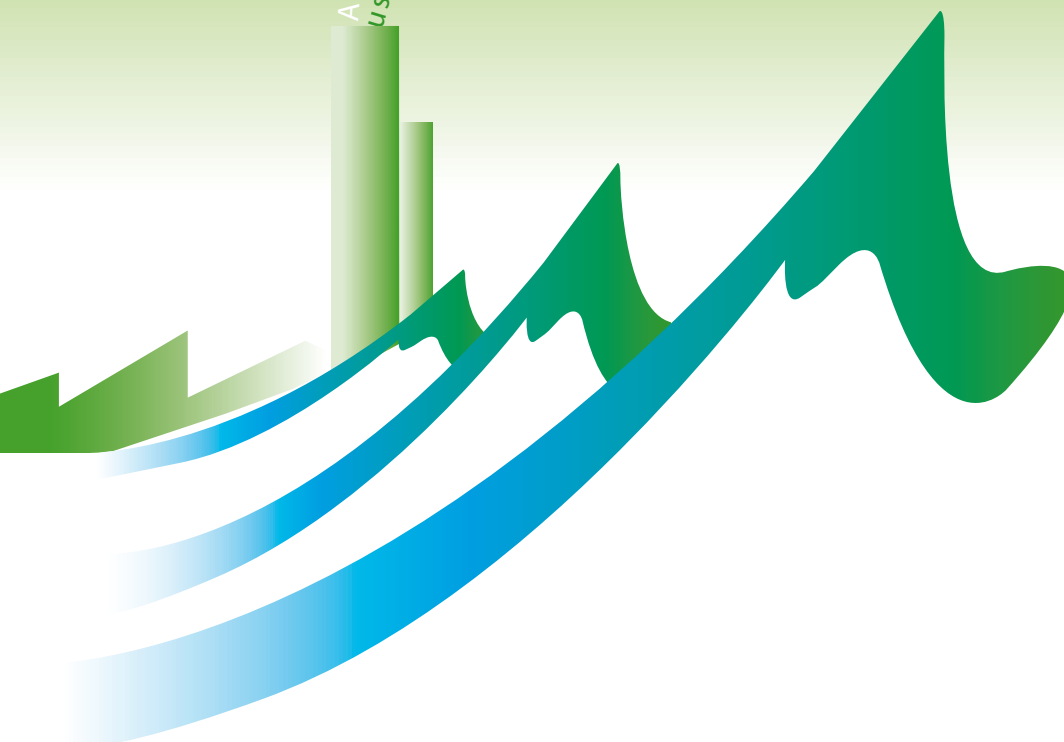




alpine space promotion of eco-companies transboundary

Italy Slovenia Switzerland
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France Germany
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Austria
Austria



Guidelines for public policy makers to support and promote eco-companies in the Alpine Space





Guidelines for public policy makers to support and promote eco-companies in the Alpine Space

This publication contains the executive summary of the ASPECT guidelines, elaborated as a collective work of the ASPECT partners.

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Province of Mantua

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- BAUM Consult, Germany
- Bayern Innovativ, Germany
- Chamber of Commerce of Lyon, France
- CEIPIEMONTE, Italy
- Clusterland OÖ, Austria
- ÖGUT, Austria
- Regional Development Agency of Gorenjska, Slovenia

The ASPECT guidelines represent a manual for public policy makers on how to support and promote eco-companies in the Alpine Space. The goal of the ASPECT guidelines is to provide support to organisations and public policy makers in order to foster eco-industry development and attract external eco-industry investments, especially since these SMEs are very dependant on public policy. The guidelines describe common tools, strategies and best practices for promoting and attracting eco-companies.

