



A framework for Member States to support business in improving its resource efficiency

An Analysis of support measures applied in the EU-28
Measure synthesis

Building resource efficiency related skills and capacity
within a company/business

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A framework for Member States to support business in improving its resource efficiency

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Building resource efficiency related skills and capacity within a company/business

If a company lacks the skills to improve its resource efficiency, it will be trapped in using existing methods. Governments use various skill and capacity building tools to remove this barrier, e.g. by encouraging the inclusion of resource efficiency issues in curricula for vocational training or further education. Skills related to resource efficiency (sometimes called ‘green skills’) can be defined as any knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes that are needed to develop and support a resource-efficient society. They are useful in all sectors, not just for ‘green jobs’, since they can help to adapt products, services and processes to environmental challenges and regulations.

Building resource efficiency-related skills and capacity within a company is established in most of the 28 EU member states. The measure is widely used in two member states (Bulgaria and Spain, 7%) and used a little in 19 member states (68%). Seven member states do not have a national policy regarding this measure in place (25%).

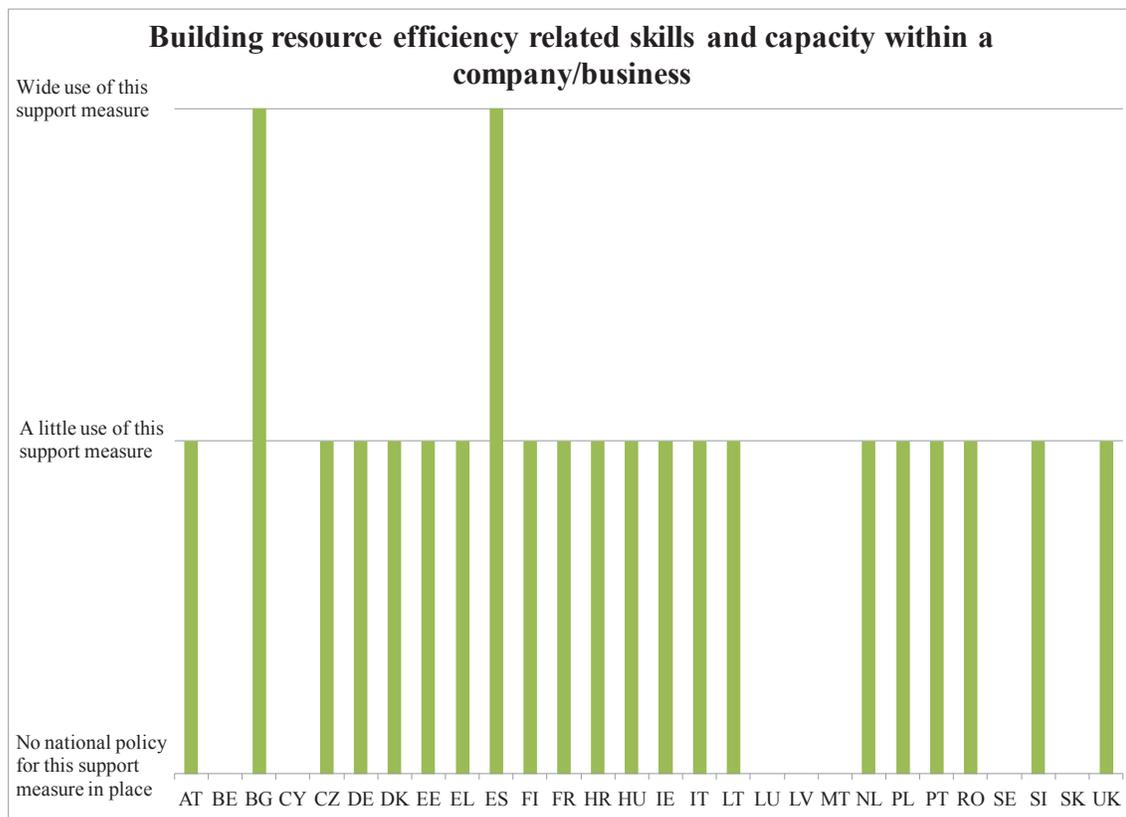


Figure 1: Scope of application of support measure 6 across the EU-28

Good practice examples

In the following section, we provide selected good practice examples for this support measure from four different Member States (see Figure 2; the full list can be found in the separate Annex document) Bulgaria and Spain (with wide use of this measure); the Netherlands and Germany (with a little use of this measure).

