Project description

Background

Until now, the furniture industry has been largely excluded from broad-based environmental awareness campaigns, and few projects have attempted to improve the manufacturing process from an ecological standpoint. Yet, the environmental implications for air, water and land, as well as for noise and waste ensuing from production are self-evident. In addition, continued lumbering activities, with the removal of wood from forests risking extinction, is leading to fragmentation and deterioration. At the same time, efforts to improve European consumers’ awareness about ecologically- improved furniture products have been sadly lacking. The environmental problem is particularly pressing in Tuscany, which hosts over 10 000 firms in the sector. But, the impact is felt throughout Europe with countries such as Spain, France, Germany and Scandinavian ranking among the world leaders in furniture-making. The Sixth environment action programme of the European Community foresees “action on economic incentives for environmentally friendly products, enhancing 'green' demand through better consumer information, developing an objective basis for green procurement, and action to encourage more environmentally friendly product design”.

Objectives
The project aimed to: stimulate entrepreneurs’ awareness of the importance of an eco-friendly choice in the field of furniture, furnishings and complements, from design to end-of-life disposal; and to prove its technical, economical and financial validity. The goal was to develop at least 15 prototypes (with demonstration characteristics) of eco-compatible and eco-efficient products that would contribute to a reduction in pollution and in consumption of energy and materials.

Results

The Ecofriendly project achieved some significant successes. The main achievements were as follows: • Development of 15 prototypes of various furniture items with a reduction of environmental impacts varying between 10% and 50%. • Acquisition of a method based on the organisation of process and environmental information. • Establishment of good collaboration with designers. • Creation of a constructive relationship between the offer of innovation (universities and research institutes) and demand (small businesses) through the mediation of service centres. • Verification of the market potential for eco-friendly products. • Dissemination of a widespread culture of sustainability between companies in the sector • Development of an environmental analysis method transferable to other merchandise sectors. • Possibility of achieving tangible results with low-cost preliminary operations. The improvements achieved are attributable to: recycling material, use of solid wood, improvement of paint or glues, reduction of wastes, reduction of packaging, reduction of use of polyurethane materials, use of mono-material, reduction of use of material for each functional unit. The reduction of the cost for the prototypes’ production was due to the use of “poorer” materials, using less material, energy savings in the use of machinery, lighting systems, heating, optimizing use of the warehouse, added value of offering an environmentally compatible product, improvement of work quality. These results will give more weight to current legislation on the use of greener material in furniture-making. A number of well-known furniture designers assisted some of the firms. This means that most of the prototypes developed show both a reduced environmental impact, but also have an original design, that should prove attractive on the market. In a follow-up interview in April 2004, the beneficiary reported that, following necessary modifications to the prototypes for mass production, 12 project partners (Arrimobili, Artexport, Dema, Bosal, Fattorini, Giemmegi, Gilma, Giovanetti, Graffiti, Halto, Segis and Toncelli) have successfully introduced the prototype items of furniture. The website is still active at: http://life-ambiente-ecofriendly-furniture.consorziocasatoscana.it/

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Habitats - Forests
Environmental management - Eco-products design
Industry-Production - Wood - Furniture

Keywords
environmental law, environmentally friendly product, furniture industry

Target EU Legislation

- Industry and Product Policy

Natura 2000 sites
Not applicable

Beneficiaries:

Coordinator Consorzio Casa Toscana
Type of organisation SME Small and medium sized enterprise
Description It is a privately-owned consortium, established in 1999, to promote furniture manufactured in Tuscany
Partners Arri Mobili - Radda - Italy Artexport SpA - Poggibonsi - Italy Bosal by Euroby - Martigna Bosal by Eurobi - Martignana - Italy Centro Sperimentale del Mobile e dell'Arredamento srl - Poggibonsi - Italy Dema - S. Gimignano - Italy Famam srl - Monteriggio - Italy Giemmegi Cucine - Gambassi T. - Italy Gilma srl - Tavarnelle - Italy Giovannetti Collezioni d'Arredamento - Serravalle - Italy Graffiti srl - Poggibonsi - Italy Halto srl - Casalguidi - Italy Manetti e Saito snc - Quarrata - Italy Mobilificio Fattorini - Poggibonsi - Italy Sedex srl - Poggibonsi - Italy Segis spa - Poggibonsi - Italy Toncelli Cucine SpA - Peccioli - Italy
Administrative data:

Project reference: LIFE00 ENV/IT/000034
Duration: 01-DEC-2000 to 30-SEP -2002
Total budget: 1,526,157.23 €
EU contribution: 676,988.00 €
Project location: Toscana(Italia)

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Read more:

Project web site: Ecofriendly Furniture Project
Publication: Title: Designing and Producing within the sustainable framework - Handbook.
Author: LIFE Ecofuture Project Year: 2002
Editor: LIFE Ecofuture Project No of pages: 240

Publication: Guidelines-Manual
Title: "Designing and Producing within the sustainable framework - Handbook."
Author: LIFE Ecofuture Project Year: 2002
Editor: LIFE Ecofuture Project No of pages: 240

Publication: Layman report
Title: Designing and producing within the sustainable framework - The experience of the Tuscan furniture industry. Author: LIFE Ecofuture Project Year: 2002
Editor: LIFE Ecofuture Project No of pages: 8

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