



Svenska Naturskyddsforeningen

PRESS RELEASE

Ecological Design- the first step to a sustainable society

(Brussels, 25 February, 2008) - The European Environmental Bureau [1] and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation [2] today launched a report [3] exploring opportunities for an EU approach to “ecodesign”, a concept that products and services should be safe for people and the environment as a fundamental element of a sustainable society. As scepticism about a voluntary approach to ecodesign grows even within the industry sector, the new study calls for more strategic links between policy tools, including sustainability criteria on specific products and information provision on sustainability issues.

The study, “*Forcing Products to Go Green?*” is being launched with a view to influencing the European Commission’s finalisation of the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and Sustainable Industrial Policy (SIP) Action Plans [4], scheduled for release in April. The study will be launched at an event organised through the GLOBE EU group of MEPs [5] where the Directors of DG Environment and DG Enterprise will present drafts of their respective Action Plans.

The SCP is expected to focus on three main areas: Leaner Production (eg., resource efficiency targets), Better Products (eg., Ecolabel revision and extending legislation on Energy Using Products [EuP] to other products) and Consumption Patterns. The SIP is expected to focus on improving energy and climate-related activities in industry and ensuring competitiveness. The SSNC study urges more ambitious, coordinated sustainability policy that includes providing information and other drivers for innovation that industry could begin to adopt ahead of a lengthy legislative process.

Doreen Fedrigo, EEB Policy Unit Coordinator, said: “*It’s obvious that Western industrialised societies need to change their consumption and production patterns, but there is a real lack of inspiration in how to go about it. Ecodesign needs to become the leading factor in developing the products of the future and we’re pleased there is finally broader support for a legislative approach. However, we question the Commission’s focus on process in the Action Plan packages when we need a more honest debate on why we consume and produce the way we do. The Action Plans, sadly, won’t deliver this policy path, but will at least open the door to such urgent discussions. The interesting part is yet to come.*”

The study was undertaken by SSNC as part of its on-going work to improve the environmental quality of products on the market. Both environmental NGOs strive to strengthen EU product legislation, safeguard the eco-design achievements already made, broaden ecodesign objectives and prevent bad products from entering the market.

Eva Eiderstrom, SSNC Director of Shop and Act Green, said, “*The SCP and SIP Action Plans should advance the forward-thinking about sustainable production beyond product policy alone, something that has already been going on in Sweden for over 10 years. It will be a sadly missed opportunity if these Action Plans do not also include ambitious objectives and a ‘roadmap’ for supporting measures on producer responsibility, putting resource targets on the table and providing tools for provision of information to the public.*”

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Editor's Notes:-

[1] The EEB is a federation of over 145 environmental citizens' organisations based in EU Member States and most accession countries.

[2] The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) is a member-based environmental organisation founded in 1909 and was active in preserving some of Sweden's largest national parks. New strategies include working with consumers and ecolabelling, and joint campaigns on European projects.

[3] EEB, SSNC, 2007. "*Forcing products to go green? Opportunities for strengthening EU ecodesign legislation.*" http://www.eeb.org/activities/product_policy/documents/forcing_products2goGreen.pdf

The report compiles information obtained during interviews with representatives from the European Commission, industry, NGOs, academia and interested Member States. The views expressed in the report do not necessarily represent the view of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.

[4] Both Action Plans are scheduled to be published in mid-April, but it is not yet clear how they will be linked. Both the SCP and the SIP are expected to focus mainly on legislative process for specific aspects of product policy.

[5] GLOBE EU's mission is to facilitate co-operation and the exchange of information between members of Parliament to ensure that a lack of information does not weaken the legitimacy of EU decisions or make the adoption of new legislation more difficult.

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