Overcoming barriers to SMEs in eco-innovation

Eco-innovation is essential to respond to major current and future societal challenges, particularly in terms of the environment. The creativity and dynamism of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) means they have a crucial role to play in this area – both as eco-innovators and as recipients of green technologies. Eco-innovation is key to supporting our society over the next 50 years and to minimise the gap between environmental pressures and a standard of living with which we will feel comfortable in our society. Technology will have to bridge that gap and the development of that technology involves eco-innovation in products, processes and – increasingly – services, much provided by SMEs.

According to European Commission figures, more than 99% of all European businesses are SMEs. They provide two out of three of all private-sector jobs and contribute to more than half of the total value-added created by businesses in the EU. Moreover, SMEs are the true backbone of the European economy, being primarily responsible for wealth and economic growth, in addition to their key role in innovation and R&D.

All these enterprising companies are trying to find their niche in the economy and respond to needs in society. But, while they are creative and dynamic, their size is such that their market influence is very small. Equally SME capabilities for developing new products are inevitably restricted. In the same way, even earlier in the chain of knowledge and innovation, their access to expertise, finance and markets is similarly circumscribed. However, the brightest ideas come from small and medium-sized companies.

Moreover, different policies are necessary to support the crucial front runners that have the creative ideas and equally important late adapters that take such ideas and help society arrive at its goals. The front runners have already shown their willingness and readiness to think ahead of environmental legislation. They help policymakers formulate new policies, whereas the late adapter need to be brought in to adapt existing knowledge. So we need them all.

The Bilbao Forum is intended first of all to get entrepreneurs themselves to speak about their specific needs and the barriers to their development. These will be examined against the background of what governments and other organisations are already doing to support SMEs in the eco-innovation sector.

Concrete examples will be presented of best experiences and best practices of how SMEs can respond to develop their niche in the economy. The intention is to elaborate recommendations for more effective government policies at the regional, national and European level. Participants will include a number of specific SMEs together with policymakers, finance institutions, research institutions and relevant non-governmental organisations.

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RECPINEU
EU research projects can drive a local SME to GLOBAL recognition

Brief description
RECPINEU’s R&D and Management, conscious of the quality of its innovative products and their value for the environment, decided in 2005 to participate in two European research projects – CRIOSINTER and MULTITURF – together with many other European partners. The main reasons were to evaluate the potential of its products in new applications and open the horizons for new market possibilities.

Target Audience
Individual researchers and SMEs committed to develop environmentally sound and innovative

Keywords
Criosinter; Multiturf

Completed or Ongoing?
Completed

Organisational background: RECPINEU is a major European producer since 2001 of rubber powders and granulates using the Hi-TEC cryogenic process (primary system) for tyre recycling. It successfully introduced this technology in Europe and is still the sole Company using it, running its productions lines 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, and 52 weeks/year. RECPINEU is a Certified Company since 2004 in Quality (NP EN ISO 9001:2000), Environment (NP EN ISO 14001:2004), and Occupational Health and Safety (HSGS 18001:2007), complying with the recent REACH Legislation on Chemicals. Its products consist of "recycled rubber polymers" – vulcanized rubber powders and granulates of high quality and specifications, free from contaminants and not chemically degraded, suitable for use in rubber industry as rubber secondary raw materials, and in other industries as rubber elastomeric particles of different sizes for specific applications (ex: synthetic turf, sport surfaces, floor tiles, playgrounds, etc.)

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Public Funding of Eco-Innovation Research, Demonstration and Market Transfer to SME by the Commission, the States and the Regions

Public Funding of Eco-Innovation Research, Demonstration and Market Transfer to SME by the Commission, the States and the Regions

8th ETAP Forum on Eco-innovation

General Description (Context/Action):
• Our approach was based in our knowledge and good quality of our Products.
• The goal was to "open" and demonstrate new industrial applications for our Products.
• The required resources were mainly our personnel skills and its expertise on products and applications, since the financing of direct expenses other than the staff costs were very short.
• We found some minor difficulties during the development stages of the Projects due to the initial "ignorance" of the Project partners concerning the features of our cryogenic rubber recycled products, many times confused with the more traditional "mechanical" rubber recycled products – but hopefully that aspect was made clear and recognized along the project.
• At the end of the Research Projects all the Consortium partners achieved their research objectives, and in our case we have confirmed our current business models.
• We consider the results of both projects very favourable, since at the end we achieved the EU level and the recognition from our partners that our Company is a significant and reliable actor in our activity due to the high quality and performance of our products, which facilitates our approach to the market.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
• The main impact is the potential to increase the material recycling of the EU waste tyres for supplying in the future the new applications researched in both Projects.
• Simultaneously, economic sustainability was found in both projects, regarding the use of adequate recycled rubber characteristics and specifications as raw material.
• The goal was to demonstrate the possibility of using quality recycled rubber in the applications researched in both Projects, instead of new (virgin) rubbers or elastomers.
• As a sign of success, we started selling our cryogenic rubber products to the project partners and also to new EU customers, as a recognition of its quality.
• We recommend the approach "first the research, then the demonstration projects" as an efficient way to develop new market applications that will drive the recycling industry.
Organisational background:
Tecnalia is Spain’s largest private R&D Corporation and is the fifth largest in Europe.

