



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Innovation Partnerships: new proposals on raw materials, agriculture and healthy ageing to boost European competitiveness

Brussels, 29 February 2012 – The European Commission has today proposed decisive action to meet three key challenges facing our society, in areas that are crucial to growth and jobs: the supply of raw materials, sustainable agriculture, and active and healthy ageing. All three require a more concerted innovation effort across the public and private sector, in order to improve quality of life and position Europe as a global leader. The Commission has therefore launched two new European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) - on Raw Materials and on Agricultural Sustainability and Productivity - and has endorsed a four-year action plan for the Active and Healthy Ageing EIP, a pilot launched in February 2011. EIPs take a new approach to tackling the whole research-development-innovation chain, bringing together public and private stakeholders across borders and sectors in order to accelerate the uptake of innovation. They each have an ambitious target to reach by 2020, and are expected to start delivering results within 1-3 years. The announcement today comes just ahead of a European Council that is expected to reaffirm the place of research and innovation at the centre of European economic recovery.

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, said: *"We need to innovate to get Europe back on the path to growth and jobs, and to tackle major challenges such as access to raw materials, sustainable agriculture and our ageing society. European Innovation Partnerships will break down silos, remove bottlenecks and focus our efforts on results that matter to our citizens and our businesses."*

The European Innovation Partnership (EIP) is a new concept that was introduced in the Europe 2020 flagship Innovation Union. The aim is to address weaknesses, bottlenecks and obstacles in the European research and innovation system that prevent or slow down good ideas being developed and brought to market. These include under-investment, outdated regulation, lack of standards, and fragmentation of markets. Each Partnership is led by a Steering Group chaired by the European Commissioner or Commissioners with responsibility for the policy area or areas concerned. They are joined by representatives of Member States (Ministers), Members of Parliament, industry leaders, researchers, civil society and other key stakeholders. EIPs identify what needs to be done to overcome bottlenecks – from further developing technologies to getting the market frameworks right and stimulating demand – and galvanise action across public and private sectors. They do not replace funding programmes or regulatory processes, but provide a shared platform for cooperation.

Innovation partnership to overcome Europe's raw materials shortages

The supply of raw materials, the lifeblood of today's high-tech industry, is increasingly under pressure. With a view to increasing Europe's own production, under the proposal to set up a European Innovation Partnership on raw materials, joint innovation efforts will support exploration, extraction and processing of raw materials. For example, it has been estimated that the value of unexploited European mineral resources at a depth of 500-1,000 metres is about € 100 billion. New technologies will help to extract deeper, in more remote areas and under harsh conditions. Action is also needed to develop substitutes for critical raw materials and to improve recycling of electric, electronic equipment and other waste. Improved access to minerals will enhance the development of innovative products such as thin photovoltaic layers, energy-efficient lighting, electric cars, advanced passenger jets, infra-red optics and fiber glass.

Vice-President Antonio Tajani, responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship said: *"We need to join forces to tap Europe's enormous own potential of raw materials. Intensified action is required to make Europe the world leader in the capabilities related to exploration, extraction, processing, recycling and substitution by 2020. It will be the key to Europe's ability to develop today the technologies of tomorrow. Such innovation is decisive for Europe's competitiveness, sustainable growth and new jobs."*

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European Innovation Partnership for agriculture

Food security is one of the major challenges worldwide in the years ahead, with global food demand forecast to rise by 70% by 2050 (FAO), accompanied by a steep increase in the demand for feed, fibre, biomass, and biomaterial. However, this challenge is accompanied by a slow down in productivity growth – in good part because of a reduction in investment in agricultural research – and increased pressure on the environment and our natural resources. For example, 45% of European soils face problems of soil quality. Around 40% of agricultural land is vulnerable to nitrate pollution and, over the last 20 years, farmland birds have declined by 20-25%.

In short, the key challenge for agriculture in future is not only to produce more, but also to do this in a sustainable manner. These challenges will not be resolved without a major push towards embracing research and innovation – and in particular in bringing researchers, farmers and other players closer together so that we can accelerate the speed of technological transfer from science to farming practice, and provide more systematic feedback about practice needs from farming to science. The European Innovation Partnership (EIP) "Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability" aims to provide a working interface between agriculture, bio-economy, science, and others at EU, national and regional level. It will also serve as a catalyst to enhance the effectiveness of innovation-related actions supported by Rural Development Policy as well as the Union Research and Innovation. Two headline targets have been identified for this EIP - promoting productivity and efficiency of the agricultural sector (reversing the recent trend of diminishing productivity gains by 2020); and the sustainability of agriculture_(securing soil functionality* at a satisfactory level by 2020).

EU Agriculture and rural development Commissioner Dacian Cioloş stated: *"The key challenge for agriculture in future is not only how to produce more, but also how to produce better. Embracing demand driven research and innovation, as well as improved dissemination of best practices will be essential to this end."*

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European Innovation Partnership on active and healthy ageing

Demographic ageing is one of the most serious challenges facing Europe today. The number of European citizens aged 65 and over will double over the next 50 years, from 87 million in 2010 to 148 million in 2060¹. While this presents a specific challenge for European care and social systems, it is also an opportunity to redesign these systems in the interest of patients, healthcare systems and the innovative industry.

The European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing has been set up to respond to these challenges. In November 2011, it delivered a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) identifying priority areas and specific actions, for public authorities, businesses and civil society (see [IP/11/1309](#), [IP/11/519](#)).

Today's [Communication](#) from the Commission is the concrete follow-up for implementation of the specific actions. This includes: inviting stakeholder engagement; setting up a marketplace for innovative ideas; addressing regulatory and standardization issues. This will improve elderly citizens' lives, help them to contribute to society as they grow older, and reduce pressure on health and care systems - ultimately contributing to sustainable growth.

The Commission confirms its commitment to support the implementation of the SIP, in particular by:

- launching, today, a first invitation for stakeholders to commit to specific actions on innovation in active and healthy ageing (find it [here](#));
- putting in place, as of April 2012, a "[marketplace for innovative ideas](#)", helping stakeholders find partners, share good practices and disseminate evidence;
- aligning and effectively using EU funding instruments such as the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), the 7th Framework Programme for research and the Health Programme
- addressing regulatory and standardization issues, e.g. by supporting the development of a new EU framework for interoperability testing, quality labelling and certification on e-Health;

Health and Consumer Policy Commissioner John Dalli stressed that: *"Active and healthy ageing is central for our citizens, for the viability of our health and care systems, and it offers important industrial potential. The Commission is determined to support the rapid implementation of the priority areas agreed by the Partnership in 2011. Our ambition is to achieve tangible results in the next two years."*

¹ ECFIN Ageing Study 2009

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/publication_summary14911_en.htm

Vice President Neelie Kroes said *"The EIP on Active and Healthy Ageing will help us improve health and quality of life for older people and help ensure our care system is sustainable for the long-term. We urge all stakeholders involved to contribute to our efforts and help us tackle the demographic transition head-on"*.

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