The ASPECT guidelines have been developed within the INTERREG III B project ASPECT by the Province of Mantua (Italy) with the contribution of all the other project partners: ADNV (Switzerland), BAUM Consult and Bayern Innovativ (Germany), Chamber of Commerce of Lyon (France), CEIPIE-MONTE (Italy), Clusterland OÖ and ÖGUT (Austria), Regional Development Agency of Gorenjska (Slovenia). The ASPECT project has been executed in the period March 2006 – February 2008. In the ASPECT Project, 29 best practices have been described, most of which on clustering and networking (11), policy planning (5) and information exchange (5). Other best practices concern regulation, economic incentives, promotion and export, and awareness raising. In this publication, 6 best practices are illustrated (see boxes).

Objective of the ASPECT project

The European Union aims to stimulate the competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which are the first purveyor of employment. At the same time, ecosystems in the Alpine areas must be preserved in order to provide a pleasant place to live and an attractive place to visit.

The goal of the ASPECT project is to bridge the gap between economic development and environmental protection by promoting eco-companies, most of which are SMEs with high growth rates. Eco-companies play a major role in protecting the environment by dealing with air, soil, waste, noise, water and energy.



Mrs Danuta Hubner, EU commissioner for regional policy

According to Mrs. Danuta Hübner, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, *“the aim of the ASPECT project – promoting eco-companies – can be seen as exemplary since it combines two of the main challenges of cohesion policy: on the one hand stimulating economic growth and employment; and on the other hand preserving the environment. We are convinced that developing eco-technology and environmental protection strengthens competitiveness in the long term.”*

The ASPECT project aims at fostering economic growth of eco-companies in the Alpine Space through a detailed programme including a toolkit for organisations and public policy makers, a comprehensive analysis on common tools and strategies for promoting and attracting eco-companies and the creation of a network of businesses with similar goals and needs. Also, an overview of best practices has the goal to witness the passion and originality of the Alpine Space eco-companies and to represent a source of inspiration for improvement.

The project is implemented by the joint effort of regions belonging to six countries and the thoroughness in the analysis was made possible by the involvement of 341 companies. Specific features of the ASPECT project are the bottom-up approach through the extensive survey of eco-companies, the identification of the needs of eco-companies, the focus on the main target group of regional policy makers and the exchange of best practices for the promotion of eco-companies.

What is an eco-company?

According to the OECD: *“eco-activities are activities which produce goods and services to measure, prevent, limit, minimize or correct environmental damage to water, air and soil, as well as problems related to waste, noise and eco-systems. This includes technologies, products and services that reduce environmental risk and minimize pollution and resources”.*

The ASPECT definition of eco-companies is slightly broader as it includes all individual companies that can be part of a network of environmental businesses and services (eco-industrial parks, eco-districts, eco-sites, environmental parks, green business parks, eco-industrial sites etc.), and comprises all activities related to prevention, treatment and control of environmental impacts.