General Description (Context/Action):
This study was done using third person information sources as well as in-person and phone interviews with various sources in the U.S. R&D and/or eco-innovation infrastructure (Department of Energy, the office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, New England Clean Energy Council, etc.). The overall goal has been to identify key characteristics of the U.S. approach, as well as to define the differences, as well as similarities in the approaches that have been used in Europe and the U.S. While of course respecting the important differences that exist between the U.S. and European systems in terms of publicly-funded R&D, including for eco-innovation, the hope is that aspects of the U.S. scheme can be analysed for their utility and possible implementation in the European context.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
- The U.S. has, for more than 25 years, employed the SBIR programme that is individually financed by different national agencies with large R&D budgets, and which directly benefits SMEs by publicly financing initial development stages while the resulting intellectual property stays with the SMEs. Outside of the horizontal SBIR and STTR programmes, R&D structure and consequent technology transfer are specific to the different Federal agencies.
- As regards the DOE and its spending on renewable energy, the model is essentially based on channeling R&D programmes and associated financing, to existing R&D infrastructure, especially universities and national science labs.
- Regulations and nationwide standards are important drivers for generating a market that is sufficiently interesting and stable to attract private investment.
- The public role also includes leading by example in procurement and installation of renewable energy technologies.
- The venture capital role, as well as companies’ innovative business models, continue to be very important in developing the U.S. market in renewable energy technology.

Inasmet-Tecnalia
What the U.S. does to support eco-innovation technology, especially in the area of renewable energy

Brief description
In terms of publicly-financed R&D policies specifically oriented towards SMEs, including in technology fields of eco-innovation, the outstanding programme in the U.S. is the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programme which has been operational since 1982. However, in general, U.S. publicly-financed R&D programmes are characterised by competition for scientific excellence within existing R&D infrastructure, notably universities and national laboratories. With the exception of the SBIR programme, R&D programmes generally do not include specific objectives for SME participation.

Target Audience
R&D officials, especially in R&D programme design

Keywords
U.S., renewable energy, publicly-financed R&D

Supporting info
The full case study will be available at the ETAP conference in Bilbao.

Completed or Ongoing?
Completed

Public Funding of Eco-Innovation Research, Demonstration and Market Transfer for SMEs by the Commission, the States and the Regions
VITO

The Flemish eco-investment bonus: a dynamic eco-policy oriented tool to support eco-innovation

Brief description
In accordance with European standards, the Flemish government grants financial incentives (subsidies) to firms that invest in reducing pollution or energy use in their plants. To optimize the eco-investment support in Flanders, the Flemish authorities have asked Vito to develop a dynamic system to select and rank appropriate technologies and determine the percentage of costs that should be subsidized.

Target Audience
Competent authorities for eco-investment support policy, industry and SME’s

Keywords
Eco-investment support – technology list – call system

Organisational background: VITO provides innovative technological solutions as well as scientifically based advice and support in order to stimulate sustainable development.

Completed or Ongoing? Completed

General Description (Context/Action):
Vito has developed a methodology to select and rank environmental technologies that qualify for financial aid for environmental investments. The selection of the technologies that could qualify for financial aid is based on the criteria laid down in the General block exemption Regulation (EC) No 800/2008, which stipulates that only technologies that have a significantly better environmental profile than the standard state-of-the-art technologies and what is legally required may be considered as potential recipients of support. However, only the additional cost of achieving this improved environmental performance is eligible for eco-investment support. This additional cost is determined by Vito. Flanders also keep the criterion of pay-back time, i.e. the average payback time has to be > 5 years.

Based on this selection methodology, a database is built and made available online (http://www.vlaanderen.be/ecologiepremie). With respect to energy, the following techniques appear: certain energy-saving techniques, the use of renewable energy (e.g. solar, wind, geothermal, biomass), cogeneration, fuel cells, etc. Vito updates the database of potential eco-technologies. New technologies may be proposed by suppliers and companies, technologies on the list may require the elimination of certain techniques, costs may change, etc. The performance factor is a qualitative factor that indicates how the technology contributes to achieving the environmental policy objectives (distance-to-target approach). Technologies with a high performance factor are thus more likely to receive eco-investment support than those with a low performance factor. To apply for eco-investment support, Flemish companies are invited to submit a subsidy application using a ‘call’ system. Three times a year such a call is launched to which the companies can register their investment project.

The result of this assessment is a ranking of the technology applications from high to low priority. The subsidy-envelope per call is divided over the best-ranked applications, in descending order until exhaustion of the budget. This selection and ranking methodology, and the use of a ‘call’ system for eco-investment support, have proven to be:

• Dynamic: The technology list can be easily updated to reflect the ongoing progress in technologies, regulations and new environmental policy targets.
• Transparent: The selection and ranking methodology makes it very clear for companies which technologies are more likely to receive eco-investment support, and why. The tool also allows companies to check the amount of subsidies they can receive.
• Goal-oriented: The system takes into account the Flemish environmental policy targets. Using this ranking methodology only high performing technologies, which contribute the most in achieving the environmental policy targets, will receive eco-investment support.
• Standardised: Companies can only apply for eco-investment support during the calls, with a specific timeframe for approval, which makes it time-efficient and structured for both companies and authorities.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
The performance factor, as mentioned above, being the most important factor in the assessment of the technology applications. The cash-flow ratio of the applicant: this ratio give an indication of the credibility and financial health of the company; vision of the applicant towards sustainable energy use, such as participation in the energy audit covenant, and sustainable entrepreneurship, i.e. ISO 14001 or the application of eco-management tools.

