

## **Commission tables major green product plan ENDS Europe DAILY 2586, 16/07/08**

The European commission adopted a major policy package to green European manufactured products on Wednesday. The plans will extend the reach of existing EU ecodesign rules, revise and enlarge product ecolabelling practices, set new mandatory green public procurement standards and significantly overhaul the EU's corporate green management scheme.

The proposals were presented in a joint action plan uniting work developed separately by environment commissioner Stavros Dimas on sustainable production and consumption and by industry commissioner Günter Verheugen on a sustainable industry policy.

The result is a set of measures focusing almost entirely on products. It ties in with existing EU initiatives on environmental technologies ([EED 03/05/07](#)), lead markets ([EED 07/01/08](#)) and greener IT ([EED 13/05/08](#)). It also marks a high-point in the decade-long EU debate on integrated product policy ([EED 09/12/98](#)).

"A product made in Europe can only be successful in the future on the world market if it has not only quality standards but if it also is energy efficient and is good for the environment," Mr Verheugen said. "European industry will retain competitiveness only if its products and services are the most sustainable".

The centrepiece of the plan is a proposal to extend the existing energy-using products directive - now officially dubbed the ecodesign directive - by applying it to products that do not consume energy directly but whose design has energy consumption implications. Mandatory minimum standards would be developed for product groups where manufacturers fail to develop satisfactory voluntary regulation.

Arguments over the nature of the extension delayed adoption of the whole package ([EED 16/05/08](#)). Under the plans as adopted, the energy and resource-use aspects of the new product groups will be prioritised, but the standards could cover other environmental aspects (see separate article). This appears to be a victory for Mr Dimas, who said on Wednesday that the scope of the revised directive would grow from covering one-third to two-thirds of all products on the EU market ([EED 03/06/08](#)).

EU product labelling provisions will be beefed up with revisions to two major existing schemes (see separate article). The alphabetic energy label for white goods will be revised and extended to other energy-using and energy-related products, and the EU's flower ecolabel will be streamlined.

The commission also wants to give a significant boost to green public procurement and other incentives towards greener products (see separate article). It has set an indicative target for half of all procurement to be "green" by 2010. Linked to the energy labelling directive revision would be a requirement for public authorities to buy products above a certain energy class.

The package includes plans to revise and extend the European environmental management system (Emas), one of several initiatives under the heading "leaner production", including support for better resource efficiency and more eco-innovation (see separate article).

Mr Verheugen said the plans had had a broad and very warm welcome from MEPs and governments in informal presentations. The industry commissioner said the French presidency and the European parliament had agreed to treat it as a "priority project" and that he expected a first-reading agreement by next spring.

Follow-up: [European commission](#), tel: +32 2 299 1111, plus [press release](#), [background memo](#), [sustainable products page](#) and [SCP/SIP action plan](#)

## **EU proposes extension of ecodesign law** **ENDS Europe DAILY 2586, 16/07/08**

The European commission has proposed extending an EU law that sets minimum environmental performance standards for energy-using products to cover all "energy-related" goods.

The move was announced in legislative proposals to revise the 2005 "ecodesign" directive ([EED 06/04/05](#)). It is the central element in a wider EU sustainable product package (see separate article, this issue).

EU industry commissioner Günter Verheugen said possible initial target products included windows, building insulation materials and shower heads. A list of priority groups will be drawn up after the revision is finalised. Plans to target groups such as furniture and clothes have been dropped, while transport products are explicitly excluded. A review in 2012 would consider extending the ecodesign rules even further, to non-energy-related products.

The criteria for selecting products include those with annual EU sales of more than 200,000 units, those with a "significant environmental impact", or product categories that display a wide disparity of environmental performance. The standards would focus on energy- and resource-related product aspects, but could also cover considerations such as use of hazardous substances.

As in the original ecodesign law, manufacturing sectors would be encouraged to voluntarily develop and adhere to minimum standards. But Mr Verheugen said they would be given "certainly not more than two years" to follow this "preferred approach", after which the commission would propose binding standards.

Last week EU states approved the first-ever mandatory standards under the existing law, on standby losses from consumer appliances ([EED 08/07/08](#)). The treatment of energy-using products already covered in the legislation will not be affected by the revision. In addition to the minimum standards there would be stricter, but voluntary, "benchmark" standards, based on the best-achieving products in a particular category. These would give producers an "early indication of the possible future evolution of minimum requirements", says the commission. The result would be a less prescriptive version of the Japanese "top-runner" approach ([EED 16/10/07](#)).