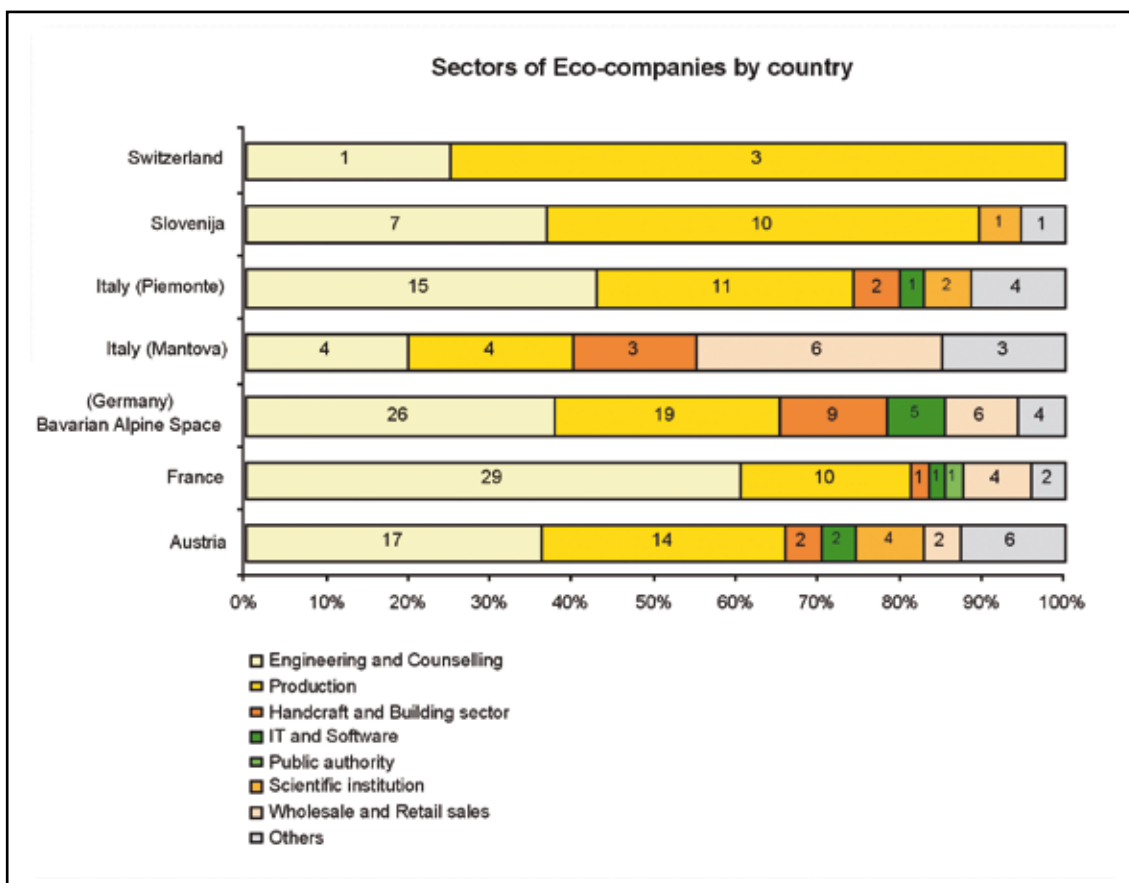
Overview of the Alpine Space eco-companies

The ASPECT survey, conducted among 341 eco-companies, represents a comprehensive overview of businesses engaged in environmental technology in all Alpine Space regions and a unique reference and working tool for public policy makers.

The Alpine Space is characterised by SMEs: 95% of the interviewed eco-companies have less than 250 employees, while over 50% less than 20. Furthermore, eco-companies are a significant part of the economy, in some countries more than in others. The turnover of European eco-industries as a percentage of GDP is about 2.3%. Among the participating countries, the turnover is the highest in Austria (4,3%), followed by Slovenia (3,3%), Germany (3,0%), France (2,8%) and the lowest in Italy (1,5%). In the Alpine Space, most of the companies are SMEs with a turnover up to 5 Million Euro.