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General Description (Context/Action):
Vito has developed a methodology to select and rank environmental technologies that qualify for financial aid for environmental investments. The selection of the technologies that could qualify for financial aid is based on the criteria laid down in the General block exemption Regulation (EC) No 800/2008, which stipulates that only technologies that have a significantly better environmental profile than the standard state-of-the-art technologies and what is legally required may be considered as potential recipients of support. However, only the additional cost of achieving this improved environmental performance is eligible for eco-investment support. This additional cost is determined by Vito. Flanders also keep the criterion of pay-back time, i.e. the average payback time has to be > 5 years.

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The performance factor of the technology, used to rank the selected technologies according to priority for receiving eco-investment support. The performance factor is a qualitative factor that indicates how the technology contributes to achieving the environmental policy objectives (distance-to-target approach). Technologies with a high performance factor are thus more likely to receive eco-investment support than those with a low performance factor.

To apply for eco-investment support, Flemish companies are invited to submit a subsidy application using a ‘call’ system. Three times a year such a call is launched to which the companies can register their investment project. All the submitted eco-investment projects are then assessed within a certain timeframe using the following qualitative and quantitative criteria:

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• Goal-oriented: The system takes into account the Flemish environmental policy targets. Using this ranking methodology only high performing technologies, which contribute the most in achieving the environmental policy targets, will receive eco-investment support.
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The EIC Environmental Investment Network
Advice for strategic and investment decisions for SMEs

Brief description
Eco-innovation from two perspectives – investors and SMEs. SMEs stand to benefit in several ways from consideration of internal strategic environmental investments whilst investments in environmental SMEs provide an effective route to increasing the sustainability and profitability of investors’ portfolios. Target Audience
SMEs, Investors, Sustainability

Organisational background:
The EIC Environmental Investment Network (EIN), managed by Forbury Environmental (FEL) and Clarkslegal, aims to facilitate investment in early-stage environmental technologies and services. Through this work the EIN is constantly in contact with SMEs who are sustainability driven, eco-innovators. These businesses are providing and commercialising the eco-innovations that many SMEs within the wider economy will need to adopt to increase the sustainability of their operations. In turn, these companies constantly inspire FEL to re-evaluate its own best practice measures.

General Description (Context/Action):
Institutional investors look to make investments in eco-innovation that will have impacts in a wide range of areas, from infrastructure to large multinationals to the SME sector that makes up the vast majority of all countries’ economies. A company that has implemented innovative sustainable measures itself would also be more attractive to an investor than a similar company without forward thinking sustainability measures. There is increasing awareness that in order to adopt sustainable practices within SMEs, more upfront capital may be required, although in nearly all cases this will be paid back with profit by the resulting savings. SMEs, by definition, are the type of businesses in which the majority of investments are likely to have a significant impact on the firm’s operations as a whole, rather than multinational global players. As a result, strategic investment decisions must carefully consider costs with associated benefits. Other than cost and economic savings, SMEs can benefit from enviro-venture capital in several other ways – for example, investment will allow them to comply with new legislation, which is increasingly the case, and anticipate forthcoming legislation that is likely to affect the business operations. In addition, investment in sustainability can enhance reputation and open doors to untapped markets.

The sharing of information between SMEs is essential in order to foster eco-innovation and adoption of innovative new products. The EIN supports the concept of clustering SMEs who are working in related areas to share their visions and expertise. Additionally, clustering can provide a means to assess the viability of new innovations that can be used to make strategic investment decisions as well as being a method of accessing resources at a much lower cost. The symbiotic nature of the relationships within a cluster can be extremely beneficial to all involved stakeholders.

The EIN and FEL have been active in exploring how such a cluster may work in practicality in conjunction with the Welsh Automotive Forum. Such clusters are known in other sectors and can enable a higher degree of crucial expert management, can make either some or all of the cluster more attractive to investors who want to moderate their risks when supporting innovative technologies, and may better attract helpful public funding. There is increasing awareness that the risk paradigm is shifting. Long term value may in future depend on demonstrable sustainability, so that not addressing eco-innovation becomes the high risk option rather than innovation being the risky choice. Awareness of the scope to find suitable eco-innovations is a crucial issue. Many SMEs have little appreciation of technological developments and may be able to adopt and exploit commercially to give them competitive advantage. The objective of the EIN is not only to maximise equity funding for socio-innovation but to also encourage the adoption of suitable technologies by businesses, large and small. These businesses could then nurture and develop the technologies to improve their own sustainability and possibly apply capable management and debt finance for growth of such technologies generally in the market. As the investor community as a whole is slow to take up innovative technologies, and there is inadequate funding from the private sector for the scale of eco-innovation required, it is the EIN’s perspective that the market needs a stronger focus on the potential impact of SME awareness. This may accelerate utilisation of vital technologies and in turn facilitate better access to external funding than the innovative business would be able to access on its own.

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ZENIT GmbH
Helping SMEs go European -
the Sector Group Environment of the Enterprise Europe Network

Brief description:
For some 15 years (including the predecessor project), the Sector Group Environment has been the No. 1 point of call for all European SMEs interested in eco-innovation in the broadest sense. Over 50 organisations in the Enterprise Europe Network have united to form a powerful network which, through an ongoing programme of joint activities at EU level, such as matchmaking events, contributes to a transnational exchange of business, technology transfer and R&D opportunities between Europe's environmental players, above all SMEs.

