



Janez Potočnik: A 21st century view of our environment



Commissioner Janez Potočnik trained originally as an economist in Slovenia. He headed his country's team negotiating accession to the EU and was Slovenian minister for European affairs from 2002 to 2004. He became the European Commissioner for science, research and technological development in 2004.

Commission President José Manuel Barroso's new team was confirmed on 9 February 2010. Janez Potočnik, a Slovenian and previously Commissioner for science and research, was appointed as Commissioner for the Environment. "Our world is fragile. And it is this fragility which makes the environment such a key part of our future agenda," says Commissioner Potočnik. "I am looking forward to building on my experience over the last five years, and making sustainable and workable environmental policies."

The new Environment Commissioner is keen for environment to be even higher on the political agenda and to ensure that environmental issues become embedded into the whole range of EU policies. Key issues will include resource efficiency, biodiversity loss and the effective implementation and enforcement of existing environmental legislation.

Potočnik believes – just like many Europeans – that preserving the environment makes enormous economic, social and business sense. He knows too how

important it is to kill off the green myth of unaffordability. "Better environmental protection can cost more and can mean administration and regulation. But it is necessary and, in the long run, pays dividends by improving our quality of life, stimulating our economies and creating jobs," says the Commissioner. "This is consistent with the broad aims of the successor to the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs: Europe 2020, through which we will pursue the principle of sustainable development in a knowledge-based resource-efficient economy."

This will involve changing behaviour across the wider economy and society – not an easy task. Potočnik intends to fight hard to turn environmental protection into environmental value. He will use his experience as research Commissioner and as an economist to push for economic incentives that promote true innovation and creativity. "The more we are aware of the real and inherent value of our environment, the more effectively we will be able to design policies to combine our economic, social and environmental goals."

High number of entries for 2010 EBAE

An exceptionally high number of entries has been submitted for the 2010 European Business Awards for the Environment despite the current economic climate. The 2010 competition attracted 141 entries from outstanding companies across Europe. Entries cover: Management – 38; Product – 57; Process – 40; and International co-operation – 6. All entries are finalists of their national competitions – an essential prerequisite for participation at EU level as only the best companies from the EU and candidate countries can apply. The jury will meet in Madrid, Spain – current holder of the EU Presidency – from 10 to 12 March to select the winners. The president of the jury is Ms Cristina García-Orcoyen Tormo from the Fundación Entorno-BCSD Spain. The shortlist will be announced immediately after the jury meeting. Awards will be presented during Green Week in June.

Building on success



The EBAE can provide a boost to business as one 2004 winner – NEDAP – explains.

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Environmentally-friendly water purifier

Success has been slow but sure for the innovative and environmentally-friendly Naïade water-purification system that won the EBAE for international co-operation in 2004. The Naïade is a stand-alone, solar-powered water purification unit using ultraviolet (UV) light rather than chemicals such as chlorine in the purification process and is aimed particularly at developing countries. Some 250 small and large systems have already been installed around the globe, including in Africa, India, Indonesia and South America. Major governmental contracts are also now in the pipeline for Ghana and Mali.

Aid organisations and governments in developing countries strive continuously to improve the availability of clean drinking water. The Naïade system was developed by Dutch electronics company Nedap and tested in pilot projects with Indian pump manufacturer La Gajjar Machineries. While interest has been high, it has been necessary to overcome reluctance from NGOs to move away from use of chemicals for water treatment and to gain the financial support of the governments to install networks of the water purifiers covering all local water points for maximum effect.

“UV treatment is state of the art,” explains Paul de Reus of Nedap. “New York City is building a plant using this technology to treat eight billion litres of drinking water a day from the end of this year. Everywhere that NGOs have installed our systems, they have seen marked reductions in infant mortality – down from three or four children a month to zero. And illness rates in schools equipped with such systems have dropped from 30 or 40% to a more normal 2 to 5%. However, NGOs still stick to chlorine.”

Nedap is still working with this project and investing considerable sums of money in it. “Ghana is now preparing an order for several thousand units and we are working on a huge project together with Dutch NGO WASTE in Mali, with the support of the Soroptimists women’s organisation,” adds de Reus. “So we are now arriving at the point where the unit has broken through.”

<http://www.nedapnaiade.com>

Why EBAE?

The European Business Awards for the Environment were established by the European Commission Environment Directorate-General in 1987. They are presented every two years and aim to recognise and reward European companies that set an example by successfully bringing together innovation, economic viability and environmental concerns. The scheme consists of four award categories, rewarding companies for management practices, products, processes and international co-operation activities that contribute to economic and social development without detriment to the environment.

EBAE activities take place at both national and European levels, with participation open to companies from all EU Member States and candidate countries. Companies must first succeed in national award schemes, before they can participate in the bi-annual European-level competition. Submission of entries to the EU-level competition is managed by national coordinating bodies. This two-level process means EBAE winners are the best of the best: the most far-sighted, responsible and innovative companies in Europe.