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Scope of application of support measure 6 across the EU-28 & Best practice cases

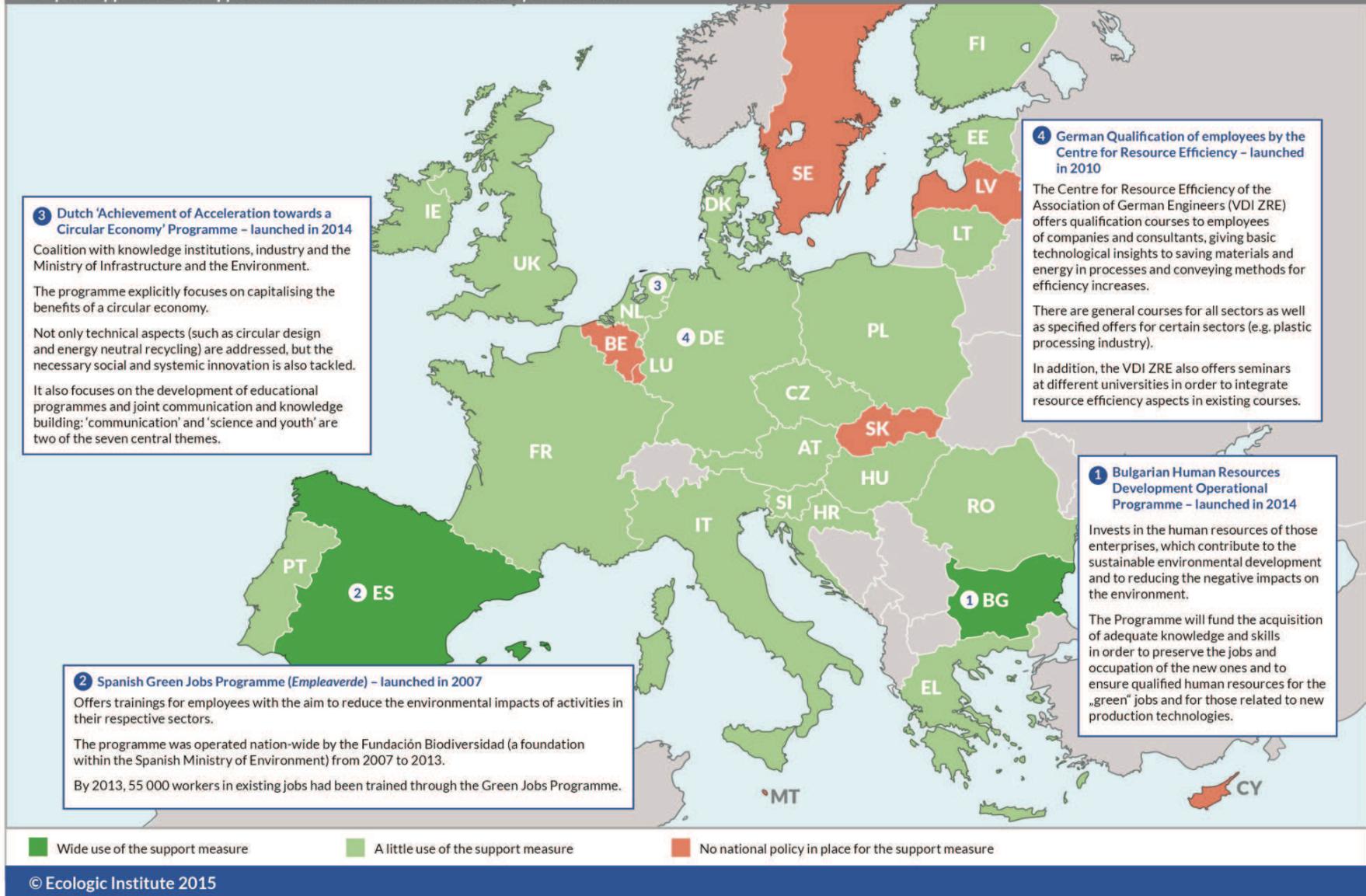


Figure 2: Good practice examples and scope of application for support measure 6 across EU-28

In **Bulgaria**, the Human Resources Development Operational Programme invests in the human resources of those enterprises that contribute to sustainable environmental development and reduce negative impacts on the environment. Running from 2014 to 2020, the programme will fund the acquisition of adequate knowledge and skills for employees, aiming to preserve jobs and occupy new ones. One focus of the programme is on the introduction of new “green” and resource-efficient technologies. More specifically, the programme will target the improvement of existing skills (e.g. in regard to energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste treatment, water treatment, etc.) of employed people at enterprises by financing training events and will assist in adapting new jobs in response to rapid changes and the requirements on the labour market. Furthermore, the provision of internships and apprenticeships in “green” enterprises to unemployed youth will be encouraged. Incentives for employers to introduce innovative, more productive and “greener” models for work arrangements in enterprises, including for ensuring health and safety at work and for improving the social climate in enterprises will be provided. The measure is part of the implementation of European Structural and Investment Funds in Bulgaria.¹

Spain promotes the development of green skills through the Green Jobs Programme (*Empleaverde*). As part of the programme, trainings for employees are offered with the aim to reduce the environmental impacts of activities in their respective sectors. The programme was operated nationwide by the Fundación Biodiversidad (a foundation within the Spanish Ministry of Environment) from 2007 to 2013. A budget of 17.1 million EUR was allocated to the measure (12.7 million EUR were contributions from the European Social Fund). By 2013, 55,000 workers in existing jobs had been trained through the Green Jobs Programme (OECD 2015)².