Organisational background:
ZENIT is a public-private partnership founded in 1984, which specialises in consulting services in the areas of innovation and technology for SMEs and other organisations in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany.

Target Audience:
All organisations which support SMEs in the area of environment, e.g. consultants, chambers of commerce, technology centres, researchers in universities and institutes, public bodies, ministries, approval and authorisation bodies, utilities, programme managers in business administrations, sectoral organisations, multipliers and SMEs.

Keywords:
SMEs, technology transfer, business development

Supporting info:
http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/about/sec-

tor-groups/environment

General Description (Context/Action):
The Sector Group Environment (SGE) of the Enterprise Europe Network was born out of the Thematic Group Environment of the predecessor network, the Innovation Relay Centre Network, and builds on the many years of experience, contacts and the success of that project. The SGE is an expert group which covers all environmental topics. Recognising that environment is a key issue for Europe, it uses its members' expertise to fulfi 1 its objectives of supporting European organisations in their scientific, technological and commercial development. The partner organisations are admitted to the group on the basis of their expertise in the field of environment, the potential of the environmental sector (either as donor or recipient) in their region and the commitment of the individual consultant. This guarantees a high standard of operations and of services to clients, which are primarily SMEs. These services include: finding business and cooperation partners; bringing together enterprises, institutes, stakeholders and public bodies; advising on funding opportunities from EU research programmes; identifying and promoting innovative technologies, products and services, and matching technology supply and demand; assisting in EU legislation matters such as Directives and Regulations. An overriding goal is to make eco-innovation visible, attractive and available to all players. The Group currently comprises over 50 members from across the EU, from Norway in the north to Malta in the south, from Hungary in the east to Spain in the west and is chaired by Peter Wolfmeyer, Managing Director, ZENIT GmbH.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
The SGE itself does not make any direct environmental impact. It is however contributing, through awareness-raising, promotion, publications, the organisation and implementation of events throughout the EU, and through the mediation of new business concepts, innovative technological solutions, and dissemination and commercialisation of R&D results, to reducing the environmental footprint of Europe's SMEs. By matching demand with supply, the SGE is helping SMEs towards cleaner production – for example, by identifying and mediating better wastewater management solutions for manufacturing SMEs.

The appeal of the SGE for its SME clientele is its clear focus on a specific sector, its firm foothold in the regions represented and in Europe, the doors it opens for them in other EU Member States, the professional, individual and tailor-made assistance it offers (e.g. accompanying them on visits abroad), its value-for-money and having its commitment from and personal contact with qualified consultants. The Sector Group concept can be transferred to other sectors (at present there are 18 in the Enterprise Europe Network) and the success of this strategic approach can be measured by the growing number of organisations interested in joining the Group as members, in the increase in European enterprises participating in its activities and by those which have succeeded through the Group in establishing pan-European partnerships. The outlook for the future is to integrate the SGE to a greater degree into other environmental initiatives, projects, and programmes at European level.
General Description (Context/Action):

A&B Laboratorios de Biotecnología is part of the chemical sector, whose environmental credentials have often been questioned. However, during the last years there have been many advances designed to change this perception with the Responsible Care, (in the chemical sector safety features must also feature environmental benefits during the design and development process) and "Product Stewardship" (responsible risk management and improvement in a product’s behaviour in relation to safety, hygiene and the environment during its entire life cycle). Both of them are principles of Green Chemistry.

The organization has based its commitment to society and its strategy of searching for alternatives to traditional chemical products using eco-label criteria, biotechnology and studying the impact of products throughout their life cycle during the early design stages.

In the first stage of the process, the most difficult issue was that the existing methodologies were not applicable to the chemical sector. The tools used for the evaluation of environmental aspects based on eco-indicators, which are very often utilized in other sectors, did not provide enough information about the chemicals. A&B Laboratorios de Biotecnología created the first database and the first environmental assessment system under Ecodesign standard to measure a chemical product’s environmental impact and improvement. Such measurement includes multiple factors, such as eco-indicators, toxicity, acoustics, maximum exposure factor, pictogram, volumetric coefficient, origin, production, transport, use and final disposal.

Every product in the product catalogue has been environmentally evaluated using this method.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):

A&B Laboratorios de Biotecnología has demonstrated that effectiveness and innocuousness are not struggling, developing eco-design methodology which can be used by any company in the chemical sector. 35 products have already been ecodesigned and the average environmental impact has been reduced by 17%.

These statistics positively affect the environmental impact of the organization by revealing that, for example, in 2010, the consumption of dangerous raw materials has been lowered by 21%, and the generation of hazardous waste has been reduced by 18% from the previous year.

The use of environmental biotechnology (adding biocatalysts to the product) and the ecological criteria of the European Eco-label also help the organization to reduce the environmental impact of the products. A&B Laboratorios de Biotecnología has 6 products that carry the Ecolabel.

The implanted eco-design system allows for the introduction of new regulations such as REACH, biocides, VOCs, as well as reducing the percentage of hazardous and ADR products released on the market.

The example of successful products along these lines will serve to spur other organizations on given the fact that the environmental investment, is without doubt, the driving force behind today’s products.

Organisational background:

A&B Laboratorios de Biotecnología is a technologically-oriented company, whose business is research, design, manufacturing and marketing chemical and biological products.