Fast set up

The Naïade system consists of a solar panel, a power supply unit, a reactor with UV lamp, a water container and filters. Water is poured into the container through a double filter and is treated with light from the UV lamp, powered by the solar panel. An optional car battery, charged from the solar panel, can power the unit on cloudy days or during the night. The unit can be set up

and operational within 30 minutes. No special infrastructure is required and a single unit can meet the clean water requirements of between 250 and 350 people at an estimated cost of around €1 per person per year.



Hungary: Eight national winners head for Brussels



There were eight national award winners in Hungary – from left to right: Attila Vass (Elektrolux), Dr Emese Majorosi (Pannon GSM Távközlési), Márta Szigeti Bonifert (REC), István Kenyeres (Organica), Irén Márta (Holcim Magyarország), Mónika Agócs (Dréher Sörgyárak), Dr István Kling (State Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Water), Dr Judit O. Gaál (G&G), Lajos Kovács (Fótáv) and Attila Görgöi (Mecsek-ÖKO)

Eight Hungarian national competition winners are participating in the European awards in 2010 – three each in the Management Award and Process Awards for Sustainable Development, and two in the Product Category for Sustainable Development. The Hungarian scheme involves a

two-level approach in co-operation with participating environmental NGOs – the Association of Environmental Enterprises, the Hungarian Business Leaders Forum, the KÖVET Association for Sustainable Economies, the Hungarian Association for Innovation and the Hungarian Cleaner

Production Centre – that conduct their own environmental awards.

The national awards focus on companies and meet the criteria of one or more of the four EBAE categories. The winners of the NGO awards are forwarded to the Hungarian Jury of the Environmental Awards (HEA), which selects the companies that can continue the competition at the European level. The HEA organises a lunch and press conference to announce the Hungarian candidates in January of the year of the European Awards. The Hungarian Minister of Environment, as the President of Honour of the HEA, hands out a diploma to the representatives of the Hungarian candidates, this year eight diplomas.

<http://www.kszgysz.hu>

Portugal: First edition of EBAE innovation award



Portugal organised the first edition of the EBAE_{pis} – *Prémio de Inovação para a Sustentabilidade* (Innovation Award for Sustainability) – in 2009, addressing micro, small, medium and large enterprises from all business sectors. This award aims to select the national candidates for the European Business Awards for the Environment, and was designed to identify, recognise and promote companies that developed innovative projects with relevant contributions to sustainable development.

The objective of this national award is to highlight policies, practices, processes and products developed by companies from all sectors operating in Portugal which help to reach economic and social development without degrading the environment or over-exploiting natural resources in such a way that the society may equitably share its benefits.

The organisers of the EBAE_{pis} are Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente (Portuguese Environment Agency), Direcção-Geral das Actividades Económicas (General Directorate of Economic Activities in the Ministry of Economy, Innovation and Development) and Departamento de Prospectiva e Planeamento e Relações Internacionais (Department of Foresight and Planning and International Affairs in the Ministry of Environment), in co-operation with BCSD Portugal and Grupo GCI.

<http://www.apambiente.pt>

Malta: Recognising management and resource conservation

The Cleaner Technology Centre in Malta organised the presentation ceremony for the fifth edition of the Environment Award for Industry on 10 December 2009. These awards recognise industries or organisations which, through their policies, practices and processes, help bring about social and economic development while reducing the impact of their operations on the environment. Another aim of the awards is to act as a spur for more organisations to take measures in favour of the environment.

The environment award was given in two categories:

- A. The Management Award for Sustainable Development highlights the growing need for businesses and organisations to acknowledge their obligations to various stakeholders within society and to manage their broader social responsibilities accordingly. The joint winners were the General Soft Drinks Co Limited and Medichem Manufacturing (Malta) Limited.
- B. The Conservation Award for Sustainable Development is designed to recognise and promote the achievement of outstanding results in the areas of energy, water and materials conservation. The winner of this award was the Mater Dei Hospital.

<http://www.mus.com.mt>



General Soft Drinks – joint winner of the Management Award for Sustainable Development



Medichem Manufacturing (Malta) – joint winner of the Management Award for Sustainable Development



Mater Dei Hospital – winner of the Conservation Award for Sustainable Development

- **EU Sustainable Energy Week** (EUSEW), Brussels (BE), 22 to 26 March 2010

The EUSEW is the reference event for sustainable issues in Europe. It forms part of the Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign which is an initiative of the European Commission launched in 2005.

More information:

<http://www.eusew.eu/>

- **ETAP Forum on SMEs and ecoinnovation**, Bilbao (ES), 20 and 21 April 2010

Overcoming barriers to small and medium-sized enterprises in eco-innovation

More information:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoinnovation2010/1st_forum/index_en.htm

- **EU Green Week**, Brussels (BE), 1 to 4 June 2010

This event will address biodiversity in Europe and the world, the pressures affecting biodiversity, the benefits it brings and possible solutions to current rates of loss.

More information:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek/>

More events can be found on the Environment DG website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/index_en.htm



HOW TO CONTACT US

EBAE website: <http://www.ebae.eu>

Alternatively you may contact your national organiser directly:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/awards/procedure_coordinators_en.htm

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