In addition to recognising pioneering environmental processes, products and management systems, the 2012 European Business Awards for the Environment (EBAE) honoured European companies who have excelled in the areas of biodiversity and international cooperation. While the German company INENSUS GmbH received the top prize in the International Business Cooperation category, Slovenské elektrárne, a.s. (Slovakia) won the inaugural Business and Biodiversity award.

The International Business Cooperation award is presented to a company that has stimulated sustainable growth in a developing country by establishing a cross-border partnership to exchange knowledge and technology. Created in 2012, the Business and Biodiversity award recognises companies that have contributed to halting biodiversity loss and supporting natural ecosystems.

The sustainable electrification of off-grid villages

“It really means a lot to us that an independent jury has looked at our model and has decided that it really works and is of value to the countries, to the European Commission and to the European Union.”

Nico Peterschmidt
Managing Director of INENSUS GmbH

Founded in 2005, INENSUS GmbH provides expertise in electronics for decentralised power systems. With headquarters in Goslar, Germany, the company was awarded the International Business Cooperation prize at the EBAE 2012 for its project ‘MicroPowerEconomy – a Private Public Partnership model for comprehensive island-grid village electrification with renewable energy’.

INENSUS – which is an acronym for INtegrated ENergy SUPply Systems – is a leading provider of products and services in the field of small wind and decentralised energy systems. The company also offers the essential competencies to develop and deliver comprehensive off-grid electrification projects.

The company designed the MicroPowerEconomy business and risk management model to attract large scale private investments for renewable energy power supply components to be operated in island-grids. Through a public-private-partnership approach, it sets out to deliver the sustainable electrification of off-grid villages in an ecologic, socioeconomic and financial manner. In 2008, the company undertook a joint venture with the Senegalese company MATFORCE CSI to electrify villages according to the MicroPowerEconomy approach.

The MicroPowerEconomy consists of three interlinked components to manage the risks associated with rural electrification. First, a network of committed stakeholders is established to ensure those involved work towards achieving their common aims. Next, a tariff and accounting model is instituted to encourage users to plan their electricity consumption, thereby reducing the strain on the power system and stabilising the mini-grid. Finally, a load management and accounting unit – involving metering and demand side management – is introduced to regulate power based on grid frequency, in order to deliver a reliable and stable energy system.
In 2010, the company implemented the MicroPowerEconomy model to electrify the village of Sine Moussa Abdou in Senegal. A 5 kW wind turbine, a 5 kW photovoltaic system and an 11 kVA engine-generator were all installed, in addition to a 1.5 km mini-grid. Through the project 900 inhabitants in 70 households now have access to electricity. The success of the project in Sine Moussa Abdou led to a second project in the village of Ndombil. Once again a 5 kW wind turbine, a 5 kW photovoltaic system and an 11 kVA engine-generator were all installed, in addition to a slightly larger 2 km mini-grid.

According to the Jury for the EBAE 2012, the INENSUS project represented a truly innovative and proven cooperative business model, which will be replicated to provide off-grid micropower to other Senegalese villages.

www.inensus.de

Protecting biodiversity for future generations

“Our company really cares about what we will leave for future generations, so sustainable development and corporate social responsibility are very important to us. We didn’t expect to win, but we are really proud of all the people who participated in this project.”

Dr Thomas Loprais
Slovenské elektráreň, a.s.

Based in Bratislava, Slovenské elektráreň, a.s. is the largest power generating company in Slovakia and the second largest in Central and Eastern Europe in terms of available installed capacity. The company – which has been part of the Enel Group since 2004 – was selected as the inaugural winner of the Business & Biodiversity award at the EBAE 2012. Slovenské elektráreň, a.s. received the top prize in this new category for its project ‘Energy for Nature: Saving most precious animal species in Slovak mountains’.

Presented for the first time during the EBAE 2012, the Business & Biodiversity award was created to honour companies that have demonstrated outstanding achievements in halting biodiversity loss and supporting natural ecosystems. The Jury chose to award this new prize to Slovenské elektráreň, a.s., concluding that in addition to supporting Natura 2000 and creating sustainable public-private partnerships, the project has engaged employees and the local community.

