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## SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN VISEGRAD REGION

### Czech Report



[project fanpage](#)

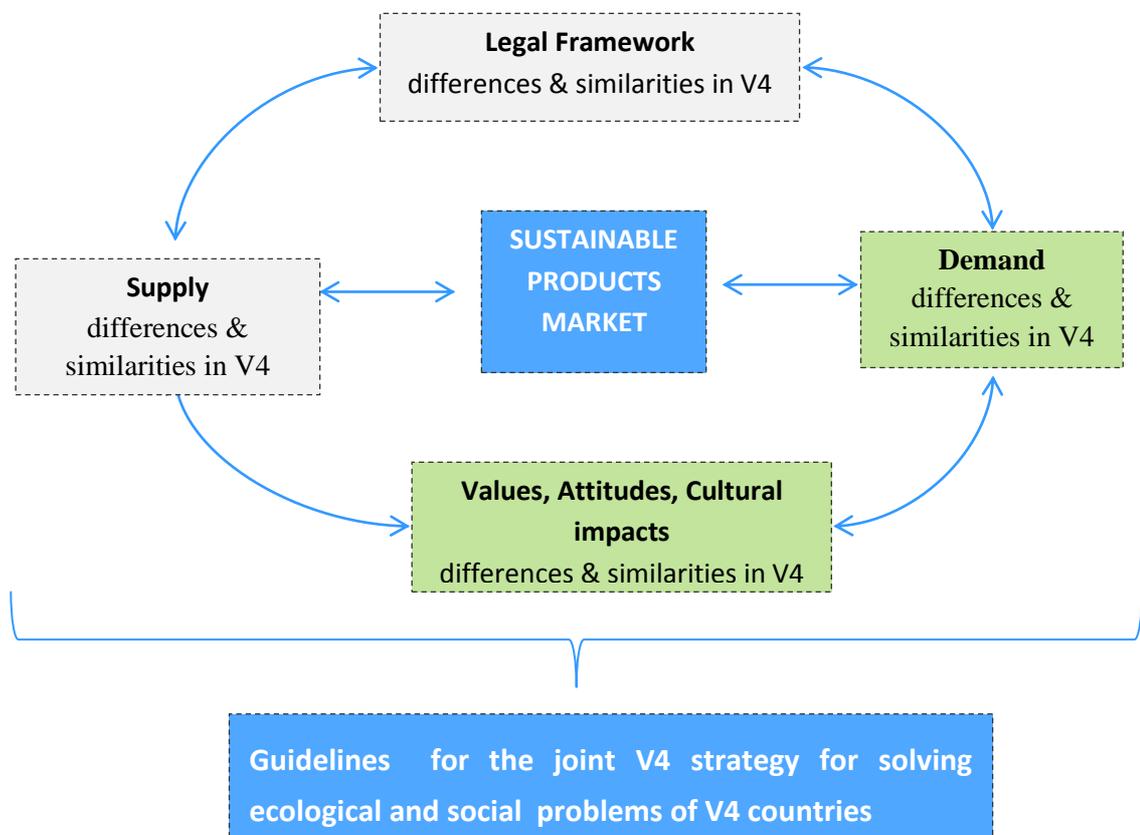
[project website : www.k48.p.lodz.pl/ecomarket](http://www.k48.p.lodz.pl/ecomarket)

The report was prepared in the framework of the project "Prospects of the Visegrad cooperation in promoting a sustainable consumption and production model" The project is supported by the International Visegrad Fund  
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## The Approach

The objective of this project is to support and strengthen the cohesion of the V4 countries in the efforts to achieve a more sustainable consumption culture and thus more sustainable production models in the selected consumer goods' markets. In the project this will be done within the analysis of intermediate connections and influences of:

- Demand side of the market – consumers
- Values, attitudes and cultural impact
- Supply side of the market – produces
- Legal framework



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The results of this report will concentrate on the first two points: **the demand side of the market represented by consumers , their values and attitudes.**

The importance of demand side analyses result from the fact that gradual environmental degradation, shrinking of non-renewable resources, and lower quality of life are directly or indirectly arising from **snowballing consumption**.

These unfavorable processes concern increasingly also V4 countries and will not stop unless consumption patterns are modified. Therefore the sustainability agenda has gradually been shifting to include consumption alongside production. Manufacturers may use new designs and technologies to minimize the impact of a product on the environment, but their efforts are pointless if consumer do not buy more sustainable goods and do not change their consumption habits.

## Research Aims

The main objective of the project was to access current consumption patterns in V4 countries, identify the factors that influence those patterns and finally to draw the conclusions for more sustainable consumption models. In detail, the survey examined following aspects of consumers' behavior:

- Environmental knowledge
- Environmental concern
- Perceived consumer effectiveness & Perceived marketplace influence
- Environmental actions within last twelve months
- Barriers
- Buying behavior

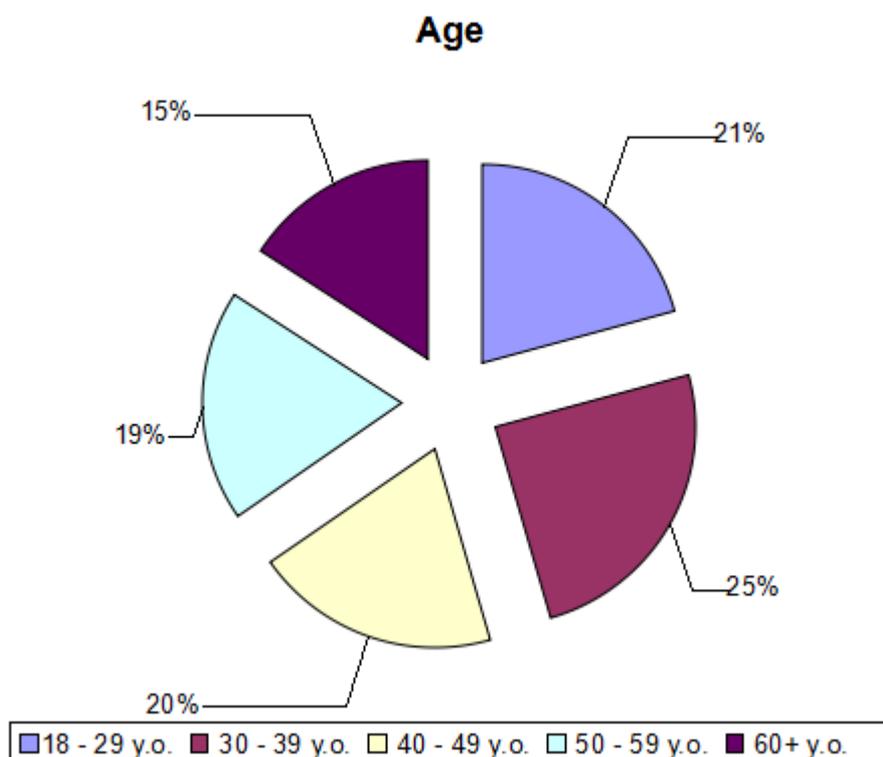
The idea is based on assumption that we might live better by consuming less, making more conscious and rational purchasing decisions. Therefore a change in the attitudes of consumers towards a more responsible behavior is needed. It is a gradual process that needs appropriate knowledge, awareness, and frequently the modification of long-standing habits.