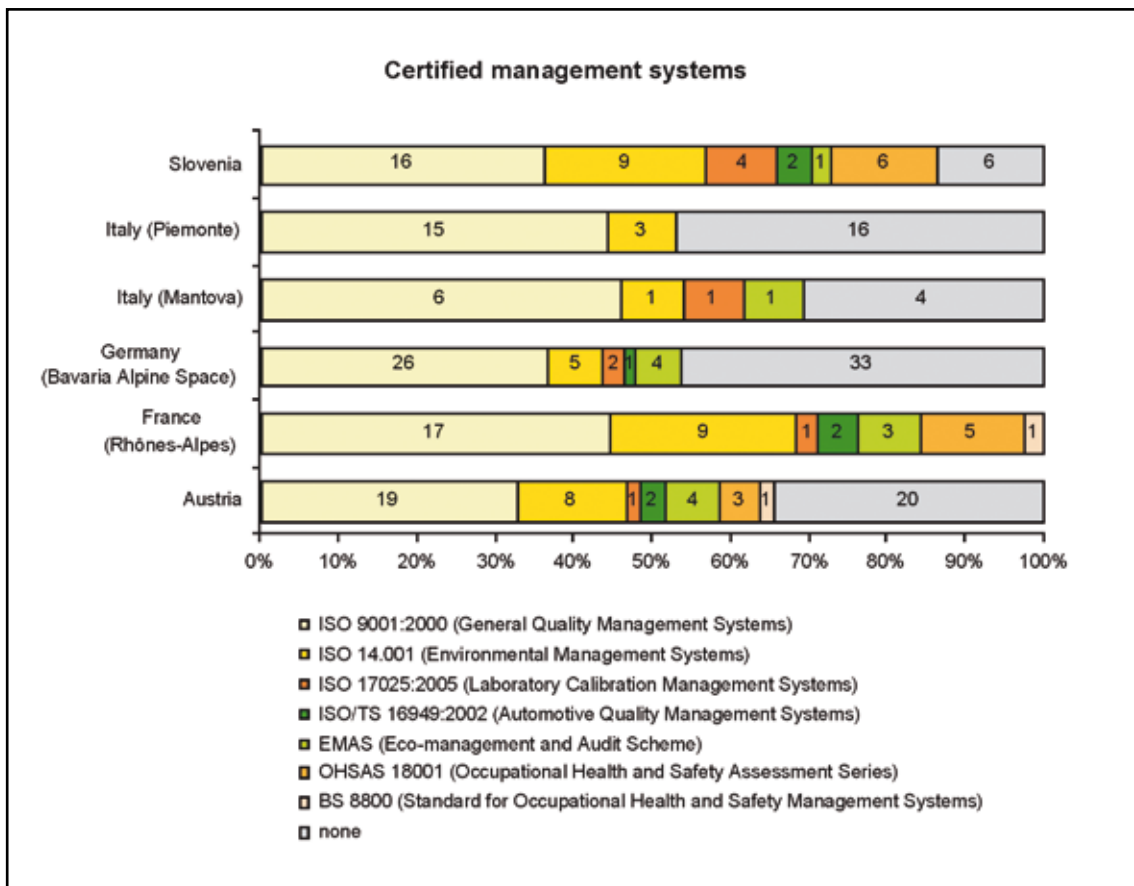
More than 50 % of the responding companies operate regionally (diameter of 50 km) and within their country. For Italy (Piemonte), Germany (Bavarian Alpine Space) and Austria the European market has nearly the same relevance as the national market. Still, the internal market is the most important market for Alpine Space eco-companies (70% of the market share).

Among all ASPECT regions, the "Engineering and Counselling" sector is the most common, followed by the "production" Sector. In the field "end of pipe technologies" most of the companies



work in the “Waste Management” and “Recycling” sector, while in the “Cleaner production” field the area of renewable energies/climate protection is well represented. Especially in the Bavarian Alpine Space, activities in the field of “renewable energies/climate protection” play a significant role.

A majority of eco-companies strive for a high level of quality and reduction of environmental impact through the implementation of management systems. More than 30% of the responding eco-companies have a certified quality management system fulfilling the ISO 9001 quality and/or ISO 14001 environmental standard.



Project methodology

The development of a sound strategy for the promotion of eco-companies has been based on a detailed analysis by means of a questionnaire answered by 341 eco-companies focusing on their needs and a questionnaire for the project partners about the situation in their specific region. This research was followed by an elaboration and evaluation phase which allowed to focus on priorities and develop tangible deliverables (strategies, tools, best practices).