Brief description

Eco-design is considered by A&B Laboratorios de Biotecnología to be a key process of success in the chemical sector. In this way, sustainable and profitable products are launched to the market considering the environmental and safety impact over its complete life cycle and trying to minimize it under the Eco-design standard (UNE 150301 – on developing phase to ISO 14006).

Target Audience

Organizations, institutions and business firms involved in developing, financing and deploying green technologies and related eco-innovations.

Keywords

Eco-design, biotechnology, eco-label, chemical sector

Supporting info

• http://www.ihobe.net
• http://www.ab-laboratorios.com/es/noticias/28/pag-1
• http://www.eco-label.com

Completed or Ongoing?

Ongoing

A&B Laboratorios de Biotecnología S.A.U.

Eco-innovation: the key to success

Getting advice for the right strategic and investment decisions in SMEs

Getting advice for the right strategic and investment decisions in SMEs
Networking of clusters of SMEs for eco-innovation

Sant’Anna University - School of Advanced Studies

A cluster approach to support eco-innovation and effective environmental management in SMEs

Brief description
The presentation reports the results of two EU-funded Projects (Ecoinnovation IMAGINE and LIFE+ ECCELSA), whose main objective was that of defining and experimentally applying a methodology based on the EMAS Regulation to many industrial clusters in Italy, by way of an approach shared by the main local actors and interested parties, in order to favour the development of technological and managerial eco-innovations. The principle on which this “Cluster Approach” was based is the idea that a concerted and synergistic management is the most appropriate way of promoting environmental improvement by SMEs.

Organisational background:
Sant’Anna School of advanced studies is a university providing graduate and post graduate education and carrying out research especially in the field of innovation, environment and health.

Keywords
Cluster, networking, resource sharing, SMEs

Outcomes
• a significant “multiplier” effect on all the other organizations of the cluster (higher satisfactation, involvement in improvement actions, stakeholders pressure on the laggards, etc.)
• a wide availability of common resources and tools for environmental management
• a strong partnership between public and private actors of the cluster
• a better informed policy making by local institutions, targeting environmental priorities
• a higher stakeholder involvement, with a particular increase of environmental awareness in local communities and citizens.

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General Description (Context/Action):
Networking between organizations emerges from several studies as one of the most important factors fostering environmental management. In the first case, enterprises co-operate by identifying and assessing similar environmental aspects and by finding technological and operational solutions that can be applied to similar production processes and products. In the second case, co-operation is facilitated by “physical co-localization”. In our experience, a network has been created among SMEs within a “cluster” in order to foster information exchange and to define and apply common solutions to the environmental, problems or to share environmental management resources.

Our experience refers to the results of two EU-funded Projects, whose main objective was that of defining and experimentally applying a methodology based on the EMAS Regulation to many industrial clusters in Italy.

The principle on which this Cluster Approach was based is the idea that a concerted and synergistic management is the most appropriate way of promoting environmental improvement by SMEs.

The most conspicuous barriers to the implementation of the “cluster approach” have been the following:

• It is difficult to identify an actor within the cluster that is motivated enough to take the initiative in order to foster information exchange and to define and apply common solutions to the environmental problems or to share environmental management resources.
• Another barrier can be the large number of organizations operating in a cluster. In our cases, crucial support was given by the CIP – Ecoinnovation and LIFE+ funding.
• Other barriers can be the large number of organizations operating in a cluster.
• A last barrier can be the problem of “free riding”. Even if many companies in the cluster were interested, in using the cluster-based resources and tools, it might be that some companies will not and thereby not benefit from the approach.

Some SMEs particularly relied on another cluster-based tool, made available to the local producers: a common audit team.

The most important factors that can be considered very significant environmental aspects by strongly relying on the “cluster” environmental training initiatives carried out at the cluster level in order to replace their independent training activities.

Further, it has to be emphasized that even organizations operating in non-industrial sectors can benefit from this approach provided they belong to the same cluster.

It should be noted that, besides the above mentioned “direct” benefits, some “indirect” benefits were produced for the territorial area concerned, such as:
• a higher level of knowledge sharing and networking between EMAS organizations operating in the cluster
• higher stakeholder involvement, with a particular increase of environmental awareness in local communities and citizens.

8th ETAP Forum on Eco-innovation
The presented case history refers to a pilot project conducted in Northern Italy since 2007, in a furniture district characterized by a high number of SMEs representative of the entire supply-chain: from designer to retailers. The project were undertaken by “Progetto Lissone”, a consortium including over 200 SMEs which is owned for 51% by the municipality of Lissone and was developed in collaboration with the Research Unit on Sustainable Development of the University of Milano Bicocca.

The study was performed for identifying how to involve SMEs and how to disseminate eco-innovation and life cycle thinking starting from the identification of the most important impacts trough a qualitative LCA of the entire supply chain (from cradle to grave) and a quantitative LCA of a specific piece of furniture. In the project, a new model of business was developed, because the cluster of SME’s started a pilot activities of collaborative innovation from designer to retailers, promoting local production in a new perspectives.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):

The outcomes of the pilot project highlight the importance of a widen involvement of supply chain stakeholders. In this context, the role of a firms’ consortium is crucial in promoting and disseminating best practices among associated firms; furthermore, it is necessary to encourage both networks of producers acting in the same sector (e.g. association of furniture producers) and stakeholders of the whole supply chain (designers, producers/ craftmen, retailers, consumers).