Follow-up: [European commission](#), tel: +32 2 299 1111, plus [revision proposal](#).

## **Commission Press Release**

### **EU promotes sustainable products and technologies: a package of actions for sustainable consumption, production and industry**

*Improving the environmental performance and in particular the energy efficiency of products and stimulating their market uptake are the core objectives of a package put forward by the European Commission today. It sets out a series of voluntary and obligatory actions to support a coherent and dynamic policy in the EU and internationally, helping to define eco-friendly products, informing the consumer through improved labelling and supporting their purchase through public procurement and fiscal incentives.*

Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, responsible for enterprise and industry policy, said: "The EU has to set an example and prove that industry is capable to contribute vigorously to fight against climate change. Taking up this challenge will create a win-win situation – more growth, more jobs, more environmental protection."

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: *"In terms of our impact on the planet we are living far beyond our means. Our actions as consumers and producers worldwide are major forces behind climate change and the destruction of nature. The time has come for us to change the type of products we buy and transform our methods of production. This is why the European Commission is putting forward proposals to encourage a switch to energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly products and production."*

Commissioner Andris Piebalgs, responsible for energy policies said: *"The package puts forward a comprehensive set of measures which will contribute to the EU objectives on saving energy benefiting both the environment and the EU consumer."*

The action plan lists the initiatives the Commission will undertake in 3 areas:

## 1. A new product policy

### Energy and resource-efficient consumer products

In the absence of voluntary action, the **Ecodesign Directive presently** provides a framework for setting compulsory minimum requirements and voluntary benchmarks for energy-using products. All **energy-related products** – that do not consume energy during use but have an indirect impact on energy consumption – will also be covered in future. This will allow addressing products such as water-using devices and windows. For example, water-saving taps and shower heads reduce water consumption and therefore also the amount of energy used for hot water without altering the user's perceived well-being.

### Mandatory labelling

Mandatory labelling will indicate relevant environmental parameters for a **wider range of products**, including energy-using and energy-related products.

### Incentives and public procurement

The Commission also proposes that only products attaining a certain level of energy or environmental performance – identified by one of the labelling classes – are eligible for incentives and public procurement at national and EU levels. It will be up to Member States whether and in which form to provide incentives. Today incentives are granted for very different levels of environmental performance across the EU, sometimes in regions very near to each other thus limiting economies of scale for better performing products (see Memo 1). In addition Member States are recommended to adopt **common green procurement practices** for goods and services not (yet) covered by the above plan (see Memo 2).

### Voluntary eco labelling

The **EU Ecolabel scheme**, which indicates the most environmentally friendly products on the EU market, will be extended to cover a wider range of products and services, such as food and drink products, and made less costly and bureaucratic. These changes will make the scheme more attractive to manufacturers and encourage them to innovate and offer more such products.

### Retailers' responsibility

A Retail Forum will be created, which will also include other stakeholders such as producers and consumers' organisations. This forum will prepare actions to improve large retailers' environmental performance, promote the purchase of greener products and better inform consumers.

## 2. Promoting leaner production

With a view to promoting leaner production, the proposals foresee:

- Developing targets and tools to monitor, benchmark and promote **resource efficiency and eco-innovation**. An **Environmental Technology Verification** scheme will be established, to support eco-innovation through increased confidence in new technologies.
- Revising [EMAS, the EU's voluntary eco-management and audit](#) scheme, to increase its uptake, notably among SMEs, by making participation less costly and involving organisations outside the EU.
- Developing an **industrial policy for eco-industries** by first analysing the barriers to their expansion and to their full uptake by other sectors.

- Promoting environmental performance in **small enterprises** (SMEs) through customized advice.

### **3. Sustainable consumption and production internationally**

In order to promote sustainable products worldwide, the proposals envisage:

- Supporting **agreements of industry sectors** as part of international climate negotiations
- Promoting and sharing **good practice** internationally
- Promoting international **trade in environmentally friendly goods and services**

#### **Examples of gains in efficiency and cost reduction**

30% of the energy used in buildings could be saved with positive economic effects in 2030. Better window insulation would contribute to reducing CO2 emissions by more than one fifth, while reducing costs to households. Significant gains are also estimated for water related devices such as baths, showers and taps.

#### **More information**

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/sip\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/sip_en.htm)

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/escp\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/escp_en.htm)

A video news release on the contents of the new package is available from:

<http://www.tvlink.org/home.cfm?dg=env>