and can easily be disassembled.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF DOMESTIC APPLIANCES

- Repair broken down appliances instead of buying new ones.
- Replace high-energy-consuming devices with others of energy class A to A +++.
- Freecycle (give them away to others who need them) or recycle.
- Have your domestic appliances maintained often.
- Small appliances: consider the manual alternative.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

- Prefer energy saving electronic devices.
- Prefer electronic devices which have energy saving batteries.
- Chose devices which are designed for disassembly and repair.
- Choose devices with greener materials.
- Increase the lifetime length of a smartphone or a PC.
- Cut down on packaging and accessories.
- Use smartphones instead of laptops and desktops.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF PETS

- Do not buy animals from pet-shops. Adopt from stray hosts.
- Take a small dog that produces fewer droppings and you also feed it with fewer feeds.
- Instead of dogs and cats, prefer smaller animals, such as hamsters, birds, fish or even snakes, which need minimal food and produce fewer excrements.
- Share the responsibilities, expense, walks, etc. of a pet, thus lightening the burden for an owner but also reducing the ecological footprint.

REDUCE THE FOOTPRINT OF HOLIDAYS

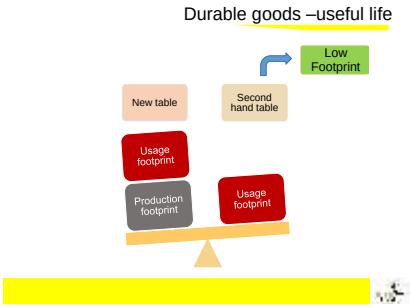
- Prefer to travel by train, ship or bus.
- Avoid travelling by airplane.
- At your destination, prefer to move around by public transport, boat, bicycle or on foot.
- Prefer accommodations certified with quality eco-label.
- Prefer camping (it is usually a low carbon accommodation).
- Prefer restaurants serving local, organic or even vegetarian food.
- Choose local souvenirs.
- Prefer Ecotourism.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF SPORT AND HOBBIES

- Rent equipment instead of buying it.
- Buy eco-designed materials or products which have obtained an environmental certification or label.
- Use public transport, either you are athlete or spectator.
- Water Sports, prefer local sports.
- Sustainable product design that includes the entire life cycle of the product.
- Prefer minimalist hobbies, music, reading, writing, drawing, photography, painting, gardening, martial arts, games.
- Exploit the popularity of sports to raise environmental awareness.
- For Sport venues: Legacy use, lightweight design of infrastructure or low impact temporary structures.

REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT OF CLOTHES AND SHOES

- Recycle them when they're worn out.
- Reduce clothes and shoes you buy. Buy good quality clothes, keep them longer, wash them slightly less often, dry them outside.
- Refuse to follow the "fast fashion" that has increased the number of fashion seasons from 2 to 50 -100 microseasons.
- Reuse, buy secondhand, give away or swap things you don't wear any more rather than dump them.

DURABLE GOODS – USEFUL LIFE?

A special challenge for durable goods is the "depreciation" of the Footprints. On closer inspection, the Footprint is, of course, generated in the year of construction (all resources and loads must be provided immediately!). However, full allocation makes little sense when it comes to personal allocation. When buying a table, for example, the first owner would have to carry the entire Footprint in the first year, the buyer of the used table will then no longer receive any. For this reason, the production Footprint is distributed pro rata over the years of use.