

Stimulating technologies for sustainable development: an environmental technologies action plan of the European Union

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The European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report drafted by Riitta **MYLLER** (PES, FI) on the Commission's Communication on Stimulating Technologies for Sustainable Development: An Environmental Technologies Action Plan for the EU. (Please see the summary of 20/04/2005.)

Boosting demand for environmental technologies: Parliament welcomed the Communication as a useful basis for discussion and development of more concrete proposals on how to boost environmental technologies, but would like to see more emphasis on the development of the demand for such technologies. It pointed to the employment and growth potential of the environmental technologies sector, where a multitude of new business opportunities and, consequently, new jobs can be created – notably within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – which could make a crucial contribution to attaining the Lisbon objectives. Parliament recognised the role of environmental policies as a driver of innovation in market economies where innovation is sparked by exacting requirements. Strict environmental norms have led to EU leadership in many growth sectors. The EU should endeavour to remain a leader on the market for new technologies and conceptual innovations. Parliament called on the Commission to set an ambitious target with regard to the EU's share of the global market for environmental technologies. It felt that within ten years the EU should attain a market share of at least 50%. The market for environmental goods and services is growing rapidly and EU companies should continue to play an important role on this market and profit from first-mover advantage.

Creating a fair and competitive market for environmental technologies: Parliament stressed the importance of removing the barriers which slow down the wider use of environmental technologies. It called on the European Environment Agency to analyse to what extent Community rules act as a brake on the use and spread of environmental technologies. The Commission should subsequently draw up a concrete action programme to eliminate the barriers identified, including a timetable. Parliament urged the Commission to draft a report on the best practices which have increased the use of environmental technologies outside the EU, for example in Japan.

Parliament went on to call on the Commission to give the utmost priority to creating "the right market conditions" for environmental technologies, primarily through decisions at Community level, e.g. by implementing the polluter pays principle, thereby making sure that companies that offer clean technologies are rewarded. The development of environmental technologies, notably in the energy sector, has been hampered by important state aids for fossil fuels and nuclear power in the Community. Parliament strongly believed in the principle that external costs should be included in the price of energy from different sources and that this principle should be a basis for the revision of the EU state aid guidelines due in late 2005. Eco-taxes are also an important tool to get energy prices right.

Meeting the demand for environmental technology: Parliament stressed the importance of providing research with sufficient means. It recalled the agreement reached in Barcelona in 2002 to increase spending on research and development in the EU in order to approach 3% of gross domestic product by 2010, and welcomed initiatives to increase funding and coordinate efforts in this field. The Seventh Framework Programme for Research must provide funding for environmental technologies. Parliament

called on the Commission, in the proposals for the next Framework Programme for Research, to draw up a strategic research agenda per economic sector in consultation with all parties concerned (producers, environmental organisations, universities, research institutes and consumers).

Coherent policies on an internal as well as an external level: Parliament called on the Commission to make an assessment of internal and external spill-over effects of policies within the EU from the point of view of sustainable development in order to avoid objectives of the EU being undermined. ETAP must be coordinated with existing initiatives.

Finally, Parliament emphasised that sustainable development requires global solutions and welcomed all initiatives to promote environmental technologies in developing countries. Exports of outdated and polluting technology to third countries must be discouraged. The EU should take a leading role in technology transfer. Parliament urged the Member States to encourage the public sector, the private sector and international financial institutions to promote environmental technologies and to give priority to environmental technologies in their lending while denying financial support to outdated and polluting technologies. It welcomed the recently adopted OECD recommendation on Common Approaches on Environment and Officially Supported Export Credits.