A further interesting example for building resource efficiency related skills in companies can be found in the **Netherlands**. The programme ‘Achievement of Acceleration towards a Circular Economy’ (*Realisatie van Acceleratie naar een Circulaire Economie* – RACE) explicitly focuses on capitalizing on the benefits of a circular economy. The Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (I&M) in autumn 2014 entered into a coalition with knowledge institutions and industry to set up a programme that explicitly focuses on capitalizing the benefits of a circular economy (RACE).³ Within RACE, not only technical aspects (such as circular design and energy neutral recycling) are addressed, but the necessary social and systemic innovation is also tackled. It also focuses on the development of educational programmes and joint communication and knowledge building: ‘communication’ and ‘science and youth’ are two of the seven central themes. In fact, RACE is the result of translating the starting points of the Green Deal ‘the Netherlands as a circular hotspot’ into an actionable program. It consists of among others of the following work packages: ‘raising public awareness around the topic of circular economy’ and ‘involving young people in the transition towards a circular economy’. More than 100 businesses are associated with RACE and indicated as a circular Best Practice. In addition, an online platform (www.CirculairOndernemen.nl) was launched in June 2015, and already more than 500 participants registered. Nearly 50 businesses completed the Circo-programme, aimed at Circular Design.

In **Germany**, the Centre for Resource Efficiency of the Association of German Engineers (VDI ZRE) qualifies employees of companies and consultants. The offered qualification courses give basic technological insights to saving materials and energy in processes and convey methods for efficiency increases. There are general courses for all sectors as well as specified offers for certain sectors (e.g. plastic processing industry).⁴ The measure was launched in 2010 and is available nationwide.

¹ European Commission (2015). Operational Programme Human Resources Development. URL: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2014-2020/bulgaria/2014bg05m9op001, accessed 6 August, 2015

² European Commission (2001). Going green in Spain. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=242>, accessed 20 August, 2015

³ MVO Nederland (2014). Nieuwe Samenwerking brengt winst Circulaire Economie dichterbij. URL: <http://mvonederland.nl/publicatie/nieuwe-samenwerking-brengt-winst-circulaire-economie-dichterbij>, accessed 1 October, 2015

⁴ VDI (n.d.). Qualifizierung Ressourceneffizienz. URL: <http://www.ressource-deutschland.de/qualifizierung-re/>, accessed 6 September, 2015

In addition, the VDI ZRE also offers seminars at different universities in order to integrate resource efficiency aspects in existing courses.⁵ The offer of seminars at universities include a generic ‘Resource Efficiency’ teaching module as well as tailored seminars such as a ‘Sustainable Manufacturing’ Summer School or a ‘Sustainability and Quality Management’ course. Furthermore, the VDI ZRE offers support for universities in setting up study courses on resource efficiency, e.g. for a master course on climate and resource-friendly design and construction at the Technical University of Braunschweig.

Lessons learnt from the application of the support measure

In most EU Member States that promote the development of resource efficient skills, the support focuses on the company level. In few cases (e.g. Germany) university courses are offered. In general, very little information on lessons learnt and success factors for this support measure could be gathered. Of the above-mentioned four Member States, only Germany provided information on lessons learnt. In addition, further lessons learnt emerged from the information obtained for the other Member States where this support measure is being applied.

One success factor that could be identified is the **engagement at the personal level and trust in the trainers**. In **Germany**, experienced practitioners who have already successfully implemented resource efficiency projects in SMEs carry out the qualification courses for employees.

A further success factor is the **linking of the skill development with other measures**. In **Finland**, one specific feature of TUORE Expert Network – which promotes the building of resource-efficiency skills in companies – is its interlinkage with other support measures, such as support for industrial symbiosis, provision of targeted resource efficiency information and development of non-legal standards for products and services. In **Austria**, company members can take part in EMAS implementation workshops to receive training on how to stepwise and systematically introduce EMAS. Similarly, in the **UK**, the trainings within the “Halving Waste to Landfill” voluntary agreement were part of a package of measures aiming at changes in practice and expertise in the construction and demolition sectors. Thus, the trainings were assisted by and contributed to wider effects.

In some cases, **online tools are used** to offer support for companies in building resource efficiency-related skills. This facilitates dissemination and offers low budget options to support businesses, e.g. in form of online training material. For example, in **Greece**, the web-portal EnviroHelp for Business offers **tailor-made** educational material and practices. Regarding the structure of this report, it has to be noted that support activities like these are difficult to distinguish from support measure 4 – Providing targeted resource efficiency information and advice to companies. In some Member States (e.g. Spain and Bulgaria), EU funding programmes supported the realisation of the measures.

Across the examples obtained from the literature review and Member State responses, the following aspects could be identified as key success factors for building resource efficiency-related skills and capacity within a company/business in the EU:

- ★ Engaging at the personal level with company members.
- ★ Employing experienced trainers who have practical knowledge of company processes.
- ★ Targeting teaching contents and materials to specific sectors, regions or types of companies.
- ★ Linking skills development with other support measures to support resource efficiency in businesses.
- ★ Financial support through EU funding programs (e.g. European Social Fund, European Structural and Investment Fund).

References used

OECD (2015) OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Spain 2015, OECD Publishing, Paris

⁵ VDI (n.d.). Bildung und Weiterbildung. URL: <http://www.ressource-deutschland.de/instrumente/bildung-und-weiterbildung/>, accessed 10 August, 2015