Sustainable Production through Innovation in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in the Baltic Sea Region

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Abstract

This article provides brief information about the international project SPIN (Sustainable Production through Innovation in SMEs) that is under implementation in the Baltic Sea region to intensify eco-innovation development and implementation and presents initial findings from the study conducted in the framework of this project, particularly, an overview of SME sector (including structure of the SME sector, contribution of SMEs to the national economy and situation concerning innovation implementation) in Lithuania as well as framework situation concerning eco-innovation development and implementation (including available financial support). The key SME needs in development and implementation of eco-innovations are also discussed in the article.

Keywords: Sustainable industrial development, sustainable production, eco-innovation.

1. Introduction

SMEs play a major role in economic growth, and provide most new jobs. In Lithuania, SMEs represent 99 % of the total number of enterprises and account for 74% of employment. Number of SMEs in Lithuania in the last decade was rapidly growing. Contribution of SMEs to the Lithuanian economy is determined by a high share of these companies in the overall number of enterprises.

SMEs pose serious environmental problems due to their high numbers and their cumulative effect. For example, a report on SMEs and the environment produced for the European Commission by ECOTEC Research and Consulting mentions that SMEs are estimated to generate as much as 60 % of commercial waste and 80 % of pollution incidents (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). A study conducted by the Institute of Environmental Engineering, Kaunas University of Technology for the Ministry of Economy in 2007, Lithuania revealed that total volume of hazardous waste generated in SMEs amounts to 35 000 t/ year and 300 000 tons of non-hazardous waste per year (Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania, 2007).

One of the main features of SMEs sector is continuous change. To survive in the rapidly changing business environment, SMEs have to be flexible, dynamic and open. In this context, innovations have particularly important role.

To ensure increasing the exploitation of the innovation potential from SMEs throughout the Baltic Sea region (BSR) in order to enhance sustainable production processes in SMEs leading to the creation of public benefits and private profits whilst reducing economic and environmental costs, international project SPIN (Sustainable Production through Innovation in SMEs) has been developed and is under implementation with financial support from the EU INTERREG Programme.

SPIN is a Baltic 21 lighthouse project, which implies already that it applies an integrated territorial approach for the Baltic Sea Region (further BSR)[1]. Disparities in the territorial distribution of the technological and managerial innovation performance prevail in the BSR predominately between urban and rural areas. SPIN is addressing the specific needs of SMEs in BSR in two ways: It supports SMEs to diffuse their innovations and it supports SMEs that struggle to respond to legal requirements set to secure responsible use of natural resources in the EU.

Company performance – be it in the production or service sector – can substantially be turned more sustainable in terms of environmental, economical and social performance through technical and organizational innovations. Within this context SPIN aims more specifically at:

- Identifying eco-innovation highlights developed throughout the BSR and supporting their dissemination and deployment;

[1] Information about SPIN project in this chapter is compiled using the project application document

- Addressing the needs of SMEs by matching supply and demand for technical and organizational solutions;
- Development and testing of a tools/ instruments/ schemes facilitating the application of eco-innovations in SMEs;
- Identifying and testing of appropriate incentives for SMEs to apply eco-innovations;
- Creating a consistent transnational framework.

In order to achieve its objectives SPIN is connecting the potential from the involved 8 partner countries (Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) via a strong transnational network in order to maximise the resources available and the outreach possible. By doing so it increases the competitiveness of SMEs in the BSR that supply technological and managerial eco-innovations by increasing their market.

SPIN is identifying existing/ evolving eco-innovation clusters in the BSR (also across the borders) and analyzes successful patterns for their build-up. In an extension phase the whole BSR shall be promoted as one of the leading eco-innovation clusters of the world. SPIN has a direct positive impact on the environment and contributes to the achievement of the Gothenburg goals that are referring to the environmentally friendly use of natural resources.

SPIN is supporting cleaner production. It will take a lead in finding innovative solutions to a better management of resources and will position itself within the BSR programme as a leader in eco-efficient production processes. Opposed to expensive end-of-pipe solutions SPIN will improve the resource productivity: getting more output from each unit of energy/material used reduces the environmental damage caused by each unit and avoids overexploitation of renewable natural resources. As such SPIN will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases and will contribute to the maintenance of the biodiversity. By pushing eco-innovations that help to enforce critical EC environmental Directives SPIN contributes significantly to the reduction of risks and impacts of man-made hazards.