### Information about the research

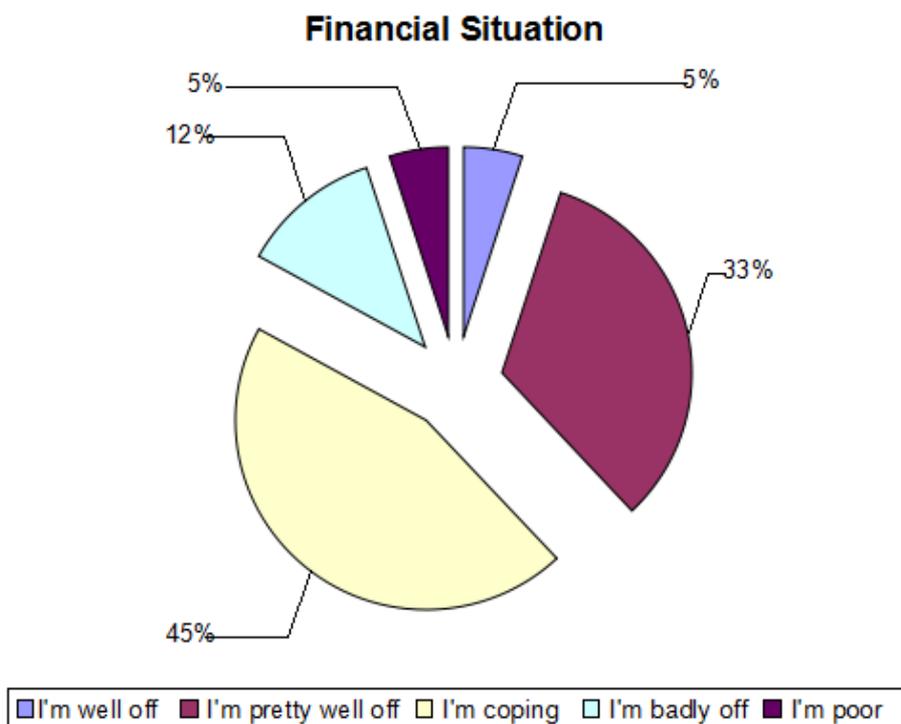
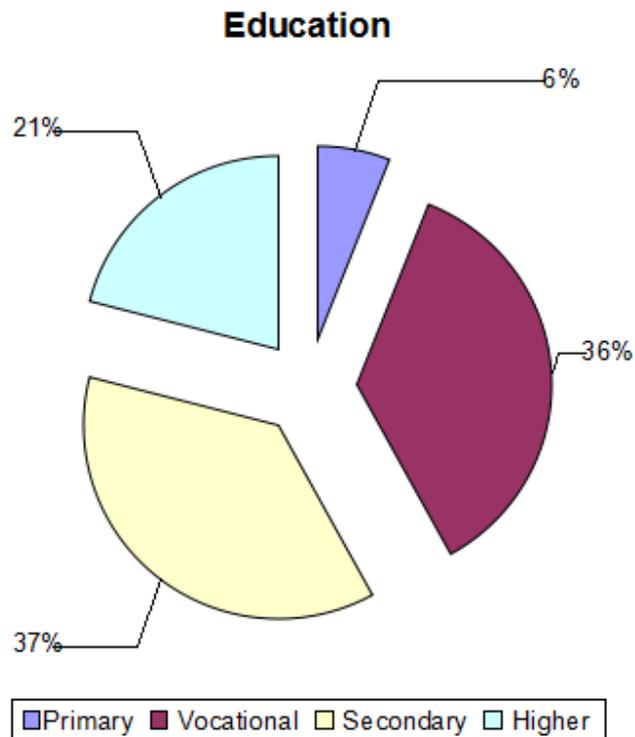
A consumer survey was conducted to examine Czech citizens' attitudes and behaviors in the context of sustainable consumption. To ensure sample size and comparability across countries the fieldwork was conducted by TNS Global in the end of March 2015. **Two thousand** randomly-selected V4 citizens, aged 18 and over, were interviewed in the four Visegrad countries.

The interviews were carried out via Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) – global and national access panel database of respondents - reaching 500 citizens in each country

### Structure of respondents in the Czech Republic



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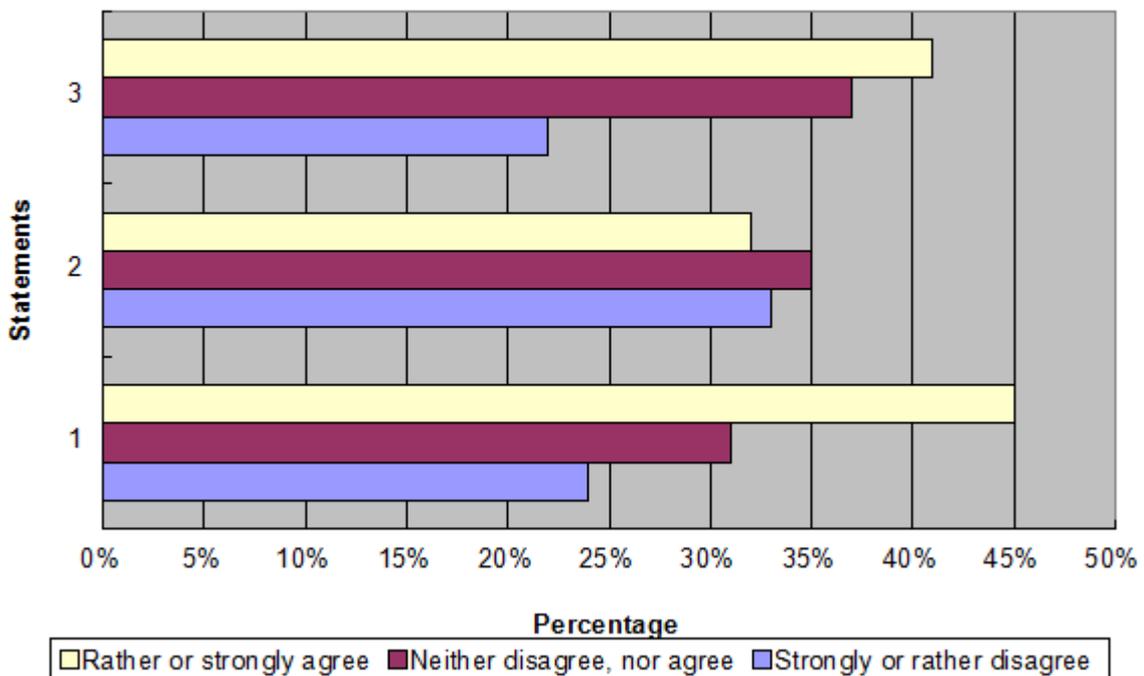
**THE SURVEY RESULTS**  
**SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

**Environmental knowledge**

As regards the “Environmental Knowledge”, respondents in the Czech Republic were asked how much they agree or disagree with the three statements allowing to evaluate the level of their environmental knowledge. The statements were:

- I often read articles or news about environmental and/or social impact of products I buy (S1)
- I don't feel I have enough knowledge to choice more sustainable products with less environmental and/or social impact (S2)
- When I am a choosing a product, I very often pay attention to environmental or social labelling before deciding to buy (S3)

**Environmental Knowledge (CR)**

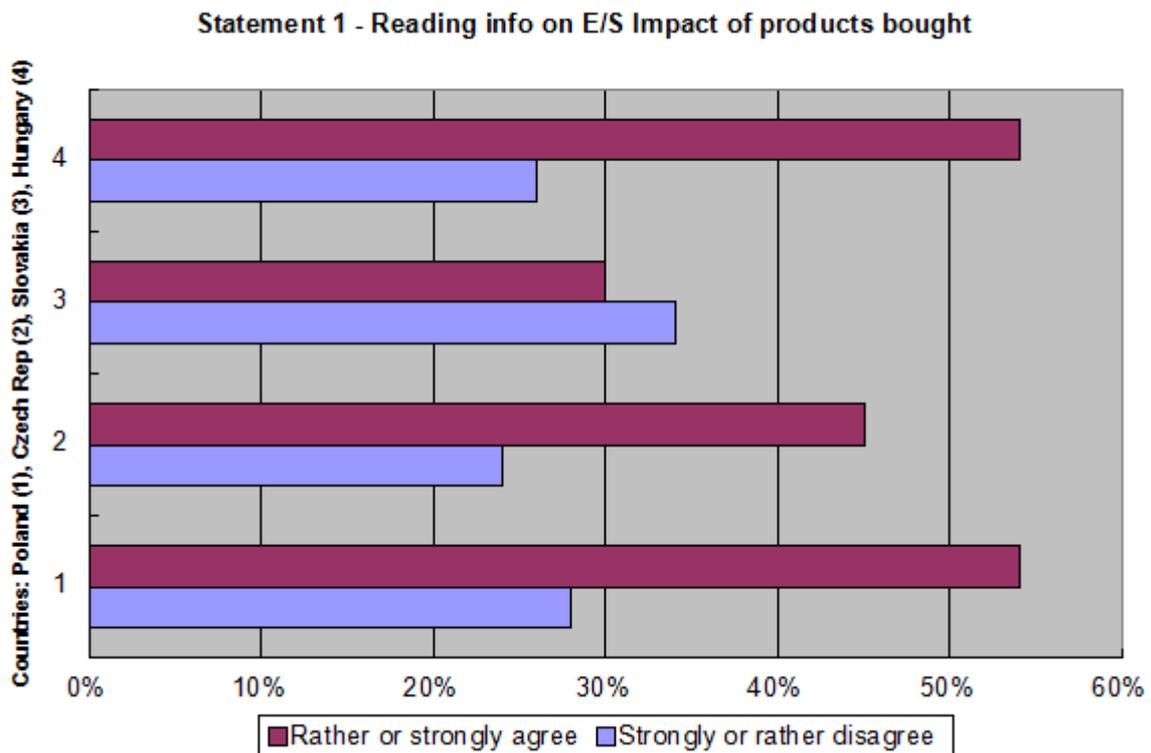


As it is shown in the graph nearly a half of Czech respondents agreed (strongly or rather) that they often read articles or news on environmental and/or social impact of products they buy (45%) and that they very often pay attention to environmental or social labelling before deciding to buy (41%).

