

Guide to EU environmental policy and initiatives

Below you can read some information on European Policies of global relevance. You can find more information about these policies on the webpages of the European Commission.

If you would like to know more about the involvement of CEN and CENELEC and the environmental media-specific policies, please contact EHD.

Europe 2020 Strategy

The Europe 2020 Strategy is the European Union's growth strategy for the next decade and aims at establishing a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy with high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

1. Sustainable Development

The great challenge faced by economies today is to integrate environmental sustainability with economic growth and to move towards an energy and resource efficient economy. Sustainable development refers to a mode of human development in which resource use aims to meet human needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural systems and the environment, so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come

2. Sustainable Consumption and Production Policies

The European Commission presented a series of proposals on sustainable consumption and production that contribute to improving the environmental performance of products and increase the demand for more sustainable goods and production technologies. The proposals also seek to encourage EU industry to take advantage of opportunities to innovate.

The building blocks of the European Union's policy on sustainable consumption and production are an integral part of the European Union's renewed Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS).

These proposals include:

- ❖ [Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy](#)

[\(SCP/SIP\) Action Plan](#)

It includes a series of proposals that will contribute to improving the environmental performance of products and increase the demand for more sustainable goods and production technologies.

❖ [Sustainable Buildings](#)

The general objective of this new initiative is to reduce the environmental impact of buildings by improving the overall resource efficiency and, as a consequence, improve the related competitiveness of construction businesses.

❖ [Sustainable food](#)

The Commission will assess how best to limit waste throughout the food supply chain, and consider ways to lower the environmental impact of food production and consumption patterns, via the Communication on Sustainability of the Food System expected to be published in 2014.

❖ [Environmental Technology Verification \(ETV\)](#)

ETV is a new tool to help innovative environmental technologies reach the market. The problem at the moment is that many clever new ideas that can benefit environment and health are not taken up simply because they are new and untried.

Under ETV, claims about innovative environmental technologies can be verified by qualified third parties called 'Verification Bodies'. The 'Statement of Verification' delivered at the end of the ETV process can be used as evidence that the claims made about the innovation are both credible and scientifically sound.

❖ [Single market for green products](#)

The Single Market for Green Products initiative proposes a set of actions to overcome the problems of proving the product's green credentials across Europe by making the diverse environmental information coherent and comparable.

The EC developed two methods to measure environmental performance throughout the lifecycle, the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and the Organisation Environmental Footprint (OEF). The methods are undergoing a testing by volunteers.

❖ [Eco-Management and Audit Scheme \(EMAS\)](#)

The EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a management tool for companies and other organisations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental performance.

❖ [Ecolabel Scheme](#)

It is a voluntary scheme designed to encourage businesses to market products and services that are kinder to the environment and for European consumers - including public and private purchasers - to easily identify them.

❖ [Environmental Technologies Action Plan \(ETAP\)](#)

Since 2004, ETAP covers a spectrum of actions to promote eco-innovation and the take-up of environmental technologies. ETAP complements the DG's regulatory approaches and directly addresses the three dimensions of the Lisbon strategy: growth, jobs and the environment.

❖ [Eco-innovation Action Plan \(EcoAP\)](#)

The Eco-innovation Action Plan (EcoAP) is a logical successor to the ETAP, moving the EU beyond green technologies and fostering a comprehensive range of eco-innovative processes, products and services. This strategy aims to support the transition to a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy. Among its Flagship Initiatives is Innovation Union (IU), designed to turn innovative ideas into products and services that generate growth and jobs.

❖ [Green Public Procurement \(GPP\)](#)

Green Public Procurement is much more than just purchasing recycled paper for offices. It is about tapping into a huge market where the environmental impact related to the production, transportation, use and disposal of goods and related services can be reduced.

❖ [Eco-design](#)

The environmental impacts of Energy-using Products take various forms, such as energy consumption and related negative contribution to climate change, consumption of materials and natural resources, waste generation and release of hazardous substances. Eco-design, which means the integration of environmental considerations at the design phase, is arguably the best way to improve the environmental performance of products.

The Ecodesign Directive provides with consistent EU-wide rules for improving the environmental performance of energy related products (the use of which has an impact on energy consumption) through eco-design. It prevents disparate national legislations on the environmental performance of these products from becoming obstacles to the intra-EU trade. This should benefit both businesses and consumers, by enhancing product quality and environmental protection and by facilitating free movement of goods across the EU.

