Twelve European companies vying for European Business Awards for the Environment

Twelve European companies were nominated yesterday in Vienna for the European Business Awards for the Environment. The finalists represent companies from Austria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. The prizes, awarded by the European Commission every two years, acknowledge companies for outstanding contributions to sustainable development in four categories - products, processes, management and international cooperation projects. The four winners will be selected and receive their awards on 1 June 2006 during Green Week, the Commission's major annual environmental conference and exhibition event in Brussels. Sustainable companies not only protect the environment, they also contribute to innovation and competitiveness, thus spurring economic growth.

"Today the European Business Awards for the Environment are more relevant than ever," said Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas. "Europe needs companies that invest in environment-friendly innovation. They do not only contribute to winning the battle against climate change and protecting our biodiversity, but they also help make Europe more competitive. It is a simple win-win situation. My congratulations to the 12 finalists - they have made sustainable business models a reality and displayed extraordinary ingenuity."

The 12 finalists were chosen from 139 entries from 23 European countries. This is the highest number of entries recorded since the European Awards for the Environment were launched in 1987. This record reflects growing interest of businesses in environmental sustainability.

The jury, chaired by Mr Heinz Felsner, Secretary General of the Austrian Business Council for Sustainable Development, is made up of 12 environmental experts representing industry, NGOs, academia and public authorities. The jury short-listed three candidates for each of the four categories. It will come together again later this year to choose the winners in each category. The winners will be announced and receive their awards during a prestigious award ceremony with senior Commission officials, music and artistic performances on 1 June 2006, which will be part of the Commission's annual Green Week.

The 2006 Business Awards were open to companies from all EU member states as well as the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. The companies first had to succeed in national award schemes to be nominated by the national award bodies for the European Business Awards. A participating country can send a maximum of 12 candidates for the European Awards, three for each category.

The finalists for the European Business Awards chosen yesterday are:

The Management Award for Sustainable Development (recognising companies managed in ways that allow for a continuous and measurable improvement of their environmental performance)

- **Aceria Compacta de Bizkaia SA (Spain)**. The jury nominated this steel production company because it has managed to implement environmental management measures and remain competitive in its market.
- **Sotral SpA (Italy)**. The jury recognised the successful introduction of an environmental approach in the sector of catering logistic services.
- **General Electric Hungary Ltd Light Source Factory (Hungary)**. The jury acknowledges the sustained exemplary environmental performance in the Hungarian plant of this multi-national.
The Product Award for Sustainable Development (recognising new products or services that contribute to sustainable production and consumption patterns)

- **VA Tech Hydro GmbH & Co (Austria).** The jury nominated this company for the development of tailor-made hydro turbines that can be installed in existing weirs, locks and dams without altering the environment or landscape.
- **Windsave Ltd (UK).** The jury appreciated the development of a compact wind mill for individual houses and offices at an affordable cost.
- **DTS OABE SL (Spain).** The jury recognises the development of a water-based insecticide applied in a lacquer, which limits any cross pollution and which is not damaging to human health.

The Process Award for Sustainable Development (recognising new environment-friendly production technologies and processes)

- **Fortum Power and Heat Oy (Finland).** The jury nominated this company for the development of a cost efficient combustion technology for NOx reduction in large combustion plants throughout the entire process rather then only through an end-of-pipe solution.
- **Volkswagen AG (Germany).** The jury emphasised that the company focussed in this waste recycling process on the most difficult waste section, i.e. not on the 80% vehicle parts that are recyclable (mainly steel), but the remaining 20% waste - shredder residues which have so far been an environmental problem.
- **Ten Cate Advanced Textiles BV and Color Wings BV (Netherlands).** The jury emphasised the competitive advantage of the use of exactly dosed ink drops applied at a high speed which is comparable to traditional colouring technology for textiles.

The International Co-operation Award for Sustainable Development (recognising international partnerships that contribute to environmental protection, economic development and social equity in a developing country or an economy in transition)

- **iD-L inspired innovations (Netherlands).** The jury particularly appreciated the development of a successful business model for the production and marketing of attractive products manufactured from waste.
- **YIT Rakennus Oy (Finland).** The jury has nominated this waste water treatment project in St Petersburg which has reduced pollution in Baltic Sea. The project provided employment and on the job training for the first public-private-partnership (PPP) in Russia.
- **BASF AG (Germany).** The jury appreciates the initiative of the company to transfer knowledge about a developed management tool for improving ecological performance and strategic decision-making to developing countries and countries with an economy in transition.

Background:

The European Commission launched the Business Awards for the Environment in 1987, recognising achievements of companies who pioneered environmentally friendly policies and products. The Business awards recognise and promote, as an example to others, organisations which make an outstanding contribution to sustainable development. The prizes are awarded every two years.

The EU Strategy for Growth and Jobs recognises the potential of eco-innovation to promote economic growth and job creation. Launching it in March 2005 in Brussels, EU leaders stated: "Eco-innovation and environmental technology should be strongly encouraged (...).

In addition to its growth in the internal market, this sector has considerable export
potential.” The emphasis on eco-innovation is reflected in the 'Broad guidelines for the economic policies of the Member States and the Community (2005 to 2008)', adopted by the Council, and the Commission’s 'Lisbon Programme', both of which list priority actions to revive Europe’s economy.

Many findings show that environment policy and eco-innovation can promote economic growth and create jobs, contributing to competitiveness and employment. There is an expanding world market for environmental goods and services, estimated at over €500 billion in 2003. The EU eco-industries sector employs more than 2 million people, and continues to grow at around 5% per year. Last year, exports grew by around 8% and there was a trade surplus of over €600 million. There are increasing market opportunities for eco-efficient products and services.

Many studies come to the conclusion that environmental sustainability improves the financial performance of companies. The '2006 Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations' outperformed the MSCI World Index by 7.11% over the period December 1999 to December 2005. This is a listing, released at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2006, of 100 large blue chip companies around the world that demonstrated the strongest sustainability performance among a group of over 1800 companies in 2006.

Green Week is the largest annual international forum for discussing current and future European Union environmental policies. Close to 4000 people participate each year in the week-long programme of conferences, exhibition and awards ceremony.


Information about Green Week is available at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/greenweek/index.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/greenweek/index.html)

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2 These documents can be found at: [http://www.europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/key/index_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/key/index_en.htm)

3 See [http://www.global100.org/index.asp](http://www.global100.org/index.asp).