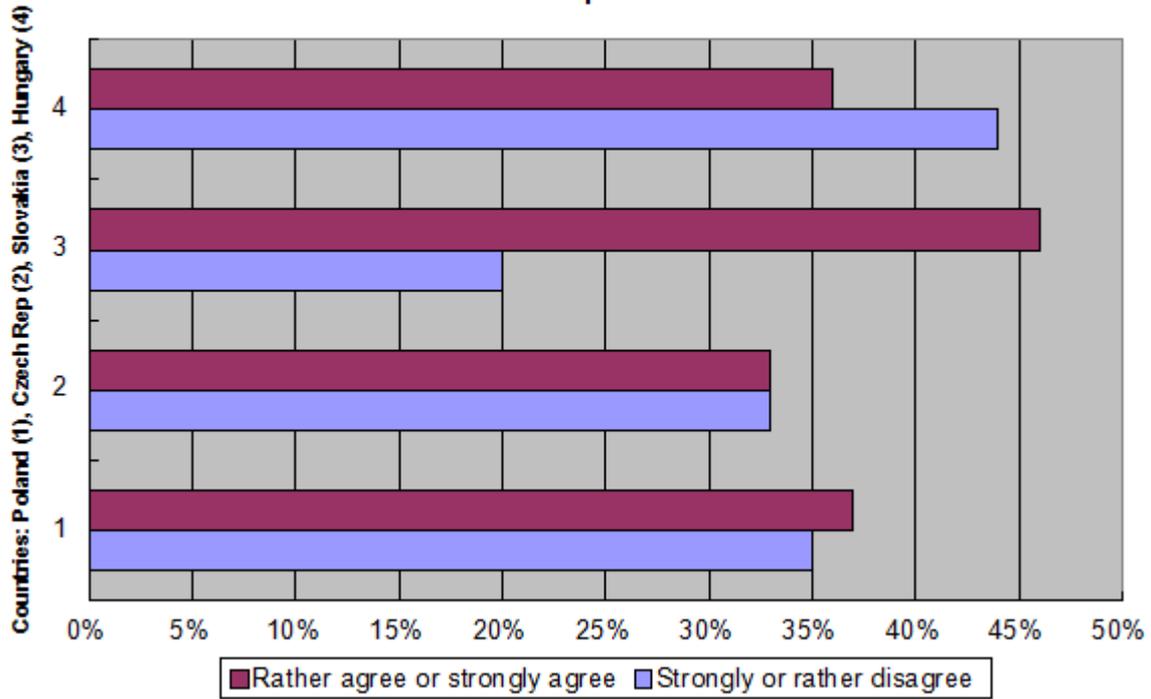
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Nevertheless, **one third of respondents (33 %) stated that they felt not to have enough knowledge** to choose more sustainable products - opposite to those who felt they had (32%).

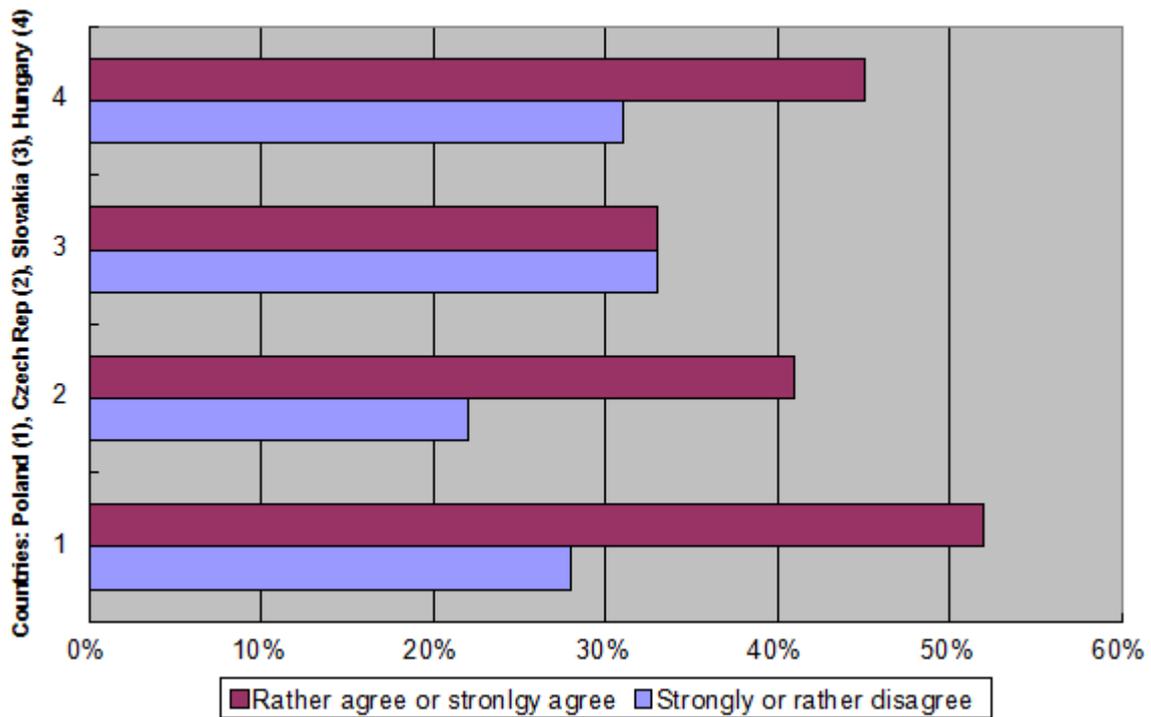
Comparing the environmental knowledge with other countries of the survey, the situation of the Czech respondents according to the statements is the following:



**Statement 2 - Choosing sustainable products with less E/S impact**



**Paying Attention to E/S Labelling**



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**Statement 1 – Reading information on E/S impact of products bought**

- Czech respondents confirm reading information (articles or texts) on Environment or Social Impact of products they buy (45%/V4 average is 46%) and they don't neglect the opposite as strong as the other countries of the survey (24%/V4 average is 28%).

**Statement 2 – Choosing more sustainable products with less E/S impact**

- Czech respondents are divided perfectly in two groups (33% agreeing to 33% disagreeing), matching the V4 average in disagreeing, which is 33%, and being lower in number in agreeing, where the V4 average is 38%).

**Statement 3 – Paying attention to E/S Labelling**

- Czech respondents seem to pay “some” attention to E/S labelling comparing to the rest of the V4 countries (only 22% neglected that/V4 average is 29%), nevertheless those who pay “special” attention to E/S labelling are not so many as in Poland or Hungary (41%/V4 average is 43%).

Czech respondents seem to be ready to „follow“ Environmental and Social Friendly Policies applied for „products“ as they do not neglect these so much as respondents in the V4 countries (see Statements 1 and 3).

**Environmental sensitivity**

Another very important factor influencing sustainable consumption is environmental sensitivity. The knowledge itself very often is not enough. What we need is a combination of knowledge, the awareness resulting from it, and the individual predisposition of a particular person produces a category referred to as concern [1][2][3]. Together they can lead to seeking and purchasing sustainable products.

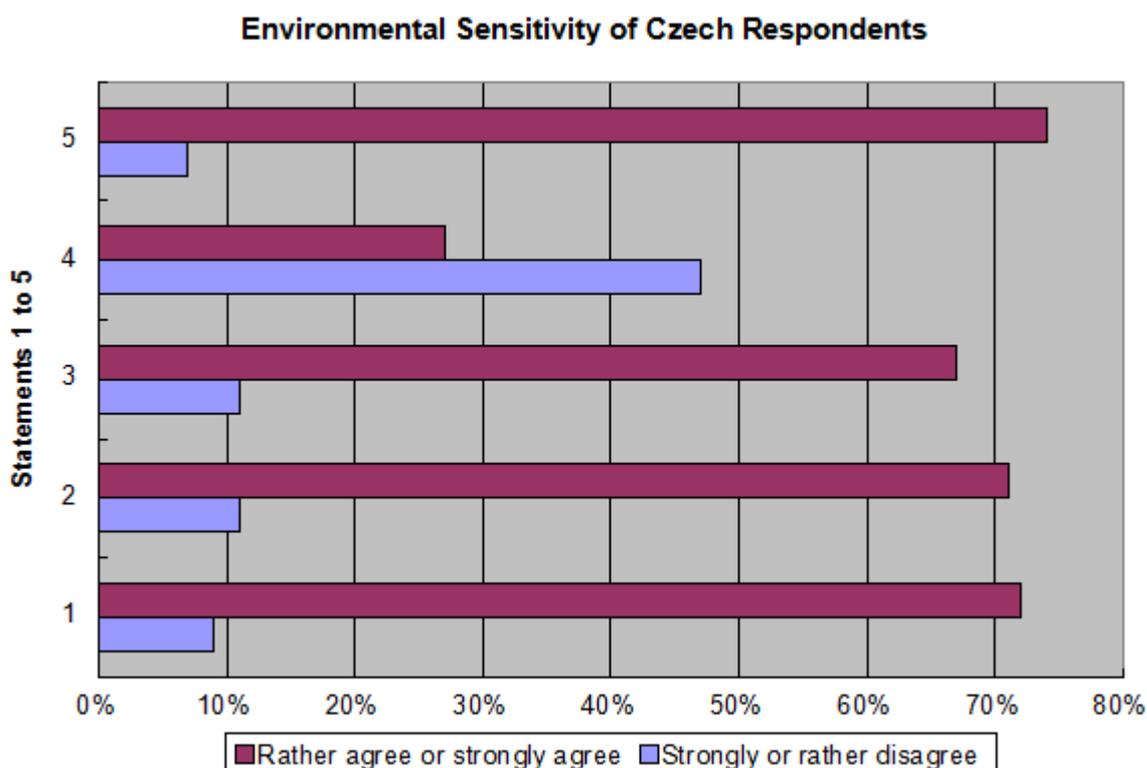
The below mentioned questions were put to Czech respondents to get their opinion reflecting their “Environmental Sensitivity”.