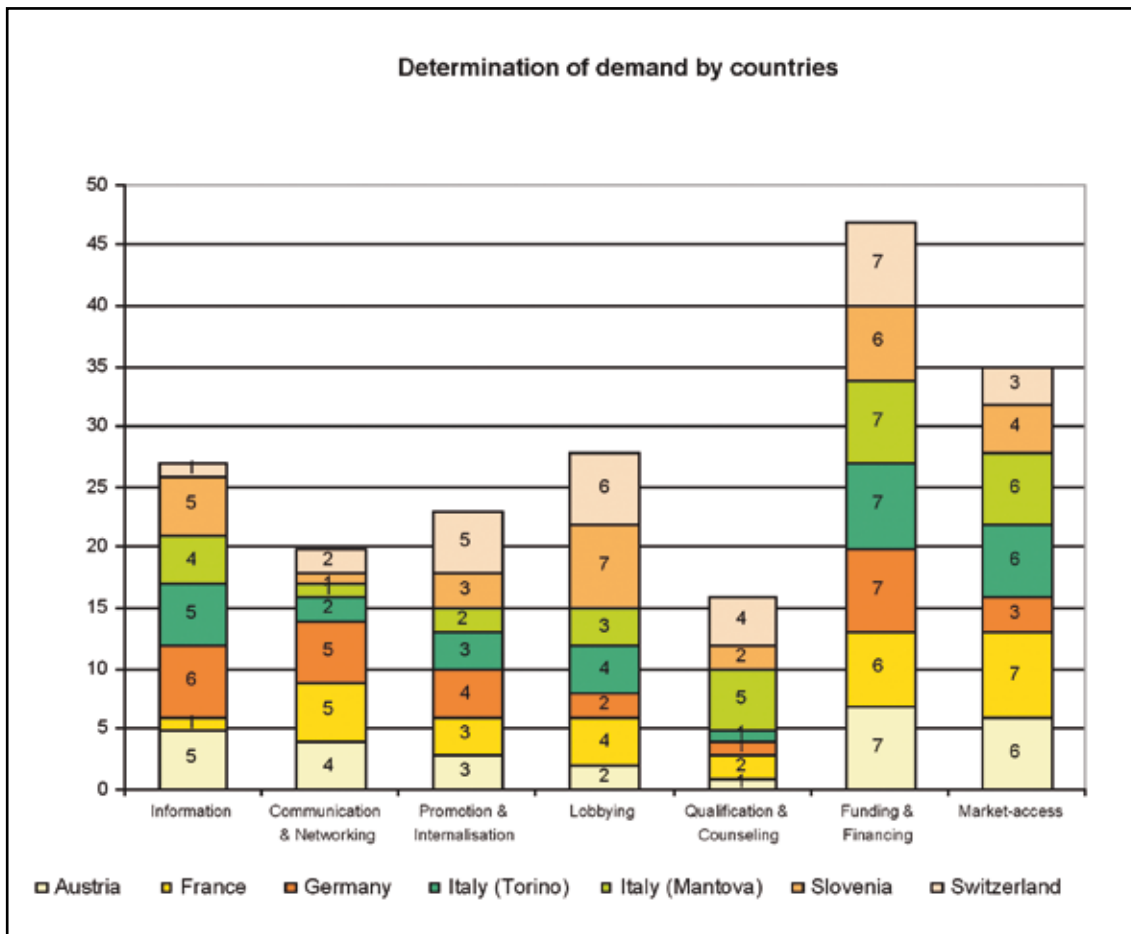


The project methodology followed a three-step process:

- *Assessment of eco-companies' needs* through a questionnaire on company requirements and difficulties. Major outcome is the need to make funding and financing more accessible to innovative SMEs and to receive support in the application of funding programmes. Furthermore, cooperation with other SMEs is seen as a chance for mutual support, further growth and success. Also, a deeper understanding of the market situation and future trends is considered as highly desirable.
- *Survey on strategies and tools to support and promote eco-companies*: by means of a questionnaire directed at all project partners, it was possible to define an overview of the policy instruments and tools applied in the different regions, the possibilities for improvement and the role of public administrations and organisations in supporting and promoting eco-companies. This collective research allowed not only to report all strategies and success factors typical of each Alpine region, but also to analyse the why's and the how's in order to identify elements that stimulate competitiveness and create incentives for public-private partnerships. The different policy instruments described by each partner were divided into categories and the information was cross-analysed with the results of the questionnaire on companies' needs. It was noted that

the three basic needs of eco-companies (clustering and networking, export and market access, funding and financing) are only partially covered by the services provided in the various Alpine Space regions. While clustering and networking seem to be well represented, policy planning, promotion and export, information exchange and awareness raising might be further improved. Funding and financing need further attention throughout the whole Alpine Space as the problem appears to be only partly the lack of sufficient funding schemes, but moreover a lack of knowledge on how to apply successfully for the various funding programmes.