Nowadays, following the previous experience, the project is enlarged. An attempt to create a short supply chain in Lombardy combining the efforts of two consortia of SMEs (Progetto Lissone, consisting of SMEs working on furniture design, production and selling and a Consorzio Forestale Lario Intelvese, consisting of SMEs working on forest management, harvesting and logging); the project is intended to integrate forest management, furniture production, recycling of production waste and energy production with the aim to optimize materials and energy flows and to reduce the overall impact on environmental compartments taking into account strategic and economic perspectives. The idea is to support a group of companies willing to work on the sustainability concept with environmental knowledge and to put the conveyed knowledge into every-day practice, involving the whole related supply chain and rising awareness among the customers.
8th ETAP Forum on Eco-innovation  
Making Eco-Innovation happen in Small and Medium Enterprises

General Description (Context/Action):

- New partners and therefore competences were developed for SMEs during the first phase of governmental support.
- The goal of the KOMZET-approach was to improve and adjust vocational training to modern needs.
- Governmental funding by the German ministries of BMBF and BMWi enhanced the creation of successful networks.
- So far no obstacles were recorded for the project, the procedure is ongoing.
- The solution was a big step forward concerning further training and structuring modern technology transfer, as well as development.
- The project helped SMEs to come together within the competence centers. The network is a sustainable combination of training, technology transfer and innovation, creating a modern network within industry for SME’s.
- An example of an overall successful trial of the approach can be seen within ZHEUS -Technical college of timber industries / Center for Timbers, Energies, Environment and Safety.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):

- The impact of the project consists of the support for innovative products influenced by knowledge.
- The main strength within the approach is to push ingenuity through appropriate training.
- The approach shows the ability of crafts to cooperate in modern networks.
- Because of the successful outcome of the project, the ZHEUS-Center will extend its development.
- The approach can be recommended through ZHEUS because new networks lead to more opportunities for SMEs.
- A permanent feedback is forwarded to ZHEUS since its existence.

Brief description
The SME plays a vital role in job creation and is a main driver for industry in the EU. An Eco-Innovation means further potential for growth in our economy. Although a small company can innovate, it also needs to know more about risks and safety in order to successfully market an environmentally friendly product. The German idea to use a partner for support and training to help overcome the gap and to learn how to act in a sustainable manner.

Target Audience
Entrepreneurs, participants from enterprises & industry, representatives from organisations and networks

Keywords
Training, skills and capacity building

Organisational background:
Holzfachschule Bad Wildungen / ZHEUS – Technical college of timber industries / Center for Timbers, Energies, Environment and Safety

Completed or Ongoing?
Ongoing procedure within the single networks and competences (KOMZET-network);  
Example:  Holzfachschule Bad Wildungen / ZHEUS – Technical college of timber industries / Center for Timbers, Energies, Environment and Safety

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ZDH, German Confederation of Small Businesses Brussels
Supporting Eco-Innovation in SME’s by specific training - the importance of competence centers.
Syntens & EIM

Encouraging Eco-Innovation and Sustainable Business in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: approach and results.

**General Description (Context/Action):**

- **Background of the project.** In the Coalition Agreement and the Agreement of Sustainability, the Dutch Cabinet emphasized the importance of innovation to the benefit of social issues such as energy, water, environment, health and safety. This should contribute to a sustainable environment and stronger business. The Dutch Cabinet also stimulates the sustainability ambitions of Dutch small and medium enterprises (SME’s) to contribute their part: SME’s are an important engine of innovation and represent a great innovation potential.

  - On average, it appears that SME entrepreneurs are short-term focused on company improvements to secure their turnover and the achievement of their business objectives. There is little awareness of the new business opportunities in sustainability. However, a growing awareness is identified among the leaders of SMEs to achieve revenue growth with sustainable business and thereby contribute to both energy and environmental goals. Given this situation, there is an additional impetus necessary for SMEs to realize the sustainability ambitions in the years to come.

  - **The goal.** Goal of the project is to encourage SMEs to acquire technological and business knowledge on sustainable innovation for savings in the field of environment and energy. The size of this pilot project is set at 150 leading consulting SMEs in several industries, including metal, plastics, rubber and electrical industry.

  - **Resources required.** Developing a sustainability scan. The Sustainable Innovation (Quick) Scan is a powerful method to quickly identify aspirations and opportunities of SMEs on sustainable innovations. Based on the results of the scan, an SME can make substantiated steps to sustainable innovation and achieve an optimal integration within their business.

  - **New organisational models.** The project combines existing sustainability knowledge with the Syntens innovation management process. Beside this, it enhanced the knowledge base of Syntens in the field of sustainability and sustainable innovations. After the pilot, Doe MEE is envisaged that sustainable innovation is an integral part of the service Syntens. Many more SMEs can then be helped on their way to sustainable innovation.

**Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):**

Based on the results, we concluded that intensive discussions could be held with the SMEs about the opportunities for both cost savings and revenue growth, particularly in four areas with the following topics:

- **Product & Service:** eco-design, sustainable materials selection, C2C, dematerialisation, different packaging, reducing energy consumption over the life and dealing with end-of-life (recyclable).

- **Technology & ICT:** the optimization of production techniques, investment in renewable technology, reducing energy consumption, digital workflows and application of smart technology (functional integration).

- **Market & Marketing:** customer research into the sustainable needs, optimal communication of the sustainability profile of the business with existing and potential new customers.