- I am afraid when I think about environmental conditions for future generation (S1)

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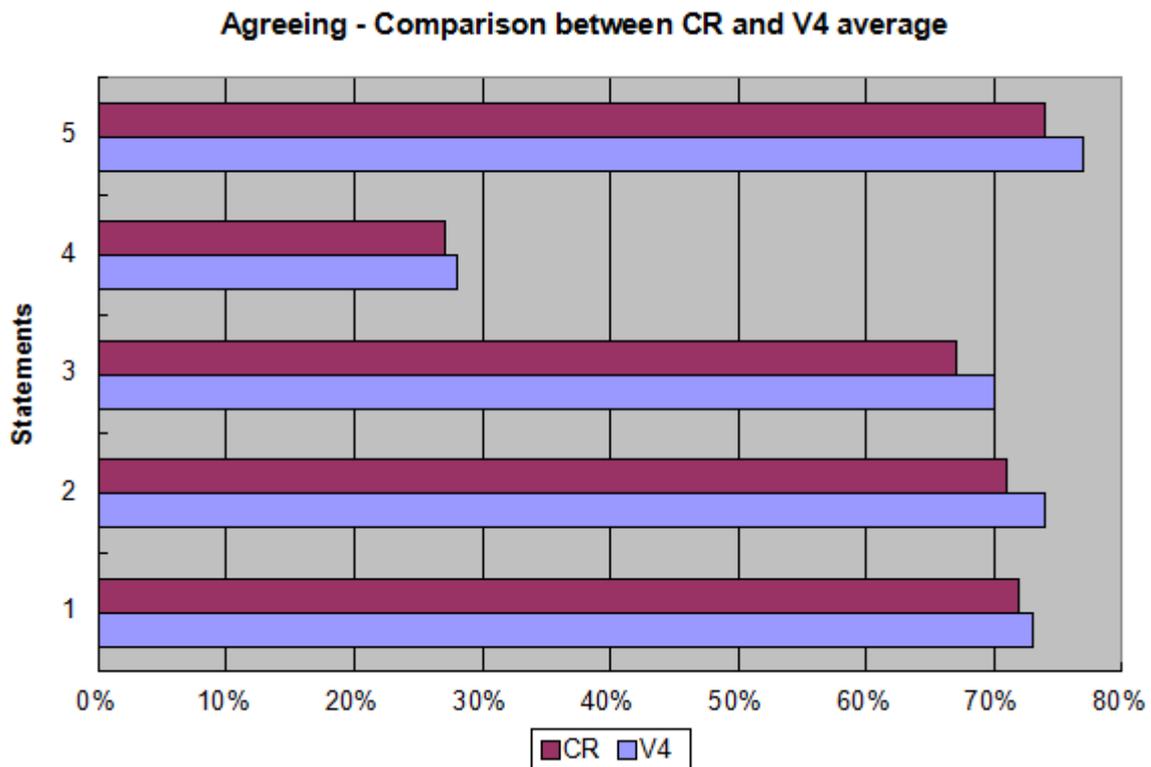
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- If we continue our current style of living, we are approaching an environmental catastrophe (S2)
- The great majority of Czech people do not act in an environmentally responsible way (S3)
- In my opinion, environmental problems are greatly exaggerated by proponents of the environmental movement (S4)
- It is still true that politicians do much too little to protect the environment (S5)



It is obvious from the graph that **Czech respondents are aware of the social impact on the Environment (so they possess an environmental sensitivity) and they seem to be ready to take positive measures** to protect the Environment in general as **more than two thirds of them** agreed with most of the given statements except the statement 4 regarding “green exaggeration” - a phenomena that is hardly “touchable”. Nevertheless, **Czech respondents do not seem to be “aware” so much compared with the other countries of the survey**, as in all the “agreeing statements” they were not even matching the V4 average (as it is shown in the graph below).

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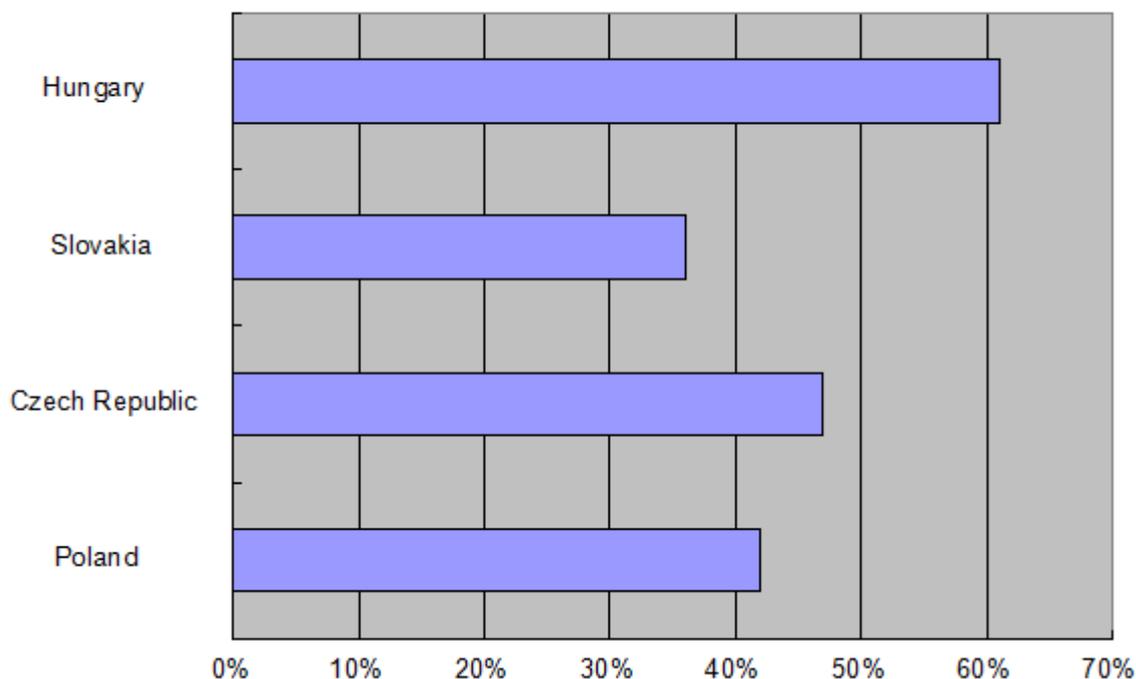


Czech respondents are aware of the social impact on Environment but are not aware so much as respondents from other countries of the survey as regards future predictions on the Environment as their statements are below the V4 average.

As regards the S4 statement, which is: **“In my opinion, environmental problems are greatly exaggerated by proponents of the environmental movement”**, the results were reflecting the opposite, it is: **nearly a half of respondents strongly or rather disagreed (47%)**, which was the second strongest decline from the surveyed countries (where Hungary reached 61%).

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### S4 Disagreeing among V4 countries



To sum up, when we compare Czech results with the V4 average sample we can observe that Czech respondents represented slightly lower level of environmental sensitivity compared with all V4 countries. Nevertheless, most of Czech respondents agreed with most statements concerning environmental sensitivity.

Czech respondents do not consider environmental problems to be greatly exaggerated by proponents of the environmental movement, so that could be a good base for further promoting of Environmental-Friendly policies and products.

## Perceived consumer effectiveness & perceived marketplace influence

As far as sustainable products are concerned the influence of so called perceived consumer effectiveness PCE is attributed a great importance. The PCE is understood as a measure of the subject's judgement in the ability of individual consumers to affect environmental resource problems [4]. A significant impact of PCE on sustainable consumption was also confirmed in the literature [5,6]. The concept of perceived marketplace influence - PMI is similar to PCE in nature, however, rather than solely looking at whether someone feels their actions are individually making a difference in environmental problems, it captures an individual's belief that their actions are actively influencing the behavior of other marketplace actors – consumers or organizations [7].

