



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

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Green Action Plan for SMEs: combining a lasting recovery with a resource-efficient European economy

Resource efficiency is one of the main drivers of companies' competitiveness since European manufacturing firms spend, on average, 40% of their costs on raw materials, with energy and water pushing this to 50% of total manufacturing costs, to be compared to a share of 20% for labour costs.

Today's *Green Action Plan (GAP) for SMEs: Enabling SMEs to turn environmental challenges into business opportunities* (see [IP/14/766](#)) emphasises the role of green growth in ensuring a lasting economic recovery within the longer term vision of a resource-efficient and low-carbon European economy.

Key objectives and actions

More specifically, the Green Action Plan sets out a series of objectives and lists actions that will be implemented at European level within the framework of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020.

The objectives foreseen and corresponding actions are grouped in five sections:

1. Greening SMEs for more competitiveness and sustainability

Provide European SMEs with **practical information, advice and support** on how to improve their resource efficiency in a cost-effective manner:

- The European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre will advise and assist SMEs seeking to improve their resource efficiency performance, directly and through a network of partners across European regions. It shall become a reference point on the effectiveness of different types of resource efficiency improvements across the EU;
- The Eurobarometer on 'SMEs, resource efficiency and green markets' will assess resource efficiency trends amongst SMEs across Europe and the US;
- The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) will be encouraged to organise a European Resource Efficiency Campaign with awareness raising activities to inform SMEs of the benefits of resource efficiency;
- Managing Authorities of European Structural and Investment Funds will be supported in encouraging projects in the field of resource efficiency and in publicising the business opportunities of green markets.

Support **efficient technology transfer mechanisms** for green technologies:

- Revision of the classification methodology of green technologies in the technology transfer database of the Enterprise Europe Network;

- EEN partners will be invited to ensure close cooperation between the different sector groups dealing with resource efficiency.

Facilitate the access to finance for resource-related improvements and energy efficiency in SMEs:

- Provide accessible information for SMEs on actions in support of resource efficiency improvements;
- European Investment Bank to provide financing through financial intermediaries for resource efficiency improvements;
- Private Finance for Energy Efficiency instruments (PF4EE) will target SMEs and mid-cap larger companies undertaking small energy efficiency investments;
- A network of public and private financiers and investors that support eco-innovation will be established;
- European Regional Development Fund will support SMEs' competitiveness, including improving energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources.

2. Green entrepreneurship for the companies of the future

Promote all forms of **eco-innovation**, including non-technological eco-innovation:

- The SME Instrument under Horizon 2020 will help SMEs explore the feasibility and the commercial potential of highly eco-innovative ideas;
- The societal challenge 'Climate Action, Environment, resource Efficiency and Raw Materials' under Horizon 2020 support increasing resource efficiency through a systemic approach towards eco-innovation and the circular economy.

Facilitate business **partnering, skills and knowledge** for green entrepreneurship:

- The Green Employment Initiative proposes a comprehensive roadmap for skills development for the greening of the economy;
- Environmental Technology Verification (ETV) will be supported to help verify the performance of innovative environmental technologies;
- New business models for resource and energy efficiency in SMEs will be supported through the LIFE programme;
- The European Enterprise Promotion Awards will recognise the efforts to support green entrepreneurship.

Exploit better the role of **clusters** in support of eco-innovative SMEs:

- Integrate resource efficiency as a specific topic in trainings under the Cluster Excellence Programme.

3. Opportunities for SMEs in a greener value chain

- Address 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**;
- Analysis of the systemic barriers impeding the deployment of circular business models by SMEs;

Facilitate **cross-sectoral collaboration** in view of promoting the circular economy:

- The forthcoming action on 'Cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains' under Horizon 2020 will support cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaboration and innovation projects driven by SMEs and allocate at least 75% of the total budget to SMEs;

- The European Cluster Observatory will provide regions with a better mapping of geographic concentrations of competences in eco-industries;
- Model regions showcasing systemic eco-innovative solutions will be identified;
- The LIFE programme will promote the take-up of circular economy models and showcase their benefits for SMEs;
- Establishment of an expert group to focus on a systemic approach to eco-innovation.

4. Access to the markets for green SMEs

Promote a **greener European internal market**:

- Encourage European Standardisation Organisations to take into account circular economy objectives.

Facilitate access to **international markets** for green entrepreneurs:

- Establishment of European Strategic Cluster Partnerships with joint strategies for internationalisation;
- International matchmaking missions will encourage cooperation in the fields of resource efficiency and eco-innovation;
- Financial instruments under COSME will support SMEs to internationalise.

Facilitate the uptake of resource efficiency technology in partner countries through cooperation with European SMEs;

- Provision of technical assistance for the establishment of Cooperation Partnerships between EU businesses and clusters and their counterparts in middle income countries for low carbon business collaboration;
- Building of new entrepreneurial activities based on green technologies in South Mediterranean countries through cooperation with European SMEs.

5. Governance

Ensure **monitoring and updating of the actions** set up by the Commission to support SMEs in this domain:

- The actions linked to this Green Action Plan for SMEs will be regularly monitored and evaluated in dialogue with SME stakeholders, and information will be provided through the Commission website;
- The SME Performance Review will complement the Green Action Plan monitoring.

Coordination, cooperation and best practices exchange at European, national and regional level will be supported:

- The Network of SME Envoys will be used to discuss implementation of best practices, results and obstacles;

Coordination will be established with the EcoAP High Level Working Group to ensure exploitation of synergies between the various initiatives.