

OECD ADVISORY EXPERT GROUP

sustainable manufacturing and eco-innovation

Advisory Expert Group

An Advisory Expert Group (AEG) on Sustainable Manufacturing and Eco-innovation was formed to assist and guide the initial stage of the project. The AEG, which met for the first time in April 2008, consists of governmental officials, industry representatives and academics. The AEG will provide support to the project through participating in expert meetings and in online discussions, so participation by government and industry representatives should be as broad as possible. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to contact us in time for the second AEG meeting, to take place back-to-back with the OECD/USDOC International Conference in Rochester, NY on 23-24 September 2008.

Project objectives

Expanding economic activities have in recent decades been accompanied by growing environmental concerns at a global scale such as climate change, depletion of natural resources, pollution and excessive waste generation. Although industry has shown increased interests in sustainable production and taken a number of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, progress falls far short to tackle these pressing challenges. Improvements in efficiency in some countries and regions have in many cases been offset by growth in other regions with lower regulatory standards. This reality hints as to why even the current best policy scenario for global CO₂ emissions still projects an increase of 25% by 2030 according to the IEA.

What is now needed is the establishment of a new vision that, on top of current efforts, will enable the creation of wealth and business opportunities while reducing overall environmental impacts. In this context, the OECD Project on Sustainable Manufacturing and Eco-innovation aims to promote sustainable production by spreading existing knowledge and providing industry with a means to benchmark their products and production processes. It seeks to promote the concept of eco-innovation and to stimulate new technological and systemic solutions to global environmental challenges. The project initially focuses on environmental aspects of sustainability in manufacturing industries which constitute a fundamental building block of the OECD member economies. The outcomes of the project are expected to form an integral part of the forthcoming OECD Innovation Strategy.

Main project components in 2008

The initial stage of the project started in the second quarter of 2008 and will be concluded by the first quarter of 2009. During this stage, the OECD aims to deliver the following three outputs:

I. Framework and review paper

This paper aims to provide an analytical framework that can be applied to understand sustainable production issues as well as a review of the state of current knowledge on indicators and initiatives relevant to sustainable manufacturing and eco-innovation. The paper will include the following five elements:

1. Exploring definitions and discussions on concepts and laying out a generic analytical approach that can be applied in various industrial sectors
2. Collecting illustrative examples of good practices
3. Reviewing the existing indicators and initiatives and identifying gaps
4. Identifying relevant policy initiatives and exploring the future role of governments and the OECD in sustainable manufacturing and eco-innovation
5. Assessing the existing data set and exploring possibility of measuring eco-innovation

II. Focus group meetings with industry experts

To obtain views and activities directly from industry regarding sustainable manufacturing and eco-innovation, the OECD is planning to organize focus group meetings with leading industry practitioners in the autumn of 2008. Outputs from these meetings will feed into the framework and review paper.

III. International conference

The US Department of Commerce and the OECD will jointly organize an international conference on sustainable manufacturing and eco-innovation in Rochester, NY, USA on 23-24 September 2008. The conference aims to promote the concepts and practices of sustainable manufacturing and eco-innovation among diverse businesses including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Leading academics and industry practitioners are expected to be among the speakers and panelists, along with high-level policy makers. The presentations and discussions will help the USDOC and the OECD to identify the needs for the future work as well as to shape the framework and review paper.

Future steps

Based on findings from the initial stage, the work on sustainable manufacturing and eco-innovation will continue independently of each other in 2009-10. These areas have already been attracting a great deal of attention from OECD member economies. Alongside the development of the OECD Innovation Strategy, the OECD program in these areas is expected to grow in the coming years.

