How to accelerate change towards sustainability?

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Sustainability transitions Policy instruments

There is growing recognition that achieving prosperity within environmental limits requires fundamental changes in core systems of production and consumption. A new European Environment Agency (EEA) report, published today, identifies ten focus areas for enabling sustainability transitions.

The EEA report ‘Sustainability transitions: policy and practice’ identifies policy options for responding to systemic environmental and climate problems in Europe and globally. The report sets out 10 sets of messages for policy, outlining how governments and other actors can enable systemic change towards long-term sustainability goals.

Focusing in particular on Europe’s food, energy and mobility systems, the report illustrates the importance of promoting diverse innovations — social practices, business models, technologies — that can trigger new ways of living and thinking. It points to the critical need to empower cities as hubs of innovation and networking, to reorient financial flows towards sustainable and transformative innovations, to navigate inevitable surprises and trade-offs, and to ensure socially fair outcomes.

The report also emphasises that achieving sustainability transitions requires that all policy areas and levels of government operate together to harness the creativity and power of citizens, businesses and communities. Environment and climate policy tools remain essential but transforming systems also requires coherent contributions from many other areas, ranging from research and innovation, industry, competition and trade, to employment, education and welfare.