Green growth opportunities for SMEs

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PURPOSE: to propose a Green Action Plan for SMEs.

BACKGROUND: in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU has the priority to become a sustainable economy and set ambitious objectives for climate action and energy efficiency. The Small Business Act (SBA) highlighted that the EU and Member States **should enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities**.

Improving resource efficiency in SMEs offers enormous potential for the reduction of production costs and for productivity gains. A better use of resources is calculated to represent **an overall savings potential of €630 billion per year** for European industry. Too few SMEs in Europe are aware of this potential.

The Green Action Plan aims to contribute to the re-industrialisation of Europe as advocated by the communication "For a European industrial renaissance"and supported by the European Council.

It focuses on European level actions which are designed to fit in with, and reinforce existing "green" initiatives to support SMEs at national and regional levels.

CONTENT: the Green Action Plan (GAP) gives a clear direction and framework for how the EU, in partnership with Member States and regions**, intends to help SMEs exploit the business opportunities that the transition to a green economy offers**. This initiative concretely presents a series of new or revised SME-oriented actions proposed at European level.

The Plan pursues four objectives to:

1) Improve resource efficiency of European SMEs:

- by providing European SMEs with practical information, advice and support on how to improve their resource efficiency in a cost-effective manner;
- by supporting efficient technology transfer mechanisms for green technologies;
- by facilitating the access to finance for resource-related improvements and energy efficiency in SMEs.

2) Support green entrepreneurship:

- by facilitating business partnering, skills and knowledge for green entrepreneurship;
- by supporting all forms of innovation that foster green entrepreneurship;
- by aiding SMEs to explore the scientific or technical feasibility and the commercial potential of ecoinnovative;
- by better exploiting the role of clusters in support of eco-innovative SMEs, notably via the Programme COSME.

3) Exploit the opportunities of greener value chains:

- by addressing systemic barriers to cross-sectoral and cross-national value chain collaboration and business creation and cooperation, by facilitating the creation of service business models and the re-use of materials, products and waste;

- by facilitating cross-sectoral collaboration in view of promoting the circular economy which enhances resource and cost savings by maximising the time that resources, products and components are used.

4) Facilitate market access for green SMEs:

- by developing a joint strategy for internationalisation and encouraging the establishment of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships to access foreign markets;

- by facilitating the uptake of resource efficiency technology in partner countries through cooperation with European SMEs.

The Commission underlined the importance of implementing the Action Plan thoroughly. This requires the full political commitment of both the Commission and the Member States.

The actions linked to this Green Action Plan for SMEs will be regularly monitored.

The **Small Business Act governance mechanism**, and in particular the Network of SME Envoys, will be used to provide a platform to discuss implementation of best practices, results and obstacles.