

# European Environmental Technologies Action Plan



## Plan of Action

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The European Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP) brings together a range of existing and proposed actions to stimulate innovation and address barriers that make it difficult for environmental technologies to achieve successful market penetration in the European Union. It uses the 'open method of co-ordination' to exchange best practice between EU countries, and to develop indicators, guidelines and other tools to achieve its aims.

Since its launch in 2004, EU Member States have produced national 'roadmaps' showing how their own activity contributes to the implementation of ETAP, to make it easier to share ideas. The UK roadmap, drawing together existing work from all levels of government, was published in December 2005. It can be found at: [http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/envt\\_ech/pdf/roadmap.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/envt_ech/pdf/roadmap.pdf).

To exchange best practice, the European Commission is developing a 'champions' scheme to identify the most successful and promising activities in EU countries and the UK is actively participating in this process. Indeed, there is significant European interest in our first proposed 'champion' – the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISP) – a business-led initiative that aims to improve resource efficiency and create sustainable commercial opportunities by identifying and implementing synergies that will lead to waste or low-value outputs from one industry becoming useful and competitively priced inputs for others (see [www.nisp.org.uk](http://www.nisp.org.uk) for more information).

### European Framework

It is clear that Europe provides much support for R&D at both national and EU level. This support will continue – and it is estimated that up to 30 per cent of the €32bn budget for co-operation under the 7th EU Research Framework Programme (2007-13) could address environmental technologies. In addition, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Commission are developing a joint Risk Sharing Finance Facility to improve access to finance for private-sector and public research that has a higher than average risk profile and

that is not easily covered by the market. It is expected to allow the EIB to grant loans up to €10bn.

However, it is also clear from the national roadmaps that Europe needs to do more to help innovations get to the market. To support this, €433M has been allocated to eco-innovation in the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) for 2007-12 – of which approximately €228M will be co-invested with private-sector capital in eco-innovation managed by the European Investment Fund. An additional €728M is also envisaged to support energy efficiency and renewable energies.

Moreover, Europe needs to increase its focus on using demand-side measures to create conditions that enable consumers to choose sustainable technologies – and progress is being made in this area. For instance, public procurement can be used to create the critical mass needed for the market success of sustainable technologies. The UK successfully lobbied its EU partners to agree to an ambitious target – in the Review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy in 2006 – for the average performance in green public procurement across the EU to be equal by 2010 to that of the current best-performing member states. The European Commission is now developing indicators to measure progress towards this objective, together with guidelines in a range of product groups. The member states, meanwhile, are developing national action plans to make green public procurement a reality.

The European Commission is also developing proposals for improving the environmental performance of products, and in late 2007 or early 2008 they plan a public consultation to identify the best way of working with industry to set product performance targets. In addition, the Commission is looking at ways to provide trust and confidence for customers in the environmental performance of new technologies, and is assessing options for the establishment of a European Environmental Technologies Verification System, that will allow performance claims to be independently verified and certified.

### Eco-innovation

Activities to support eco-innovation have included the establishment of a regular European Forum on Eco-innovation to bring together actors and interested parties at all stages of the eco-innovation process – from research to the mass-market – on selected strategic topics. The aim is to facilitate cross-fertilisation, identify common objectives, raise awareness, mobilise action – and to make better policy. The first forum, held in Poznan (Poland) in November 2006, was devoted to financing eco-innovation. The theme of the second one (in Brussels in June 2007) is markets for sustainable construction. The third forum in November will form part of the public consultation on a European verification system.

In addition, the European Commission is working on a proposal for a networked observatory to gather data and analyse trends in eco-innovation in order to provide timely and strategic knowledge for decision-makers in the private and public sector. Also in progress is a review of the guidelines on Environmental State Aid, which will include guidance on aid for business aiming to invest in environmental technologies.

Finally, there are wider developments in Europe that affect the context in which ETAP operates – mainly as a result of increasing awareness about the potential impact of climate change, but specifically following the Stern Report's analysis of climate change in economic terms. These developments include the recent agreed 20 per cent target for renewable energy, the call for Strategic Energy Technologies Plan, and the German Presidency's emphasis on eco-innovation. So there are signs that ETAP may rise higher up the EU agenda as some of its promise is realised in the form of effective measures that contribute to the EU taking advantage of the economic opportunities in the shift to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy. ●

For more information visit:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/etap/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/etap/index_en.htm)