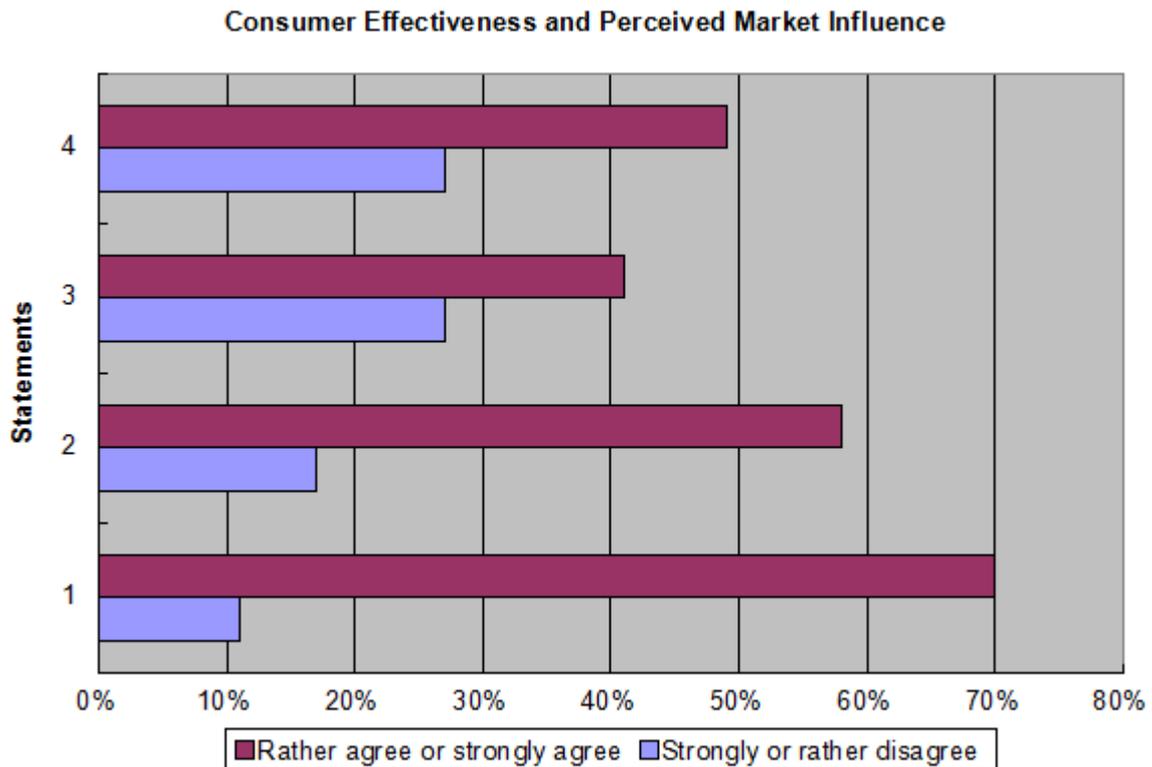
The below mentioned statements were put to Czech respondents to get their opinion reflecting their "Consumer Effectiveness and Perceived Marketplace Influence". It is how much they believe they can make a difference in solving environmental problems and also influence other consumers and other business entities:

- Each consumer can have a positive effect on environment and society by purchasing products sold by socially responsible companies (S1)
- Through my personal choices I can contribute to the solution of environmental social issues (S2)
- I believe my individual efforts to be environmentally friendly will persuade others in my community to do the same (S3)
- My purchase decisions can influence what companies make and sell in the marketplace (S4)

It is evident from the graph below that Czech respondents strongly or rather agreed with all four statements (with the statements S1 and S2 even more than half of them).

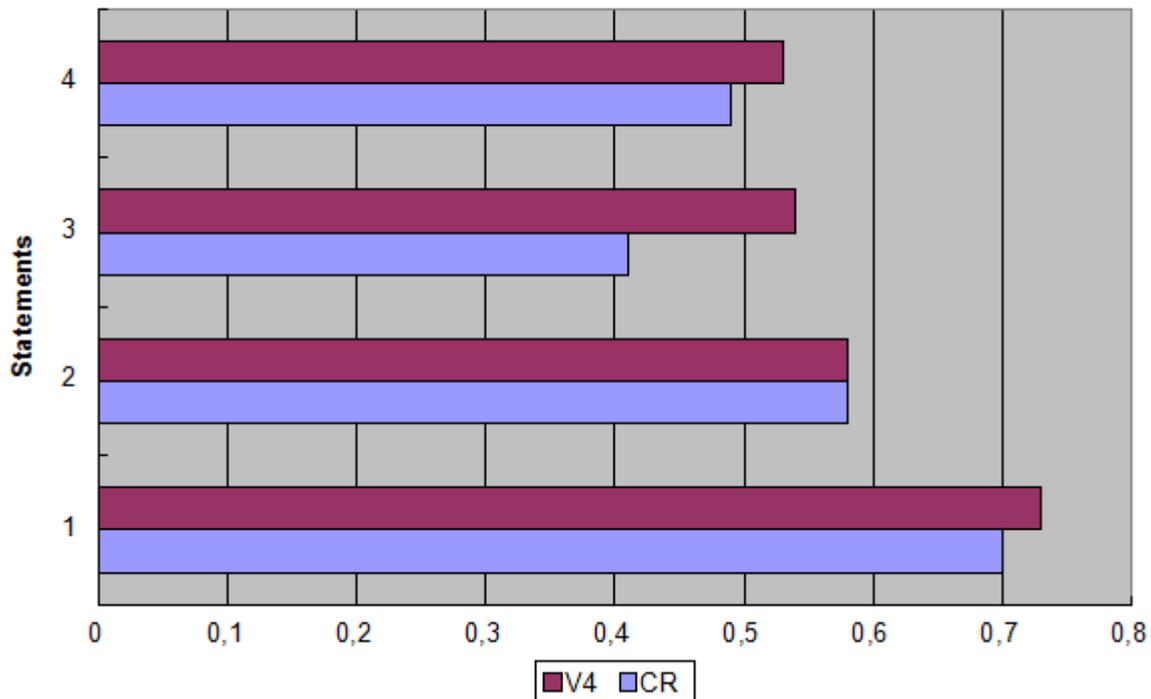
A quite positive phenomena is also with the statement S4 where **nearly a half of respondents believe that they can influence companies output in the marketplace. Such a feeling have mainly respondents with a higher education (61%).**

A good result was reached also with the statement S3 where majority of respondents (41%) confirmed that an individual effort turned to the Environment could persuade others to do the same.



Interesting results are reached when comparing the Czech respondents with the average of V4 countries:

### Agreeing - Comparison between CR and V4 countries



Again, Czech respondents are below or matching (S2) the V4 average as regards an agreeing attitude to the statements mentioned above. To be more accurate, the “position” of Czech respondents is as follows:

- With S1 **they were the last to believe in the power of a consumer to effect the Environment or the society** reaching “just” 70% in agreeing compared with: 75% reached in Poland and Hungary and 71% in Slovakia.
- With S2 they are quite optimistic ones being the 2<sup>nd</sup> (58%) to believe that personal choices can contribute to solving environmental issues (Poland 66%, Hungary 55%, Slovakia 53%).
- With S3 the gap in “agreeing” is quite a big one, **Czech respondents do not believe so strongly that an individual effort in protecting the Environment could persuade others to do the same. Only 41% of them agreed with the statement opposite to 61% of the V4 average!** Polish believers reached the top position with 63%.
- With S4 **Czech respondents were the last again to believe that purchasing decision could influence companies** reaching “just” 49% in agreeing compared with: 63% reached in Poland, 53% reached in Hungary and 51% reached in Slovakia.

