

Webwatch

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The European Technology Platform for Sustainable Chemistry

<http://www.suschem.org/>

The European Technology Platform for Sustainable Chemistry (SusChem) was founded in July 2004, and is funded under the European Union 7th Research Framework Program. In particular, it is a partnership between private and non-governmental institutions and the European Commission. Recognizing the fundamental importance of chemistry and its past and future contributions to the human development. SusChem has as main goals the development and implementation of a strategic research agenda (SRA) to tackle all the relevant issues facing the chemical industry as a key economic sector.

Thus, SusChem focuses its activities in chemistry, biotechnology and chemical engineering research, and in the promotion of innovation in Europe, as these are core areas to the future competitiveness of European companies. To accomplish those tasks SusChem tries to reach all the relevant stakeholders, including the media, NGOs, the general public, research institutions, governmental and international institutions, among others. Also, its activities are mainly focused biotechnology, materials, reaction and process design, areas considered to be where the most significant development will be or can take place. Yet, activities in other research areas are also encouraged, and specific themes for promotion and cooperation also exist.

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As a project that attempts to influence research, policy and industrial development strategies, the website is designed mainly to describe the SusChem activities and to facilitate the contact between different stakeholders. Thus, it is possible to find lengthy descriptions of the objectives and role of SusChem, including a video presentation in the main page. Also in the main page it is possible to assess directly the main activity areas of SusChem, either through links in the main text or in the hotlinks menu in the left side of each page of the website. In the right side, it is available the more recent news, events and publications issued by SusChem. In specific links one can find a list of past and future events, publications, information on how to contact SusChem members, lists of projects in the area of sustainable chemistry and potential partners, among other information. Most of the events presentations and publications are freely available, and even when registration is needed it is free.

The site design is clear and intuitive to navigate. The information is easy to find, even if there is no search facility to help people find the information or partners of interest. Although the information available focuses more on the chemical industry and the SusChem activities, as they unfold and reach significant results it is expected that more information will be available at the site, making it more appealing for a wider range of practitioners.

Redefining Progress

<http://www.rprogress.org/index.htm>

Redefining Progress (RP) is an independent organization founded in 1994 and based on Oakland, California and Washington, DC, which aims to find solutions for a more sustainable and equitable world for present and future

generations. To achieve those goals RP works with various stakeholders, in particular governmental and private organizations, with the purpose of developing sound and innovative policies that incorporate as much as possible the main dimensions of sustainable development, namely the environmental, societal and economic domains.

The past and ongoing activities of RP are centered in pressing problems, such as climate change, the promotion of research and development, and implementation of innovative solutions and tools to improve peoples quality of life, mainly in USA. The RP activities focus the economic aspects, although it also develops activities in other areas, such as in communication and education related to sustainability issues.

The website tries as much as possible to present all the activities and results achieved by RP since its creation. Specific links in a bar menu present in all its web pages allow the visitor to assess the main areas of activity, including climate change, environmental justice, environmental footprinting, sustainable indicators, among others. In each one it is possible to find a description of the RP activities, partners, and other relevant information. A publications link gives access to reports and articles written by RP members, most of them freely downloadable. Special sections aimed to educators, with teaching materials and lessons plans, and to evaluate the environmental footprint of individuals and organizations. Concerning the last aspect, RP has created a sister site (<http://myfootprint.org/>) specifically to calculate the environmental footprint of individuals and/or organizations.

The RP site is well presented and easy to navigate, with a search facility in each page with a lot of information available. Although focused in the economic areas, the site also tries to reach the general public, for example through the environmental footprint calculator, and it should be interesting to a wide range of practitioners in different areas of activity.

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol

<http://www.ghgprotocol.org/>

The Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHP) is a general accounting tool that aims to be used as international standard by institutions in different sectors of activity, in an effort to understand, quantify and manage the greenhouse gas emissions. This standard has been developed for over 10 years by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), together with other governmental and private organizations, with the objective of developing commonly accepted standard. Currently, the calculation protocols are

only available to quantify the greenhouse gas emissions of facilities and operations directly owned by the reporting entity, and its usage is non-mandatory. An extension of GHP is being developed for application in product life cycle, to be used in the carbon labeling of products, and a common effort is being pursued with the International Standard Organization (ISO) to promote both the GHP and ISO 14061 as the management tools of choice when accounting greenhouse gas emissions.

Nowadays, GHP is widely used by hundreds of organizations around the world, and it is the basis for many other standards and measuring protocols, including ISO 14061 and The Climate Registry (<http://www.theclimateregistry.org/>). This is the result of an extensive promotion strategy of GHP, by both WRI and WBCSD, of which the website is a fundamental piece. In a well-designed and clear site it is possible to find a story of the GHP development and information about its future. All the ground documents describing the methodology and how it can be applied in different activity sectors are freely available at the site. To facilitate newcomers, a FAQ section is available explaining the key aspects of GHP, as well as some examples of greenhouse gas inventories performed using the GHP. A list of tools, combined with ready to use excel spreadsheets, and designed to be easily implemented in practice is available for download, either for general application in general or in specific activity sectors. News of events or companies applying the GHP in various settings can also be found at the site. A free newsletter, that can be subscribed for free e-mail delivery present all the GHP activities and any further developments in the protocol.

The GHP site is an excellent starting point for people interested in the field of greenhouse gas emissions accounting. The information and tools available can be used in a wide range of activity sectors and purposes, and the current and future developments of GHP will ensure that this protocol will be in fact widely used and considered to be the standard when dealing with greenhouse gases accounting.

Local Energy

<http://www.localenergy.org/>

Local Energy is a North American non-profit organization founded in 2003 that tries to help communities developing their own local and renewable energy resources. Its main goal is to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and to develop healthier and more robust local economies, by reducing the risks associated with the volatile supply and prices of external energy sources, especially of fossil fuels. Local energy focuses its activities mainly on the promotion and

implementation of projects aimed to produce energy at local level, and to reduce the environmental impact of energy usage. For example, it conducts research on how renewable energy and energy autonomy can benefit local communities, and promotes activities for public engagement, such as discussion groups, panels, lectures, among others.

The website describes in detail the origins, goals and activities of this organization. A detailed description of the past and ongoing programs is available, with the presentation of the main accomplished results. A publication link gives access to reports and articles, freely available, dealing with specific problems related to the production of renewable energy from local resources, energy efficiency and conservation, among other subjects. The news section is an independent website (<http://www.localenergynews.org/>), where people can post news, stories, and even engage in discussions about specific themes linked to energy production and utilization at a local and regional level. A newsletter and a RSS feed are available to help people remain informed and updated on Local Energy activities.

The website is simple and easy to navigate, although in some pages the amount of text can make it hard to read. Although Local Energy works in restricted geographical settings (New Mexico) and focuses its activities on communities, the information available can be valuable to other stakeholders that face the same problems in other regions of the world and in different activity sectors, making the site a worthwhile visit.

Final words

We will return on the next issue with a fresh selection of sites. If you know of sites that are worthy of being presented, send us all relevant information to the following e-mail address: amartins@fe.up.pt. Any suggestions will be considered with great attention for possible publication. In that case the contributors' names will be acknowledged in this column. Surf well.