

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 2004 ELECTION MANIFESTO –
SUGGESTIONS FOR CONCRETE COMMITMENTS**

SETTING UP THE DRIVERS FOR A STRONG EU ECOLOGICAL PRODUCT POLICY

As an increasing share of environmental degradation derives from diffuse sources a more systematic approach for designing products, services or even entire systems to meet our needs is necessary (so called *demand-side management*). Since any product policy affects both the internal market and world trade issues, a strong profile for the EU is necessary.

The environmental NGOs were greatly disappointed with the Communication on Integrated Product Policy (IPP) – Building on Lifecycle Thinking, published by the Commission in June 2003. The Communication fails to address the key challenges facing ecological product policy, mostly crucially that of actively driving and co-ordinating the policy process at EU level and providing a sufficiently robust vehicle for achieving the multiple product policy objectives under the Sixth Environmental Action Programme Thematic Strategies – in particular the Waste Prevention and Recycling Strategy.

Product policy objectives should include:

- ◆ Increasing the market shares for innovative products and services. Economic and fiscal incentives and third-party certified Ecolabels play a key role here.
- ◆ Aiming to provide comprehensive environmental life-cycle information on products
- ◆ Formulation of mandatory minimum requirements for the worst performing products
- ◆ Base the orientation of IPP clearly on the paradigm shift from production of products towards the innovation of products or services or even entire systems that most sustainably meet the relevant needs. IPP should therefore have a function- or need-orientated approach.

The overall objective should be to ‘move the middle field’, pulled by new market opportunities and pushed by the threat of legislation which would ‘cut off the tail’ i.e. remove the worst products from the market. In addition to which should be an increase in transparency and data availability on the environmental performance/burden of products – ‘what gets measured gets managed’ - and promote the shift towards integrated approaches and systems thinking.

Suggested commitments to work towards concrete political projects on IPP in 2004/2005, such as:

1. **Organising** the Commission’s work on IPP. A legislative framework that sets up a Steering Advisory Committee on IPP and specialised working groups on individual tools from the IPP toolbox, setting clear, balanced stakeholder procedures (reinforcing the balance of economic and non-economic interests), would be the most efficient and credible way to take this forward. Whatever format it should take it is important that the IPP steering committee has eventually
 - a) clear procedures and a clear action plan & timeframe

- b) a common vision on what exactly IPP is working towards, essentially the four policy objectives outlined above.
2. The quality, comparability and availability of **product lifecycle data** on products is one of the central and most crucial issues of IPP. All producers should be asked to provide this data – starting simply and evolving in complexity. The most efficient way to do this is by some form of **general obligations on product manufacturers** to do so, coupled to a commitment to develop standardised formats for reporting the data. Environmental Product Declarations have a role to play here. However this issue should be kept separate from consumer information tools which have different requirements – but of course depend also on these data.
 3. It is important to expressly reinforce **policy links and use of TARGETs** for vision setting and orientation. Mere reference to the 6th Environmental Action Programme is not sufficient. Existing international commitments – e.g. Kyoto, the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants or from existing EU policy frameworks (for example Waste, Water and Air Framework Directives and daughter directives) as well as up-and-coming strategies such as the Waste Prevention and Natural Resources Strategies, should be laid down as the goals of IPP.
 4. **Economic tools** have been effectively abandoned. It is vital that the Commission not be allowed to ‘give up’ on these issues. One option is to **make use of enhanced co-operation** between like-minded states. Here the Commission can provide an important stimulating and co-ordinating role. The negative conclusions on reduced VAT on ecolabelled products is very damning for what could be a potentially good precedent for other VAT initiatives.
 5. **Extending the producer responsibility principle** from the waste and use phases to the lifecycle is an important building block of IPP. Eventually **general producer responsibility on environmentally sound products** or a general obligation for the integration of environmental aspects comprehensively into all eco-design and standardisation work will be necessary. Steps in this direction should be called for.
 6. **Creating resources for IPP**. It should be recognised that the Commission, or even Member States cannot be expected to run such an ambitious and highly data-intensive exercise as IPP at EU level without serious investment in staff and external and independent resources. One such resource is a **data collection and benchmarking facility** – which can also be used as a European Lifecycle database centre if necessary.
 7. **Consumer information**. Next to labelling, independent quality assessments by independent testing organisations geared towards the consumer have a strong awareness raising function. As part of IPP implementation the establishment of a **European network of national consumer focused eco-test organisations** and magazines, providing and disseminating comparative quality testing data, should be foreseen. This is vital as part of the consumer tools providing the ‘pull’ for eco-products. Financial support for such a network is essential for greening consumer demand.
 8. Provide leadership in the promotion of **green public procurement** as one of the essential tools for IPP, requesting **obligatory green public procurement plans** for all Member States with annual reporting and concrete objectives.
 9. Provide environmental NGOs with sufficient resources to professionalise their engagement with various product policy tools - including Ecolabels, product requirements/ criteria and standards.