

EU Launches new Eco-Innovation Action Plan - helping businesses to deliver green growth and environmental benefits

Submitted by: Spellbound PR

Thursday, 15 December 2011

EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Eco-innovation Action Plan Launched: helping business to deliver green growth and environmental benefits.

Brussels, 15 December 2011 – Eco-innovation is crucial to delivering the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The new [Eco-InnovationActionPlan(EcoAP)http://ec.europa.eu/environment/etap/index_en.html] will boost innovation that reduces pressure on the environment, and bridge the gap between innovation and the market. Eco-friendly technologies are good for business and help create new jobs, so eco-innovation is crucial to the economic competitiveness of Europe.

The EcoAP is one of the commitments of the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative, building on the 2004 [Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP)http://ec.europa.eu/environment/etap/files/com_2004_etap_en.pdf] It expands the focus from green technologies to the broader concept of eco-innovation, targeting specific bottlenecks, challenges and opportunities for achieving environmental objectives through innovation. The EcoAP includes actions both on the demand and supply side, on research and industry and on policy and financial instruments. The Plan recognizes the key role of environmental regulation as a driver of eco-innovation and foresees a review of environmental legislation. It also stresses the importance of research and innovation to produce more innovative technologies and bring them to the market. The Plan also puts emphasis on the international aspect of eco-innovation, and on better coordination of policies with international partners.

Environment Commissioner Janez Potonik said: "The innovation challenge for this Century will be making our resources go further - doing more with less – and reducing the impact of our activities. Europe must be in the lead in meeting that challenge if we want to be competitive in a world of increasing resource constraints. Worldwide demand for environmental technologies, products and services is growing rapidly even in these difficult times, and it's an area where Europe has much to offer. This is a plan for green jobs and green growth."

The Action Plan will accelerate eco-innovation across all sectors of the economy with well targeted actions. To help create stronger and more stable market demand for eco-innovation, it will take measures in the areas of regulatory incentives, private and public procurement and standards and it will mobilise support for Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to improve investment readiness and networking opportunities.

Key aspects of the new Action Plan include:

1. Using environmental policy and legislation to promote eco-innovation;
2. Supporting demonstration projects and partnering to bring promising, smart and ambitious operational technologies to market;

3. Developing new standards to boost eco-innovation;
4. Mobilising financial instruments and support services for SMEs;
5. Promoting international co-operation;
6. Supporting the development of emerging skills and jobs and related training programmes to match labour market needs; and
7. Promoting eco-innovation through European Innovation Partnerships

Next Steps

Implementation of the plan will be via partnership between stakeholders, private and public sector, and the Commission. The upcoming mid-term financial review will provide a good opportunity to assess the achievement of the goals set in this Action Plan. New efforts will focus on product development and demonstration activities to fill the gap between technology and market uptake.

Background

Eco-Innovation is any form of innovation resulting in or aiming at significant and demonstrable progress towards the goal of sustainable development, through reducing impacts on the environment, enhancing resilience to environmental pressures, or achieving a more efficient and responsible use of natural resources.

European eco-industries are a significant economic sector with an annual turnover estimated at EUR 319 billion, or about 2.5 % of EU GDP.

Further information:

[Eco-innovation Action Plan (EcoAP)http://ec.europa.eu/environment/etap/index_en.html]

[Innovation Union Flagship Initiativehttp://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm]

Contacts :

Joe Hennon (+32 2 295 35 93)

Monica Westeren (+32 2 299 18 30)

UK Press contact: Naomi van Moppes – 07714 220960 or email naomi@spellboundpr.com