- **Organization & Processes:** reduce wastage, lean manufacturing, optimization of transportation, establishing sustainable value chain, regional cooperation and assurance in business.

**Keywords**

Small and Medium Enterprises; Sustainable Innovation; Effective Stimulation

**Completed or Ongoing?**

Pilot project “Doe MEE” is completed. We will however continue to use the developed stimulation method.

**Keywords**

Small and Medium Enterprises; Sustainable Innovation; Effective Stimulation

**Supporting info**

www.syntens.nl/duurzaaminnoveren

**Keywords**

Small and Medium Enterprises; Sustainable Innovation; Effective Stimulation

**Completed or Ongoing?**

Pilot project “Doe MEE” is completed. We will however continue to use the developed stimulation method.
Environmental Sustainability Knowledge Transfer Network (ESKTN)

New Markets Opportunities For High-Performing Planar Transformers

Brief description
HIMAG Solutions design and manufacture high efficiency planar transformers. The ESKTN supported Himag in identifying new markets in the Green Technology Sector and attracting funding to develop the next generation of high performance products.

Organisational background:
The ESKTN connects businesses with the opportunity to develop innovative products and solutions to reduce environmental impact.

Supporting info
www.himag.co.uk

Completed or Ongoing?:
Completed

General Description (Context/Action):
Planar transformers are a £1m pound market, an essential part of many high frequency switching electronic devices, such as telecom rectifiers, battery chargers and motor control drives. They are smaller, lighter and more efficient than their conventional ‘wire-wound’ transformer counterparts. HIMAG SOLUTIONS, based in Gloucestershire, is already the second largest designer and manufacturer of planar transformers in the world and is pioneering new research into the next generation of lightweight, high performance and high efficiency planar transformers.

Managing Director, Dean Curran, explained that “interest was mounting for the supply of this emerging planar transformer technology, particularly in the electric/hybrid vehicle, solar power and aerospace markets. HIMAG SOLUTIONS has been well placed to embark on further research into planar transformer technology and create a new generation of high performance planar transformers that would provide unique characteristics for these challenging markets.”

Business Link was already helping HIMAG SOLUTIONS to improve their business performance when they suggested contacting the Resource Efficiency Knowledge Transfer Network (RE-KTN); a programme funded by the Technology Strategy Board (TSB). A visit by the RE-KTN’s Innovation Manager, Adrian Whyle, led to a review of HIMAG SOLUTIONS’ new product plans.

Curran continued: “Adrian was able to identify a number of areas for potential development and, critically, suggested that we look at the Grant for Research and Development to assist in funding our highly innovative research program.”

HIMAG SOLUTIONS went on to apply for an Exceptional Research Grant through the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and was successful with its application, winning an award of £157k towards the research costs for its next generation of HIMAG SOLUTIONS’ planar transformers. This will form part of a planned £1m pound expansion over the next two years.

Dean concluded: “In the current economic environment, small businesses face heightened challenges in securing financial support to develop products that will ensure their future success. Thanks to the support of Business Link, the RE-KTN and SWRDA, we are confident of delivering a superior world class product to the market and providing a key component in addressing the future environmental challenges we are all facing.”

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
It is clear that the savings in weight, volume and performance improvements of Planar Transformers, both in their use and in their manufacture, have a direct impact on the reduction of carbon emissions when compared to the larger, heavier and less efficient wire wound alternatives.

The ESKTN takes a more holistic view when working with organisations rather than just addressing the presenting issue it is important to understand the core skills and markets and work to identify new market opportunities. It is only after such an information gathering exercise has been undertaken that appropriate recommendations, support and introductions to other knowledge providers can be made and thereby have the greatest business impact. The feedback from Himag combined with the new business gained in automotive (hybrid/electric), solar and wind power, LED lighting with new potential for business in other areas demonstrates the value of this approach.

Keywords
Planar transformers, high efficiency, carbon reduction

Brief description
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Keywords
Planar transformers, high efficiency, carbon reduction

Training, skills and capacity building
Training, skills and capacity building

Completed or Ongoing?:
Completed
Ministry of Environment and Forests - Romania
Developing Emergent Ecological Markets in Romania - ECOEMERGE

Brief description
ECOEMERGE aims to guide the Romanian market towards green products and services, building on Norwegian expertise and national potential and experiences. ECOEMERGE is structured along two major axes, simultaneously addressing both production and consumption. Nevertheless, the results of these two components will be strongly interlinked and will provide input for future national policies in the fields of sustainable consumption and production.

Organisational background:
Central public authority for environmental protection in Romania.

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Organisational background:
Public procurement experts from the public institutions.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
The impact cannot be quantified yet, as the project is ongoing, but an increasing interest is expected from industry for investments in clean technologies. A lean interest and awareness on green products and services is also expected from public administrators.

EcoTechnoNet:
The first component EcoTechnoNet primarily addresses the research-development and innovation sectors, tackling the major barriers to technology transfer and market uptake of green, efficient technologies. In the second one (Green Procura) is focused on the promotion of public procurement based on green criteria. Through the events organised, as compared to, for instance, a regular event on SCP, the innovative approach is to create a platform where all the market players are involved and are trained at the same time on the same issues. It brings together the supply and demand sides, training them on cleaner production and green public procurement.