❖ [European Compliance Assistance Programme - Environment & SMEs](#)

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) traditionally find it harder to comply with environmental legislation than their larger counterparts. The European Commission has proposed an Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme to make it easier for SMEs to comply with their obligations and improve their environmental performances.

❖ [Energy labelling](#)

Energy labels help consumers choosing products which save energy and thus money. They also provide incentives for the industry to develop and invest in energy efficient product design.

3. Integrated Product Policy (IPP)

Integrated Product Policy is an approach that seeks to reduce the environmental impacts of products throughout their life cycle (from the mining of raw materials to production, distribution, use and waste management). The intention is to address potential environmental impacts at each stage of the life cycle.

4. Resource efficiency

The EC Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe (COM(2011) 571) outlines how we can transform Europe's economy into a sustainable one by 2050. It proposes ways to increase resource productivity and decouple economic growth from resource use and its environmental impact. Specific bottlenecks like inconsistencies in policy and market failures are tackled to ensure that policies are all going in the same direction.

The Resource Efficiency Roadmap provides a framework in which future actions can be designed and implemented coherently. It sets out a vision for the structural and technological change needed up to 2050, with milestones to be reached by 2020.

5. Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

The Thematic Strategy on Sustainable Use of Natural Resources is the first initiative at EU level aiming at reducing the environmental impacts associated with the use of resources in an overarching fashion. The strategy uses life-cycle thinking. With life-cycle thinking, it is possible to avoid the shifting of impacts from one stage in the life cycle to another, and to other countries.

6. Sustainable Cities - Thematic Strategy on the Urban

Environment

Europe's urban areas face a number of environmental challenges including poor air quality, high levels of traffic and congestion, urban sprawl, greenhouse gas emissions and generation of waste and waste water. These can cause environmental damage and affect human health.

Adopted by the Commission on 11 January 2006, Its goal is to facilitate better implementation of EU environmental policies and legislation at the local level through exchange of experience and good practice between Europe's local authorities.

Renewable Energy

Renewable sources of energy – wind power, solar power (thermal, photovoltaic and concentrated), hydro-electric power, tidal power, geothermal energy and biomass – are essential alternatives to fossil fuels. Their use reduces our greenhouse gas emissions, diversifies our energy supply and reduces our dependence on unreliable and volatile fossil fuel markets (in particular oil and gas). The growth of renewable energy sources also stimulates employment in Europe, the creation of new technologies and improves our trade balance.

European Platform on Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

The main objective of the LCA platform is to improve the use of LCA methods both qualitatively and quantitatively. The platform has developed a European Reference Life Cycle Database (ELCD) with reference data and recommended methods on Life Cycle Assessment to improve the practice in LCA use and interpretation.

Environment Action Programme

The 7th Environment Action Programme (EAP) that will be guiding European environment policy until 2020 entered into force in January 2014.

It identifies three key objectives:

- to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's **natural capital**
- to turn the Union into a **resource-efficient**, green, and competitive low-carbon **economy**
- to **safeguard** the Union's citizens from **environment-related pressures** and risks to health and wellbeing

Four so called "enablers" will help Europe deliver on these goals:

- better **implementation** of legislation
- better **information** by improving the knowledge base
- more and wiser **investment** for environment and climate policy
- full **integration** of environmental requirements and considerations into other policies

Two additional horizontal priority objectives complete the programme:

- to **make** the Union's **cities more sustainable**
- to help the Union **address international environmental** and **climate challenges more effectively**.

Innovation partnerships

European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) are a new approach to EU research and innovation.

EIPs act across the whole research and innovation chain, bringing together all relevant actors at EU, national and regional levels in order to: (i) step up research and development efforts; (ii) coordinate investments in demonstration and pilots; (iii) anticipate and fast-track any necessary regulation and standards; and (iv) mobilise 'demand' in particular through better coordinated public procurement to ensure that any breakthroughs are quickly brought to market.

EIPs streamline, simplify and better coordinate existing instruments and initiatives and complement them with new actions where necessary

The following Innovation partnerships are related to the environment:

- Innovation Partnership on Smart cities and Communities
- Innovation Partnership on Water
- Innovation Partnership on Raw materials