- *Overview of best practices*, which provides information on a number of different success stories and a sound foundation to undertake a path towards more efficient solutions. The 29 case studies collected represent all categories of strategies and tools analysed, thus offering ideas to answer common needs. This phase represented an important moment of interaction and the possibility to further enhance valorise and market their specific services.



Ten Golden Rules

In order to formulate regional policy advice, all best practices were evaluated by the ASPECT partners and resulted in “lessons learned” from each local experience. Subsequently the lessons learned were grouped into policy instrument (clustering, policy planning, information exchange and other instruments), in order to translate the lessons into recommendations for public policy makers. These grouped recommendations allowed the identification of 10 golden rules on how regional public policy makers can foster eco-companies:

1. **Be pro-active on environmental matters and rely on the internal market:** pro-active policy-makers can support eco-companies in their region through the implementation of dedicated policy programmes addressing critical environmental issues (e.g. regional waste programme, regional energy plan) and resolving them with the help of local suppliers (eco-companies in the Alpine Space). The internal market is the most important market for Alpine Space eco-companies (70% of the market share);
2. **Focus on the bottlenecks and provide practical solutions:** the ASPECT survey clearly identified the need for funding and financing and access to foreign markets. As a first initiative, the ASPECT project provided training on funding and financing and facilitated a number of successful business contacts;
3. **Organise clustering and networking in an effective and efficient way:** the Alpine Space is characterised mainly by highly qualified SMEs with less than 20 employees. Consequently, clustering and networking represent a crucial element to support business development, economic growth and internationalisation. The organisation and management of clustering and networking should follow a participatory approach to maximise its effectiveness and efficiency;
4. **Apply a mix of policy instruments:** there is no single solution; regional public policy makers should apply a mix of policy instruments to foster eco-companies. Regional values and identities (“couleur locale”), would definitely reject a policy setting in which “one size fits all”;
5. **Implement less but better and more ambitious regulations:** in line with the New Approach¹, the trend is moving towards less (and better) regulation, and more voluntary self-commitment. Specific and more ambitious regulations could mean a breakthrough for specific eco-company sectors (e.g. passive house standards);

1 - <http://www.newapproach.org/>

6. **Support the adoption of eco-tools in order to guarantee competitiveness:** highly qualified eco-companies could further strengthen their environmental competitiveness through the adoption of environmental instruments, like pollution prevention, environmental management systems and eco-label programmes;
7. **Create public private consortia and partnerships:** the similarities among eco companies within the Alpine Space region can provide the critical mass for joint strategies by creating consortia for large international projects, while the differences of the specific Alpine regions offer an opportunity to complete each others strengths and therefore compensate the existing weaknesses. Furthermore, public-private partnerships are often required to deal with complex environmental problems that cannot be resolved by one single actor;
8. **Do not reinvent the wheel, but transfer cross-border experiences:** the ASPECT project collected and evaluated a large number of cross-border case studies (29 Alpine Space best practices), providing a database of ideas, tangible projects and learning experiences that could be used to support eco-companies in other regional contexts of the Alpine Space;
9. **Do not underestimate lobbying and networking:** there is a need to enhance political contact (official visits, delegations) to inform potential markets about the Alpine Space technologies and to strengthen bilateral economical and technological cooperation as an important instrument to “open borders” to foreign markets;
10. **Award the best performers:** monitor the performance of eco-companies against environmental criteria and award the best performers that will act as a benchmark in order to assure their leading position in the market of eco-services (for instance by means of audits, eco-labels and awards).