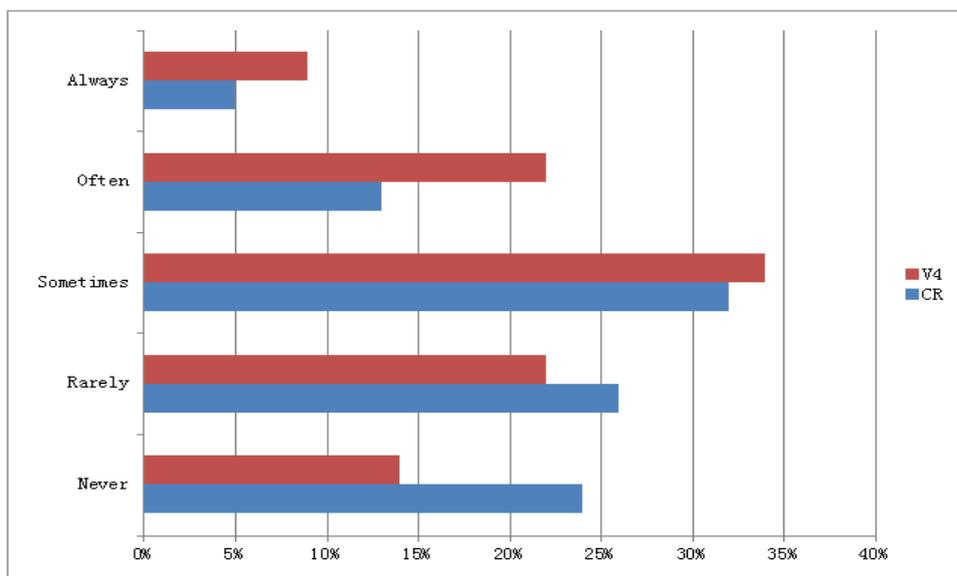
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Czech respondents possess a kind of consumer effectiveness and perceived sense of market influence as most of them agreed with all given statements. Nevertheless they are not big “believers”, as they did not reach the V4 average in 3 of 4 being the last in 2 of these!

## Consumers behavior in the past 12 months

We also asked the consumers how often, if at all, they under took concrete actions. Three of the questions related to the **before purchase phrase**: looking for information, avoiding the purchase of unethical products and buying sustainable products. The other five concerned the **post purchase behavior**: rationalization of the laundry process, and proceeding with used products: repairing them, passing and swapping , segregating and composting.

Now, let’s have a look at the answers given by Czech respondents with each statement related to **before purchase phrase**. The results for “**I avoid the purchase of products made by companies considered unethical** (environment unfriendly, abusing their workers)” are shown in the graph below:

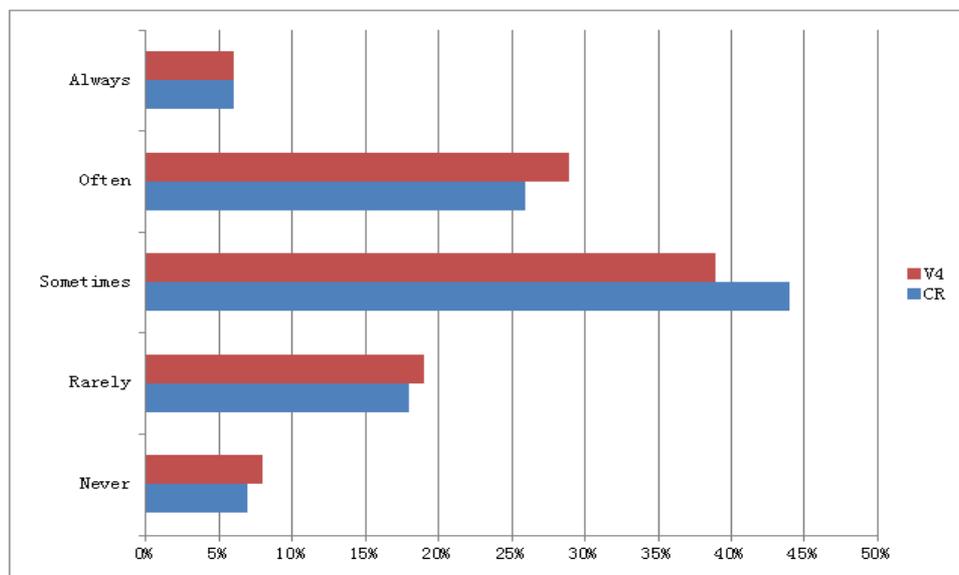


It is evident from the graph that Czech respondents did not feel “unethically” so much as their neighbors as their answers were below the V4 average in a “positive feeling”, while in neglecting

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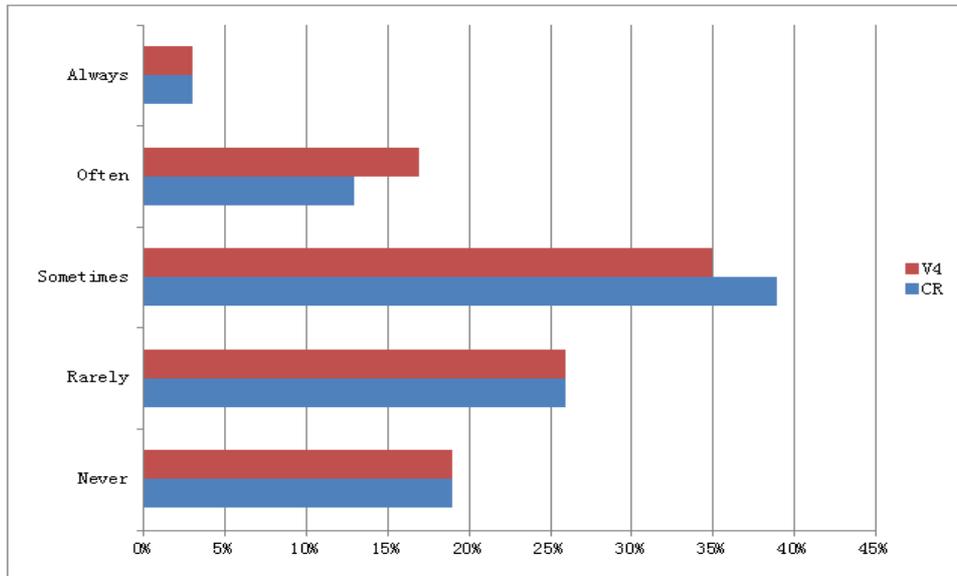
they were above. **The result for “never” is quite alarming one: nearly ¼ of Czech respondents do not care about unethical products!** When summing up the “negative answers” (rarely and never) we get even more alarming results: **50% of Czech respondents do not care about unethical products!** To compare, the results for Poland were 37%, for Slovakia 32% and for Hungary “only”24%”!

The results for “**I buy a product because it was manufactured ecologically, (i.e. without a harmful influence on the environment and human health, or produced respecting rights of workers))**” are shown in the graph below:



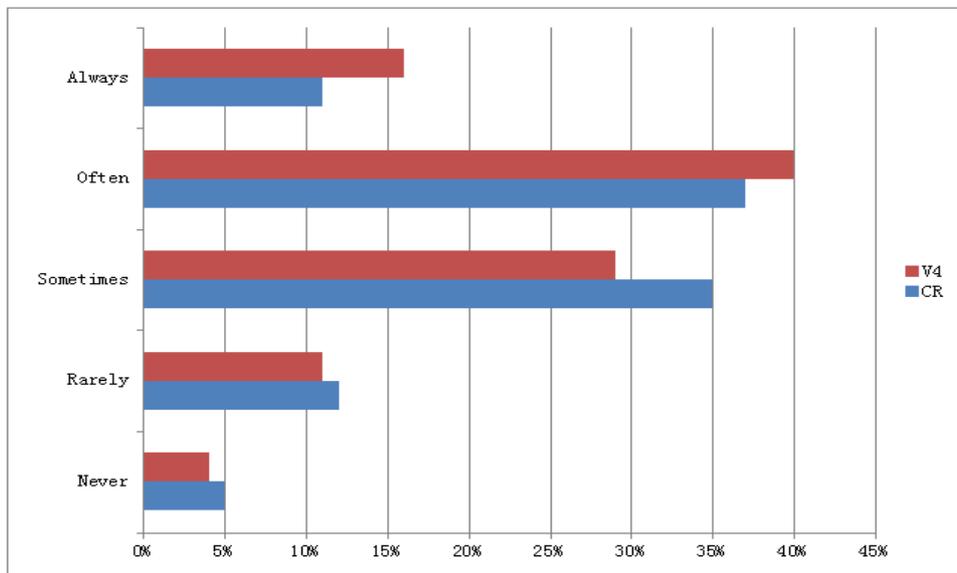
The results for ecological products are not so alarming ones as for S1. In neglecting the Czech numbers are even below the V4 average.

The results for “**I look for information about ecological and ethical aspects of the companies’ activity behavior**”, are shown in the graph below:



The actual trend, i.e. most people look for information about ecological and ethical aspects, is confirmed for all the countries of V4. The numbers are the following: CR 55%, Poland 58%, Slovakia 57% and Hungary 52%.