With a gross capacity of 5,739 MWe, Slovenské elektráreň, a.s. produces electricity from a mix of nuclear, hydro, fossil and renewable sources. The company currently operates 34 hydroelectric, 2 nuclear, 2 thermoelectric and 2 photovoltaic plants. Committed to lowering the environmental impacts of its production processes, almost 89% of the electricity generated by Slovenské elektráreň in 2011 was produced without greenhouse gas emissions. In addition to producing electricity, the company also generates and sells heat, and provides ancillary services to the power grid.

The Energy for Nature project combined biodiversity support and stabilisation. In cooperation with Tatras National Park – the largest national park in Slovakia – the company has instituted a number of nature preservation and environmental protection actions. Since 2007, Slovenské elektráreň, a.s. has actively contributed to the protection of endangered species, such as: the Tatra chamois, the Tatra marmot; the peregrine falcon, the brown trout; the golden eagle; the lesser spotted eagle; the Eurasian lynx and the grey wolf.

As part of Slovenské elektráreň’s commitment to support the Natura 2000 habitat and species directive, the company’s employees have voluntarily participated in the cleaning of natural habitats in the region. Furthermore, the company has funded monitoring and online video transmissions from peregrine falcon nests. By doing so, they have provided schools and the general public with an important environmental education tool.

www.seas.sk

Showcasing the EBAE on the world stage

In an effort to promote the European Business Awards for the Environment (EBAE), the European Commission and the EBAE Secretariat are actively showcasing the five winners of the EBAE 2012 at a selection of high-profile international events. Part of an overall communication strategy to raise awareness of the EBAE scheme, the five innovative companies were exhibited at no less than four international events this autumn.

Since 1987, the EBAE has recognised European enterprises that have set new standards in terms of environmental performance. The EBAE recognises the ‘best of the best’ across its five award categories – management, product, process, international business cooperation and business & biodiversity.

The five recipients of the EBAE 2012 are already reaping the rewards of winning the prestigious prize. In addition to benefiting from the competition’s high profile and potentially gaining access to new market opportunities, the five companies are enjoying increased visibility through the promotion of the projects at major European conferences.

In particular, the EBAE competition and the winning projects were promoted throughout the European Retail Forum for Sustainability, which took place in Brussels on 9 November 2012. The Retail...

The LIFE programme – which this year celebrates its 20th anniversary – is the European Union’s financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects across the region. It has co-financed some 3708 projects, contributing approximately €2.8 billion to the protection of the environment.

For the last eight years, the EU Member States represented on the LIFE Committee and the European Commission’s LIFE Unit have selected the projects with the highest potential for long-term environmental improvement and presented them with the LIFE Environment Awards. The latest edition of the awards – open to projects completed in 2011 – presented two projects with the title “Best of the Best”, while a further three received “Best” project awards.

The Director-General of DG Environment, Karl Falkenberg, presented the five projects with their awards during a special ceremony in Brussels in May 2012. All five projects met the competition’s ‘best practice’ criteria, which judge the projects’ contribution to immediate and long-term environmental, economic and social improvements; their degree of innovation and transferability; their relevance to policy; and their cost-effectiveness.

The ‘INSU-SHELL’ team was awarded the “Best of the Best” prize for their project, which validated a new construction technique that uses fibres to replace steel to reinforce concrete. The technique significantly reduces the amount of concrete and steel needed in the construction process.

The other recipient of the “Best of the Best” award, ‘Moveable HEPP’, received the honour in recognition of its project, which demonstrated the economic feasibility and environmental desirability of a moveable hydroelectric power plant.

Based in the Aragon region of Spain, the ‘ES-WAMAR’ project was awarded “Best” status for developing environmental solutions for managing pig slurry. Involving 600 farmers from across the region, the project facilitated the management of 800,000 m3 of pig slurry.

The Portuguese project ‘BATinLoko’ – which also received a “Best” award – successfully developed an online tool that helps textile companies make efficient choices for improving their environmental performance. It assisted 30 companies during the duration of the project, and made it possible to monitor a company’s performance and gains with respect to the environment.

The third recipient of the “Best” award was ‘Lake recultivation in Gniezno’ – a Polish project that dramatically improved the ecological status of two urban lakes. In addition to improving the water quality of both lakes, the project also successfully addressed the problem of blue-green algae build up.