Main results

The ASPECT project's objectives of developing common strategies to foster economic growth of eco-companies in the Alpine Space has been met by means of the identification of tools for promotion towards public authorities, the support of business development, clustering and networking and a comprehensive series of best practices.

The network and interactions developed with this project represent a base for the development of synergies through joint strategies, cooperation and the creation of consortia for international projects.

A concrete support for organisations and policy makers is given by the ASPECT guidelines, a manual on policy instruments to foster eco-industry development and attract external eco-industry investments.

Some specific results obtained through the ASPECT project are:

- Survey and on-line database of 341 eco-companies in the Alpine Space;
- Identification of strategies and tools to foster eco-companies;
- Reference point on eco-companies comprising 29 best practices;
- Advice for regional policy makers formulated in 10 golden rules;
- Regional seminars for eco-companies (e.g. SESEC, Kempten, Kranj (Slovenia));
- 3 day course on EMS for Italian eco-companies;
- Several short courses on funding and financing (e.g. Germany, Italy);
- Several successful match making results among Alpine Space companies.

Conclusions

The Alpine Space is characterised mainly by highly qualified SMEs. Consequently, clustering and networking through a participatory approach are crucial instruments to support eco-companies in the Alpine Space. To facilitate the matching of supply and demand various tools can be applied, whose effectiveness and efficiency depend on the local context.

There is no single solution: regional public policy makers should apply a mix of policy instruments to foster eco-companies. Regional values and identities (“couleur locale”) would definitely reject a policy setting in which “one size fits all”. The Aspect guidelines should therefore be interpreted as an innovative guidance that can be used in different contexts, where local policy-makers decide how to foster eco-companies in their specific situation, following the subsidiarity principle of EU policy.

Pro-active policy-makers can support eco-companies in their region through the implementation of dedicated policy programmes addressing critical environmental issues (e.g. regional waste programme, regional energy plan) and resolving them with the help of local suppliers (eco-companies in the Alpine Space). In other words, regional policy-makers can make a difference, especially when they succeed in involving the internal market, being the most important market for Alpine Space eco-companies (70% of their market share).

Information exchange is an important aspect of the ASPECT project. By means of the transfer of cross-border experiences, regional policy makers do not need to reinvent the wheel, but can draw on advantages from experiences gained through a large number of cross-border case studies (29 Alpine Space best practices), providing a database of ideas, tangible projects and learning experiences that could be used to support eco-companies in other regional contexts of the Alpine Space.

The ASPECT guidelines provide support to organisations and public policy makers to foster eco-industry development and attract external eco-industry investments. The guidelines describe common tools and strategies for promoting and attracting eco-companies. Specific recommendations have been made for public policy makers which can be summarised in 10 golden rules. The next step is the application of the ASPECT guidelines in the various regions of the Alpine Space with concrete case studies and in order to obtain tangible results on how eco-companies can be effectively further supported and promoted. The ASPECT guidelines are meant to facilitate this implementation process offering a range of tools and strategies both for the eco-companies and for the policy makers.

The ASPECT Project as inspiration for Alpine Space companies: some best practices

In total, 29 best practices have been described, most of which on clustering and networking (11), policy planning (5) and information exchange (5). Other best practices concern re-regulation, economic incentives, promotion and export, and awareness raising. In this publication, 6 best practices are illustrated (see boxes).

Installation of the first photovoltaic plant in Slovenia

Learning experience: “The pilot project of the first solar power station allowed us to gather many pieces of information and gain the necessary experience in photovoltaic systems.”

The Energy Restructuring Agency ApE has decided to install the first solar PV plant featuring 50 kW power. It is a large system of solar modules that will be connected to the power grid to which it will transfer the electricity produced. The first solar PV plant in Slovenia is a pilot project that will serve for promotional purposes with special attention paid to increased use of renewable energy sources and especially the possibility of increased use of solar energy. On top of that the plant will be used for demonstrative, research and educational purposes.