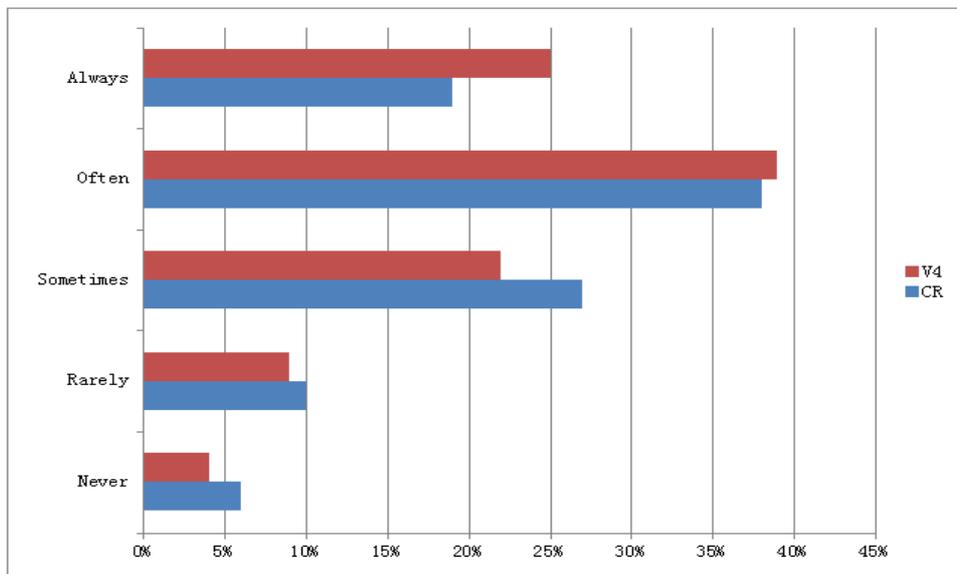
Now, let's have a look at the answers given by Czech respondents with each statement related to **post purchase behavior**. The results for **“We repair damaged products (for example clothes/textiles) and use them until can't be repaired”** are shown in the graph below:



It is evident from the graph that **most Czech respondents (8 from 10) tend to “use” a product until it cannot be repaired** but still the numbers are below the V4 average (83% to 85%).

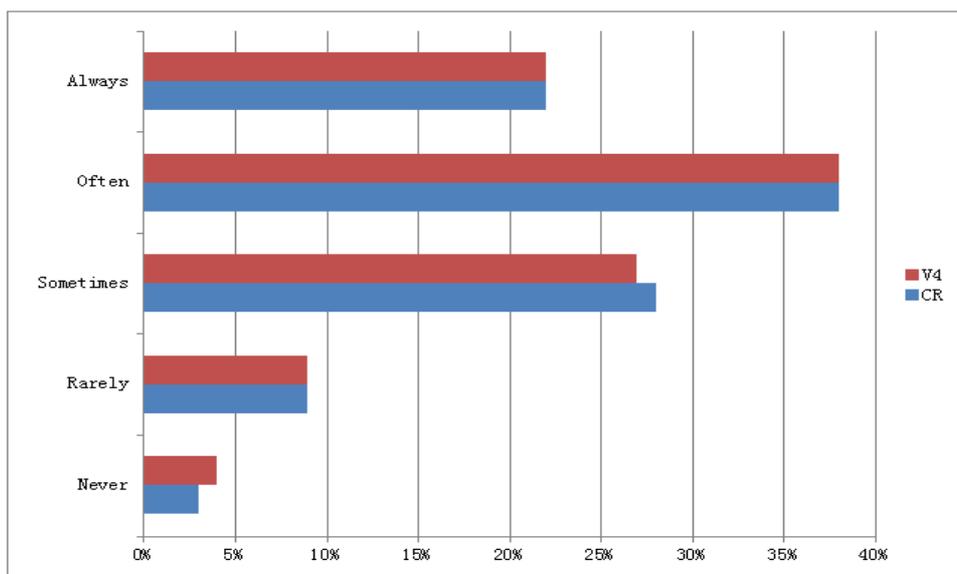
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The results for “**We try to rationalize the laundry process**” are shown in the graph below:



As regards laundry process rationalization, **6 from 10 of Czech respondents (57%) try to rationalize their laundry process** always or often washing e.g. at lower temperatures, using eco-detergents or even avoiding ironing if possible compared with 6% who never do that. **Nevertheless, Czech respondents were again below the V4 average** (for example in Hungary the number of people who always or often rationalize their laundry process is 76!

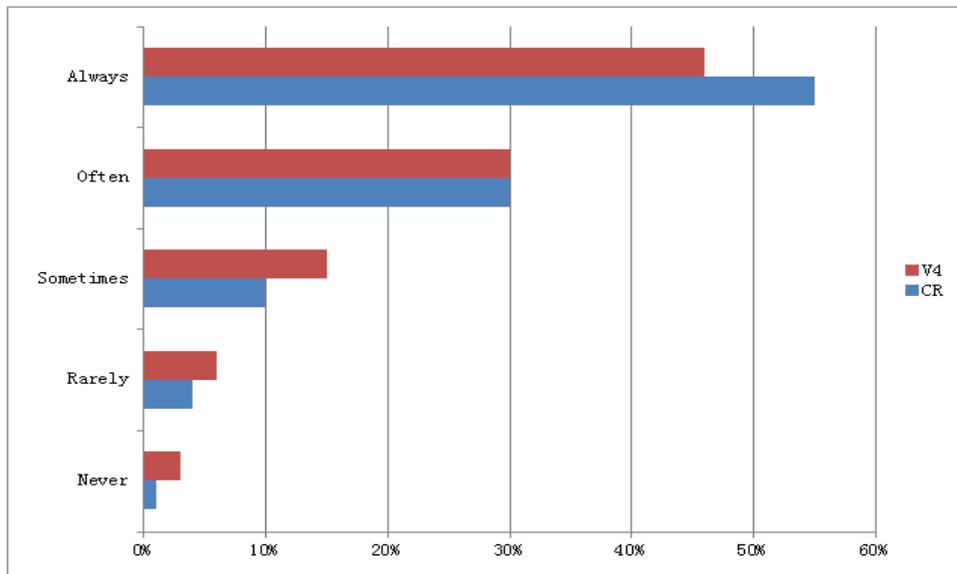
The results for “**We pass used products (for example clothing) on to friends, family, charity and re-use local events, taking part in an clothing-swap event**” are shown in the graph below:



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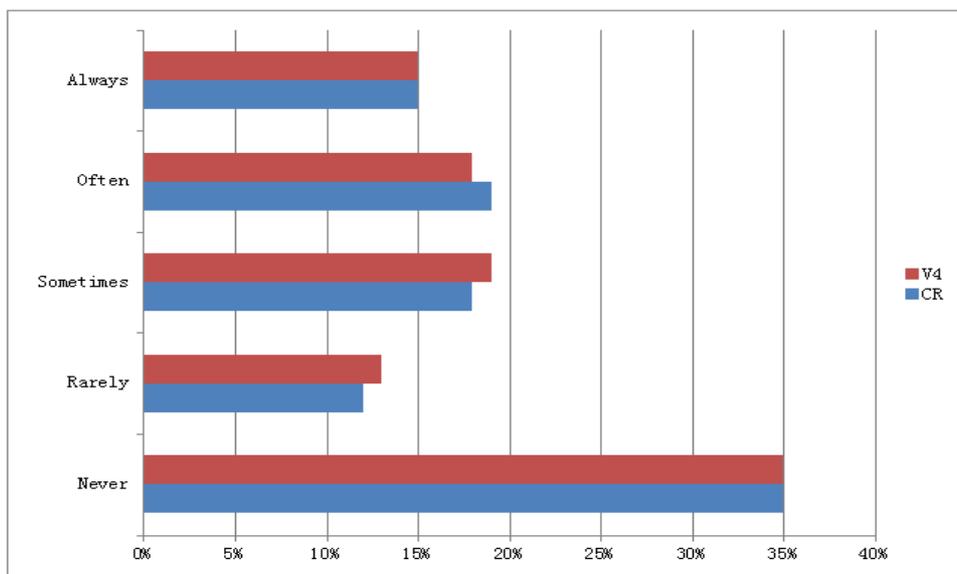
The resulting numbers perfectly match the V4 average. It is: **6 from 10 of Czech respondents pass used products further on compared with 3% who have never done that.**

The results for **“We segregate household garbage”** are shown in the graph below:



The numbers of that category were “the best” (85%). **Czech respondents segregate household garbage most of the V4 countries. Only 1% of them have never done that. It is a very positive outcome! 5 from 10 of Czech respondents, always segregate their garbage.**

The results for **“We make compost with the food waste at home”** are shown in the graph below:



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The resulting numbers perfectly match the V4 average. It is: **1/3 of Czech respondents make compost at home (always or often) compared with 1/3, who have never done that.**

**To sum up the results on Czech respondents, we could confirm the following:**

As regards the **results for before purchase behavior** Czech people were reaching mostly numbers below the V4 average. **The alarming facts are:**

- 5 from 10 do not care about unethical products (they rather or never care)
- Only 1/3 of Czech respondents buy products because they were made ecologically (always or often)
- Nearly a half of Czech respondents (45%) do not read information on ecological and ethical aspects of the companies' activity behavior

We can suppose that Czech respondents are not educated in Ecology or Ethical Issues related to **before purchase behavior** as 5 from 10 do not care about unethical products and do not read information on ecological and ethical aspects of companies' activity behavior!

