

# ECO-LINKS

**BUILDING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES**

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Decades of environmental neglect in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and the Newly Independent States coupled with the need to conform with stringent European and international environmental regulations has created opportunities for U.S. environmental firms. In fact, environmental technology and services is one of the best U.S. export prospects across the entire region.

A recent European Union study concluded that the countries in Central and Eastern Europe must undertake significant environmental infrastructure projects in drinking water supply, wastewater management, combustion power plants and solid waste management. Moreover, the study also concluded that local municipalities and businesses have significant work to do before they comply with European and international standards in waste disposal management, air pollution, water pollution, industrial pollution and nuclear safety and radiation protection.

Unfortunately, local municipalities and businesses struggle with scarce resources and lack of funds as they strive to implement costly environmental projects. Recognizing that there is a

significant need for U.S. environmental technology and expertise in the region and that local government and firms need assistance in finding partners and cost-effective solutions, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the EcoLinks program to help facilitate the transfer of U.S. technology and know-how to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The goal of the Ecolinks program is simple — promote practical, market-based solutions to industrial and urban environmental problems by helping forge relationships between the regions businesses, local governments, and environmental organizations with the U.S. businesses and environmental organizations.

To achieve this goal, the EcoLinks program has developed three streamlined programs that U.S. environmental firms can utilize when pursuing opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and the Newly Independent States.

## ECOLINKS TRADE AND INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Working in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Commerce's U.S. Commercial Service, USAID launched the EcoLinks Trade and Investment Program. The goal of the program is to facilitate the flow of

U.S. technology to Central and Eastern Europe. As part of the partnership, the U.S. Commercial Service has placed EcoLinks Environmental Technology Representatives (Tech Reps) in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Poland and Romania.

The EcoLinks tech reps work with businesses, local municipalities and organizations in country to identify specific environmental needs. The tech reps utilize USAID's Global Technology Network, an on-line network of over 4,000 U.S. environmental firms to identify potential U.S. partners. When promising matches develop, the EcoLinks tech reps are available to help facilitate meetings and to assist companies in using all the resources available to help them close a deal including the U.S. Commercial Service, the U.S. Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im), the Trade Development Agency (TDA), and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). U.S. companies interested in taking part in the EcoLinks Trade and Investment Program should register with the USAID's Global Technology Network at [www.usgtn.org](http://www.usgtn.org).

## CHALLENGE GRANTS

The second component of EcoLinks program provides grants to help promote the creation of market-based

solutions through cross-border partnerships. Challenge Grants are designed for businesses, local governments or associations. The projects should originate in Bulgaria, Croatia, the FYR Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Romania, the Russian Far East and Ukraine. Grants of up to \$50,000 are given to support one-year partnership projects that address specific urban and industrial environmental problems. Recipients can partner with organizations in 21 other countries in the region or the United States. Grants are administered through three regional offices, Kiev, Ukraine; Szentendre, Hungary; and Washington, D.C. For a complete description of the Challenge Grants, go to [www.ecolinks.org](http://www.ecolinks.org).

#### QUICK RESPONSE AWARDS

The third component of EcoLinks' multi-pronged approach is the Quick Response Awards program, which is designed to meet the immediate small-scale needs of organizations perusing opportunities within the framework of the EcoLinks programs. Activities covered by the grant must facilitate partner matching for a Challenge Grant or promote an environmental trade or investment. Some typical activities covered by Quick Response Rewards include: travel to meet potential partners; site visits to facilities; and technology demonstrations. Awards do not exceed \$5,000 and firms from Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, FYR Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Russia Far East, Slovakia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and the United States. More information and application forms are available at [www.ecolinks.org](http://www.ecolinks.org).

## KAZAK-U.S. CONSORTIUM WINS PARTNERSHIP GRANT

EcoLinks awarded a \$38,000 partnership grant to a Kazak-U.S. consortium to address aquifer pollution in Almaty. Seventy percent of Almaty's water supply comes from aquifers. The rapidly increasing number of automobiles and carwashes in Almaty has led to significant pollution of the water supply. This partnership between the Energy Resources Department of Almaty, the Kazak engineering firm of Gornoe Buro, Ltd., and the U.S. firm, Shell Engineering & Associates, Inc. will introduce technology to reduce wastewater discharge from carwashes and will demonstrate the effectiveness of using pre-treatments for specific pollutants; It will also try to create a U.S.-Kazakhstan partnership to tackle additional environmental challenges.

## TEXAS COMPANY PARTNERS WITH POLISH FIRM THANKS TO ECOLINKS

GreenTech Texas International (GTTI) is a Texas-based environmental firm that took part in ET3M U.S./Euro Partnering Event held in the Netherlands in November 2000. During the event, GTTI met with Anna Janczewska, the EcoLinks TechRep for Poland and a delegation of Polish environmental firms that accompanied Anna to the Netherlands to find potential U.S. partners. As a result of the meeting, GTTI agreed to partner with Tuzal a Warsaw-based environmental firm specializing in water treatment. GTTI and Tuzal will now work together in Poland on a number of projects.

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Companies wishing to learn more about opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe should contact the Central and Eastern Europe Business Information Center (CEEbic) at (202) 482-2645; by Email at [ceebic@ita.doc.gov](mailto:ceebic@ita.doc.gov). To learn more about opportunities in Russian and the Newly Independent States, contact the Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States (BISNIS) at (202) 482-4655; by E-mail at [bisnis@ita.doc.gov](mailto:bisnis@ita.doc.gov), or contact U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service. For a complete list of Export Assistance Centers or senior commercial officers in U.S. embassies in Europe, go to [www.usatrade.gov](http://www.usatrade.gov).