Recent Outcomes:
- Great interest was spurred and it was and remains difficult to react to these streams of different interests given the limited resources in terms of human resources. The approach needs to be continued and further developed, but away from the public sector, ECOEMERGE will only point in the direction of a completely new market reaction.
- Many of them say that this was very much needed.

General Description (Context/Action):
ECOEMERGE will establish a national infrastructure to support the development of eco-innovation and the large scale use of new, eco-friendly technologies, through collaboration platforms and partnerships between formerly state-owned R&D institutes and economic units. The ECOEMERGE Project will also create the critical mass of specialists in green public procurement, which will promote the promotion of public procurement based on green criteria. Through the example set by the public sector, the market is expected to progressively turn towards green products and services, contributing to the sustainable development of the Romanian economy.

The goal of this approach was to stimulate the emergence of new, eco-friendly technologies. It ensures the integration of environmental requirements in all development and innovation sectors, tackling the major barriers to technology transfer and market uptake of green, efficient technologies. In the example set by the public sector, the market is expected to progressively turn towards green products and services, contributing to the sustainable development of the Romanian economy.

- Did the approach lead to new ways of linking providers and beneficiaries?
- Did the solution imply new organisational or business models?
- What resources were required?
- Which barriers did you encounter during development and implementation stages?
- Did the solution imply new organisational or business models?
- No. It involved the development of existing ideas, but on a single platform and with a coherent approach towards sustainability, both in the public sector and with private organizations.
- Was the approach successful?
- Yes, for the first time public servants and private companies will be directly involved and are trained at the same time on the same issues. It brings together the supply and demand sides, training them on cleaner production and green public procurement. It also maps the main results from the research projects funded over the past ten years and tries to extract and exploit these results by informing potentially interested companies.
- The approach is successful based on the number of people interested in the events organised, as compared to, for instance, a regular event on SCP. Knowing that ECOEMERGE facilitates the partnerships by bringing important companies to the same table as R&D institutes, and also taking into account the fact that the resulting recommendations will be considered for future policy-making, the target audiences are extremely keen to be involved in this platform. Many of them say that this was very much needed.

We would recommend this approach because it allows for simultaneous move towards both consumers and producers.

We have had very positive feedback so far, exceeding our expectations and capacity to deal with it. The project will stay within budget, but there are plans for continuation, building on ECOEMERGE.
General Description (Context/Action):
Finance and guide, at an early stage, clean tech companies in their growth to the market.
Structure a fund that could combine financing with business development and provide small companies with the essential support, network and equity to develop IP to first products.
Funding of institutional investors, government support (Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs) and good team with knowledge of business development of small companies.

Getting funded was difficult (early stage companies are for most institutional investors too risky), for the investments it is also very difficult to arrange bank financing, even after commercial products are ready for the market. Lots of ideas and IP but hard to find good entrepreneurs. The EU is really lagging behind on entrepreneurship. Due to different legislation in EU countries, in many cases there is not a large home markets (if you start in small EU countries).

On the funding side: creative structures, institutional financiers, which showed courage and worked hard.

We need entrepreneurs to solve a big part of the environmental problems. This is because universities are not capable of commercialising IP/Knowledge. Large corporations can, but often not because new products usually harm their current market position. In addition, bigger systems are built on paradigms, which will not easily recognize a new innovation. Therefore, to accelerate the necessary clean mass consumption, we need ENTREPRENEURS and seed financing to support them.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
• What impact did it have on carbon emissions/waste/recycling/water consumption etc. 10 new clean tech companies with innovative and sometimes breakthrough technology in renewable energy, small wind, PV performance, Green/Biogas and building systems.
• What is a main strength of this approach?/How does it make things better? Besides the environmental benefits, it also creates jobs and stronger SME networks. It also enhances the local knowledge-circles (Universities and research institutes).
• What is of particular interest or innovative about this approach? Combinations of institutional funding and knowledge to guide and support entrepreneurial clean tech inventions.
• How did you judge if you had been successful? What evidence do you have? 10 participations, first market entry with 4 new products and a request from institutional funders to set up new growth funds.
• Why would you recommend this approach? Because it combines environmental improvement and job creation.
• What kind of feedback have you had and how will this change your project in the future? Start small, and then with some success, scale up. Look for good people combined with IP and only for commercially valuable IP.
Demeter Partners
Leading European capital expansion Cleantech fund

Brief description:
The Demeter 2 Fund is a €200 million FCPR devoted, such as the FCPR Demeter, to companies of the eco-energies and eco-industries sectors.

Target Audience:
Companies searching for capital financing, investors

Keywords:
Cleantech

Organisational background:
The team is made up of twenty-one members in Europe including fourteen in France, five in Spain and two in Germany.

General Description (Context/Action):
Demeter Partners takes capital stakes in companies (generally non-listed) in the eco-industries and eco-energies sectors with a view to financing their growth.
Demeter Partners intervenes primarily during the “capital development” phase, to help develop companies with strong growth potential, as a minority shareholder teaming up with the group of existing managers. Demeter Partners has also been involved in venture capital projects, helping start-up companies, and, in particular, those in the eco-energies.

Outcomes (Environmental, social, economic impacts):
We are mainly oriented toward expansion capital, working with companies as they grow in the following sectors:
- eco-industries (water, air and waste treatment, site remediation, etc.),
- eco-energies (energy efficiency, renewable energies, etc.).

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Further information

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Next Forum
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Brussels Autumn 2010
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