As regards the **results for post purchase behavior** Czech people were below the V4 average with the first two statements **related to repairing damaged products and the laundry process**. 5 from 10 repair damaged products and 6 from 10 try to rationalize their laundry process. **The positive results (above the V4 average) were reached with the last two statements related to garbage segregation and compost creation.**

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We can suppose that Czech respondents act Environment-Friendly **after purchasing** as 8 from 10 segregate home garbage and 3 from 10 compost food-waste at home!

To sum up, Czech interviewees were relatively less active in their **before purchase** behavior while **were super active in their post purchase behavior.**

Czech consumers **do not manifest moral boycott much** as 5 from 10 do not care about unethical products.

- ❖ *Moral boycott – avoidance of particular products, services and companies that are deemed to follow unsustainable practices*

As regards **Positive Buying**, Czech consumers were not showing much care either, as **only 1/3 of them buy products because they were made ecologically.**

- ❖ *Positive buying — favoring more sustainable products and businesses that operate on principles based on benefit for the greater good rather than self-interest.*

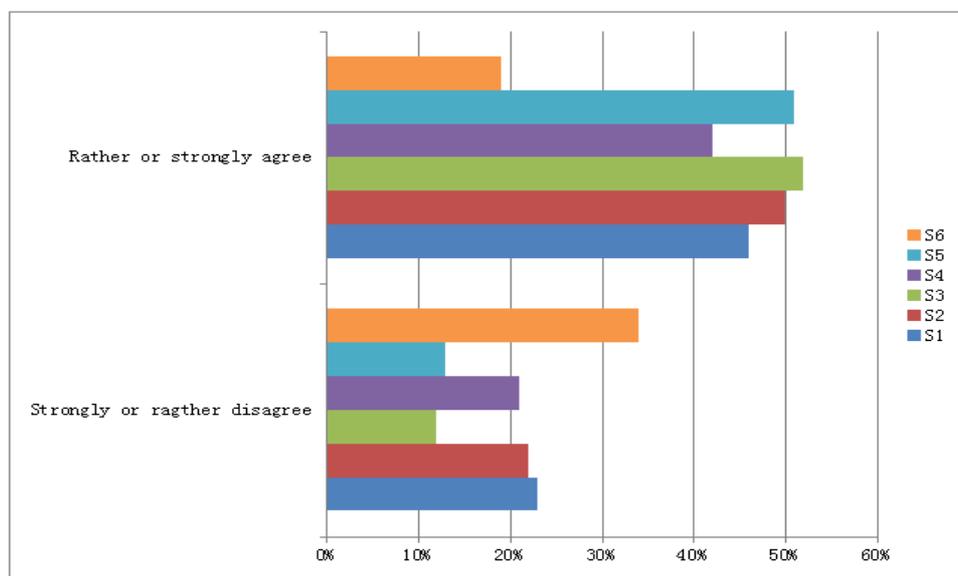
### Barriers

Another important aim of the survey was to identify the main barriers to the introducing more sustainable consumption patterns and therefore development of “eco market”. Respondents were asked how much do they agree or disagree with the statements concerning following sustainable consumption barriers:

- Difficulties to distinguish between sustainable and unsustainable products (S1)
- Lack of confidence in the eco-labels (S2)
- Higher price of sustainable products (S3)
- Lack of time for searching more sustainable options (S4)
- Insufficient availability of the sustainable products (S5)
- Unsatisfactory attractiveness of sustainable products (S6)

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The Czech results for the a.m. statements S1 to S6 are shown in the graph below:



We can conclude the following from these:

- **5 from 10 of Czech respondents have problems** with sustainable and unsustainable product differentiation
- **5 from 10 of Czech respondents have very low confidence in eco-labels**
- **5 from 10 of Czech respondents consider eco-products to be too expensive to buy**
- **4 from 10 of Czech respondents to not have time to search more sustainable products**
- **5 from 10 of Czech respondents do not consider the supply of sustainable products to be good enough**
- **2 from 10 of Czech respondent consider sustainable products to be “less” attractive**

Comparing the results with the V4 countries the considerable difference is only with the first two statements, in the next 4 the difference is only about 2%). As regards S1 Czech people seem to have bigger problems to distinguish products (46% to 41% of the V4 average). On contrary with S2, Czech respondents reached 50% compared to the V4 average of 54%).

The biggest barriers are then: differentiation of sustainable products, price of sustainable products and the supply of sustainable products together with the eco-label confidence.

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The least important barrier turned out to be unsatisfactory attractiveness of sustainable products. Only one fifth of respondents agreed that sustainable/green products are less attractive for them (for example food less tasty, clothes less stylish, often of poor quality).

The biggest barriers are: differentiation of sustainable products, price of sustainable products and the supply of sustainable products together with the eco-label confidence – as **5 from 10 Czech respondents confirmed.**

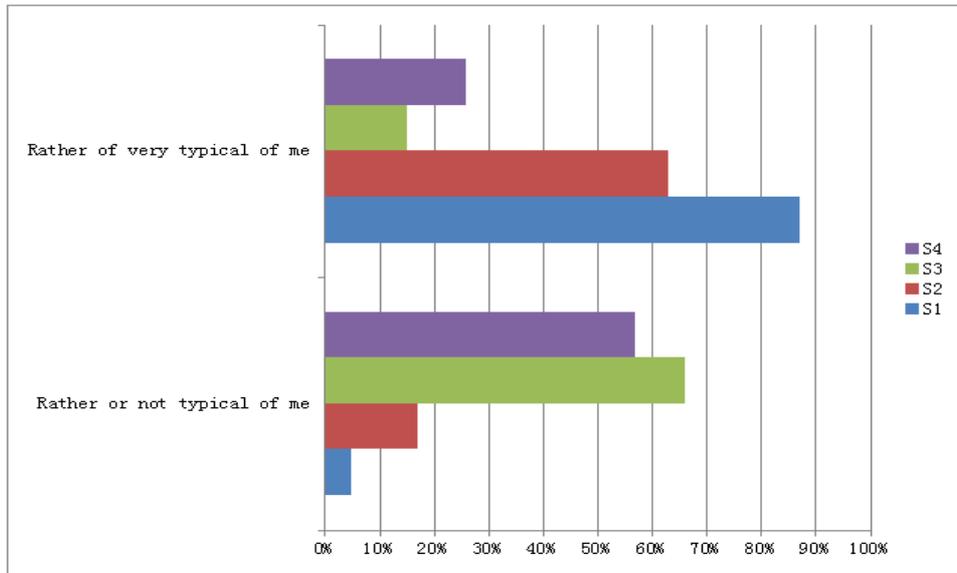
## Consumerism in the Czech Republic

The gradual environmental degradation, the shrinking of non-renewable resources, the falling quality of life and increasingly common cases of unethical behavior were all directly or indirectly arising from snowballing consumption [8]. It was therefore important to see to what extent Czech consumers manifest these negative behaviors expressed through unreasonably high consumption level known as consumerism.

The statements related to this topic were the following:

- I buy things only if I really need them (S1)
- I find it hard to resist discount (S2)
- It happens sometimes that I buy something but then I hardly ever use it (S3)
- Sometimes I shop just for the pleasure of shopping (S4)

The Czech results for the a.m. statements S1 to S6 are shown in the graph below:



We can conclude the following from these:

- **8 from 10 of Czech respondents buy things only if they need them**
- **6 from 10 of Czech respondents find it hard to resist discounts**
- **6 from 10 of Czech respondents hardly buy things they do not use afterwards**
- **6 from 10 of Czech respondents do not shop just for pleasure of shopping**

To sum up, a **large majority (87%) of Czech respondents manifests rather non-consumeristic attitude, declaring, that they buy things only when they really need them.** However, it could be caused because of their economic limitations. **The number was biggest of all the V4 countries,** where Poland reached 73%, Slovakia 66% and Hungary 76%.

Czech respondents are the strongest to manifest non-consumeristic attitude as 8 from 10 buy things only if they need them!

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The **biggest number was also reached** with the statement 2, where Czech respondents turned out to be **difficulties in resisting discounts: 6 from 10 of Czech respondents** confirmed they find it hard to resist discount. The numbers of other V4 countries were much lower: 39% in Poland, 36% in Slovakia and 32% in Hungary.

Shopping just for pleasure or buying products that are hardly ever used, are not typical for Czech respondents.

### About the Fund

The International Visegrad Fund is an international organization based in Bratislava founded by the governments of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries—the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland, and the Slovak Republic—in Štířín, Czech Republic, on June 9, 2000

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