Analysis and exploitation of resource efficiency potentials in industrial small and medium sized enterprises – Experiences with the EDIT Value tool in Central Europe

Abstract content

Whether driven by market requirements, environmental concerns or European Union policies, Resource Efficiency (RE) is one of the core topics for all European countries. Analysis of performance indicators of the past years highlights that the EU’s response must go beyond existing policies, and make RE a priority for European Commission environmental and economic strategies. Two major barriers for exploiting RE potential are: (I) enterprises, and especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), are not aware of their resource use, the real costs of non-product outputs and the related potential cost reduction they could achieve; (II) SMEs have problems in financing necessary investments in eco-innovations in order to exploit their potential to increase RE. The EU PRESOURCE project (June 2012- November 2014), funded by the Central Europe Program, aims at developing specific actions to lower these barriers, in particular in Central European SMEs. Main outputs of the project are: (I) “EDIT Value” tool (Eco-innovation Diagnosis and Implementation Tool for Increasing the Enterprise Value), that enables SMEs to increase their RE and thus their competitiveness; (II) a “Financial Guideline” and a “Cost Benefit Analysis method”, to be used to help the evaluation of projects and investments in RE and eco-innovation and the access to funding by SMEs; (III) a Competence Platform that provides policy makers and other stakeholders with data, information and best-practices on RE in Central Europe. This paper focuses on the description of “EDIT Value” tool, in particular through its application in an Italian company of the wood furniture sector and the obtained results. The “EDIT Value” tool helps to identify the most effective opportunities for improving RE and the overall sustainability performance of SMEs. The tool takes into consideration qualitative and quantitative data, collected during 3 meetings between consultants and the company. The use of the tool is tailored to the needs and time resources of SMEs and can help the involvement of the whole enterprise staff. Since for optimizing actions in the field of RE and eco-innovation, it is important to review the whole system of a business in a consistent way and with a life cycle approach, all levels of an enterprise are assessed: products, processes, management systems, strategy and stakeholders. Costs and some social aspects are considered as well and a particular attention is given to eco-design. The main feature of “EDIT Value” is its holistic, need-driven approach, which helps to point out the most effective priorities and set up baselines for a continuous improvement of enterprise performances. The final result of “EDIT Value” implementation is the identification of the most interesting RE potentials for the specific company and the development of an action plan with a cost-benefit analysis, including proposals of innovation projects (leading to a double benefit of RE and costs savings), and public and private financing opportunities. “EDIT value” testing phase in SMEs in Italy, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Poland will be concluded in June 2014; afterwards the tool will be available to the public on the PRESOURCE project website (www.presource.eu).
**Key words**
resource efficiency, SMEs, ecoinnovation, cost benefit analysis, life cycle approach

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