To find out more about the Best LIFE Environment projects 2011, please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/bestprojects/bestenv2011/index.htm

The five far-sighted, innovative EBAE projects were also showcased throughout ‘Pollutec – 25th International exhibition for environmental equipment, technologies and services’. Running from 27-30 November 2012, Pollutec, which is held in Lyon, France, is regarded as the world’s reference show for eco-industries. By presenting the EBAE 2012 winners to more than 3000 participants, the European Commission and the EBAE Secretariat are helping to raise the profile of these pioneering projects.

Best LIFE Environment projects 2011 report is now available


The five EBAE 2012 winners were represented at ‘Sustainable Innovation 2012: Resource Efficiency, Innovation and Lifestyles’, which was organised by The Centre for Sustainable Design. Held in Bonn, Germany from 29-30 October 2012, the conference provided a platform to discuss the opportunities and challenges related to resource productivity, innovation and lifestyles related to products, services, technologies, infrastructures and business models.

The five far-sighted, innovative EBAE projects were also showcased throughout ‘Pollutec – 25th International exhibition for environmental equipment, technologies and services’. Running from 27-30 November 2012, Pollutec, which is held in Lyon, France, is regarded as the world’s reference show for eco-industries. By presenting the EBAE 2012 winners to more than 3000 participants, the European Commission and the EBAE Secretariat are helping to raise the profile of these pioneering projects.

Best of the Best
INSU-SHELL

Best of the Best
Moveable HEPP

ES-WAMAR

BATinLoko

‘Lake recultivation in Gniezno’
Winners of the 2012 Innovation for sustainability are announced

The winners of the 2012 Innovation for Sustainability - European Business Awards for the Environment (EBAE) Turkish National Scheme were announced during a prestigious ceremony held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Istanbul, on 18 July 2012.

The Award Ceremony organised by the national focal point of the Programme; the Regional Environmental Center (REC) - Country Office Turkey together with the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD) attracted over 100 attendees representing business, institutions, academia and media.

Minister for European Union Affairs and the Chief Negotiator, H.E. Egemen Bagis, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey Ambassador H.E. Jean-Maurice Ripert, Board Member and Head of Corporate Affairs of TUSIAD Cansin Basaran Symes and Director of REC Turkey Dr. Sibel Sezer Eralp delivered the opening speeches during the award ceremony.

After the speech of National Programme Director, Kerem Okumus, the prizes were awarded by H.E Egemen Bagis and H.E. Jean-Maurice Ripert.

Czech national award goes to WATERSAVERS

The Czech National Awards Ceremony took place on 27 June 2012 in Prague in the presence of over 100 representatives of the corporate and public sectors. The award is organised annually by the Business Leaders Forum and enjoys support from a wide range of partners such as the Czech Ministry for the Environment and the British Embassy in Prague.

The goal of the contest is to highlight and award best practices and technological innovations focused on protecting the environment. Furthermore, this year’s contest also aimed at reflecting the society-wide discussion on sustainability. To this end, a new category was added to the competition to address this issue.

The winner of this year’s competition is a small family-owned company, WATERSAVERS, which produces specially modified faucets that, due to a unique infiltration technique, help reduce water use by 20 to 60%, without impacting on the comfort of users. This simple and yet very effective product is especially suitable for schools, hotels, hospitals and other places with high water usage.

For more information, please visit: www.csr-online.cz

European Business Awards for the Environment in Slovenia

Slovenia has a long tradition hosting environmental business awards, starting in 1995. Since 2005, the national programme has been consistent with the EBAE. The jury consists of environmental specialists, journalists and others. The current event organisers are Business Daily Finance in cooperation with the Environmental Fund (Ekosklad) and the Environmental Agency of the Republic of Slovenia.

Although the economic crisis has caused many companies in Slovenia to sideline environmental issues, others recognize it as a business opportunity. The best companies in this regard were rewarded on 20 November 2012 in Ljubljana during a day-long event called Environmental Meeting (Okoljsko srečanje: http://wwwfinance-akademija.si/okolje12). This year it was devoted to the problems of water supply and water purification.

The number of applicants was the lowest in the last 10 years. Business Daily Finance received just nine nominations: five for product, three for company and just one for process. Still, the Commission has recognized the effort and excellence of three companies—two in the management category (Jelovica hiše and Jub) and one in the product category (Joser).