

Brussels, 25 June 2004

Commission and industry initiate projects for greening products

To demonstrate how a new product-oriented environmental policy works in practice, the European Commission has selected two pilot projects based on suggestions from stakeholders, including European companies. The policy encourages everybody involved in the life-cycle of a product - from suppliers, to manufacturers, to end consumers - to improve the product's environmental performance and ensure its sustainable use. In these pilot projects the approach will be applied to mobile phones, as proposed by Nokia, and to wooden garden furniture, a proposal put forward by Carrefour. The Commission will lead the projects and is now inviting all other interested stakeholders to get involved in the exercise. The projects form an integral part of the Commission's activities to increase the availability and purchasing of more sustainable products throughout the Single Market. They are a central plank of the Commission's efforts to promote Integrated Product Policy (IPP).

Margot Wallström, European Environment Commissioner welcomed the selection: "These projects help bring this new policy to life. We need more sustainable products if we are to meet our environmental goals and improve our quality of life. I am delighted that two big European companies support this approach and that they are prepared to participate in projects that aim to improve the environmental performance and the sustainable use of these products throughout their life-cycle. I am convinced that this is the way of the future."

Driving the market forward

Integrated Product Policy (IPP) encourages companies to produce more sustainable products and consumers to choose to buy them. Governments too have an important role, notably by setting a supportive economic and legal framework and purchasing greener products. For IPP to succeed, all actors and stakeholders need to move forward together.

The two projects should each last about a year and will begin with an assessment of the environmental impacts of the chosen products based on available information. The European Commission will then guide discussions with the companies and a range of other stakeholders to draw on all their experiences and identify best practices and potentials for improvement. This should lead to different participants making commitments to implement some of the solutions identified. Stakeholders are invited to contribute in two ways:

1. by submitting information on the products in question;
2. by stating their interest in being part of those identifying and implementing solutions.

In both cases the Commission should be informed by e-mail to orsolya.csorba@cec.eu.int by 15 September 2004.

Nokia is the world's largest mobile phone producer in a market where an estimated 600 million handsets will be sold in 2004. Carrefour is Europe's largest retailer and the 2nd largest in the world. Its proposal covered wooden garden furniture, and the project will focus on a teak garden chair from Indonesia.

Background

Today's selection results from the call for products to participate in the IPP pilot projects, which was made in the Communication on Integrated Product Policy, published in the summer 2003¹. The Commission received 22 suggestions and selected two based on a series of criteria, including how well the suggestions considered the whole supply chain and to what extent the wider public is familiar with the products.

Further information on the projects and IPP can be found at:

europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ipp

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¹ COM(2003)302