SESEC: Sustainable Economic Solutions for Emerging Countries

Learning experience: “The establishment of a permanent organisation to support and promote eco-companies allows to pursue long term goals, sharing best practices, and providing a reference point for environmental solutions at the local level.”

SESEC is a project supported by a consortium of public and private entities which aims at advocating international networking for promoting sustainable development at a local level. The participants in SESEC share their experience in matching demands, technological and methodological solutions, and financial, economical and legal tools in order to establish new consortia of players able to face environmental problems even on a global scale. In five years, about eight projects have been conceived, consortia of projects



have been established, studies have been conducted and projects have been started or entirely achieved.

Eza! Energy and Environmental Centre

Learning experience: “< If you want it done right, do it yourself! > said Arno Zengerle, mayor of Wildpoldsried, to explain why his town was the first which engaged eza! with an extensive survey on the improvement of energy management in municipal buildings.”

Eza! Energy and Environmental Centre is a non-profit corporation located in Kempten, and supported by municipalities, businesses and action groups of the Allgäu, which promotes energy efficiency and renewable energy. eza! operates in the fields of public relations, energy consulting, education, training and qualification. Eza! Provides free of charge, expert consulting on energy saving, and has a network of over 120 companies (architects, engineers, building enterprises, craftsmen, producers and dealers) respecting a number of guidelines and quality level. The program also provides local authorities with comprehensive support in all fields of energy policy in order to improve energy efficiency and to promote renewable energy sources.



Passive houses in Vorarlberg county

Learning experience: “Ambitious local regulation can give a strong positive impulse to the passive house market not only in Vorarlberg but also in the surrounding regions.”



As from January 2007, a decision by the regional parliament of Vorarlberg, stated that, for the first time in Europe all public utility housing enterprises in the county are obliged to realise their new buildings following passive housing standards.



The largest public utility housing enterprise, VOGEWOSI, increased their maximum building costs for new buildings, but due to the improved financial support by the public building funds for lower energy demand the costs for the clients did not increase. The new passive houses will have 25% of the heating costs and 10% of the heating demand compared with normal houses.

As a result the VOGEWOSI decided also to improve the energy standard of their existing buildings. In four buildings they are carrying out an ambitious energy retrofitting reducing the heating energy demand from 300 to 30 kWh/m² a by using passive house technologies.

APPEL

Learning experience: “The APPEL network is a circuit that encourages professional exchange and creates synergies among all different eco-actors.”

APPEL (Lyon Association for promotion of Eco – companies) was established in 1996 as an initiative of local eco-companies and the Chamber of Commerce of Lyon. It supports the promotion and economic development of all environmental experts creating opportunities for professional exchange and synergy among all different eco-actors: research laboratory, training organisations, industry and institutions. The association is active in the development of a network in order to feredate regional eco-industries, promoting members’ know-how and thus becoming the official spokesman of this sector in the Lyon region.



Eco-theatre

Learning experience: “Don’t bore children, environmental issues should be fun to learn. Children developed during playtime awareness of environmental problems and consciousness of the need to deepen their complexity.”

The project “Ecotheatre” was born within the framework of the local Agenda 21 of the Province of Mantova. The innovative idea is to follow an emotional approach in order to utilise the theatre and its workshops to propose to children the theme of respect for the environment.

The review, created and developed by a local artist recognised at national level by the Ministry of Culture, involves an ongoing programme in several schools and 14 Municipalities in the Province, theatres and the Provincial Library system. It consists of three shows, created for children from 3 to 10 years old.

The repeated performances, for a total number of 30, are realised in several theatres, in order to make the shows accessible throughout the province.

The subjects discussed so far are: garbage, water, respect for the environment, well-being of the animals and recycling.

The cd-rom “The isle of experiments” has been produced thanks to the material collected by two primary schools.



Province of Mantua, 2007

The complete version of the work is available in English language on CD Rom.

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