SPIN is divided into four technical work package built around these specific objectives. Within the project duration SPIN will reach more than 2500 SMEs throughout the BSR. It will induce investment in SMEs that apply new solutions for their needs worth several €m, while SMEs in the BSR supplying eco-innovations increase their competitiveness. SPIN will connect 200 outstanding institutions in the field of eco-innovations in the BSR and will assemble over 1000 best practice examples in a database on innovations made in BSR. It will elaborate and test a consistent transnational action plan enhancing the application of eco-innovations throughout the BSR.

The project focuses on selected EU environmental Directives that are of special relevance to the SMEs in the BSR and create specific demand for eco-innovations. The selection of the relevant directives determines the key sectors the project is focusing on as well as the innovation highlights to be promoted specifically by the project.

SPIN is entrenched in the Baltic 21 network, which is expressed in the attached Letter of Support from the Chairperson of Baltic 21 Senior Officials Group (SOG) as well as its status as Baltic 21 Lighthouse Project. The whole policy development work package (Transnational Agenda) as well as much of the dissemination work will involve the whole Baltic 21 multi-stakeholder network.

SPIN will initiate the assembling of an Advisory Board that will ensure that the transnational agenda to be developed under SPIN is widely supported and enforced. Furthermore the involvement of the Advisory Board is a means to secure the durability of the outcomes of SPIN beyond the duration of the project itself (the "Transnational Forum" is the arena for future policy making in the field of sustainable production).

Consequently the Advisory Board that will be installed for SPIN will comprise members from the Baltic 21 SOG as well as other National Ministries: The Polish Ministry of Economy has actively contributed to the project development and has expressed its interest in and the support for SPIN. The same goes for the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications that also attended project development workshops and has drawn up a Letter of Support. The Lithuanian Ministry of Economy is dealing strongly with issues of sustainable production and has confirmed its support for SPIN.

In the framework of SPIN project, several events have been already organised in Lithuania. The first workshop in Lithuania was held in Vilnius on November 30, 2009. The event was part of European-wide series of workshops on the Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme for SME's (ECAP). In the initial phase of the project, there is a need to analyse SME sector and to identify needs of SMEs in terms of eco-innovation development and implementation. Overview of SME sector and initial findings of this analysis are presented further in this article.

2. Overview of SME sector in Lithuania

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are defined as non-subsidiary, independent firms that employ no more than a given number of employees. In Lithuania, the upper limit is 250 employees, as defined by the European Commission. Small firms are those with fewer than 50 employees, while micro-enterprises have at most ten, or in some cases five, workers. Financial assets are also used to define SMEs. Definition of SMEs in Lithuania is specified in the Law on Development of SME sector, (the last version of the law came into force on 1st January, 2008) (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2008). The application of this definition is legally binding when support from the public funds to SMEs is concerned.

Data of the Lithuanian Statistics Department (http://www.stat.gov.lt) have been used in development of this chapter if not otherwise stated in the text.

SMEs play a major role in economic growth, and provide most new jobs. According to OECD's Small and Medium Enterprise Outlook, over 95 % of enterprises in OECD countries are SMEs, which account for 60-70 % of employment in most of these countries (OECD, 2000). In Lithuania SMEs represent 99 % of the total number of enterprises and account for 74% of employment. Number of SMEs in Lithuania in the last decade was rapidly growing. There were 18,7 SMEs/ 1000 citizens in January 2008 in comparison to 16,2 SMEs/ 1000 citizens in January2005.

In terms of economic activities, SMEs active in industrial production constitute 13 % from the total SME number, while service sector and trade companies constitute 31 % and 35 % respectively (Fig. 5). In terms of geographical distribution, the biggest number of SMEs operate in Vilnius region (38 %) followed by Kaunas (20 %) and other regions of biggest cities. However, in terms of sales of goods and services, most of exporting companies are concentrated in Alytus region (23,5 %) and Klaipeda region (20,1 %).

Contribution of SMEs to the Lithuanian economy is determined by a high share of these companies in the overall number of enterprises. According to data from Lithuanian Statistics Department, total value added generated by SMEs (without financial intermediaries and agricultural companies) in 2004 – 2006 increased by 8,5 billion LTL (2,46 billion EUR) or 59 % - from 14,4 billion LTL in 2004 to 22,9 billion LTL in 2006. Percentage of total value added created by SMEs in the total value added created by all Lithuanian enterprises was also increasing (from 57,6 % in 2004 to 64,1 % in 2006). These figures demonstrate increasing role of SMEs sector in the Lithuanian economy.

Distribution of total value added created by different SMEs is presented in the Fig. 1. The biggest share belongs to trade sector (27,7 %) and service sector (28,1 %).

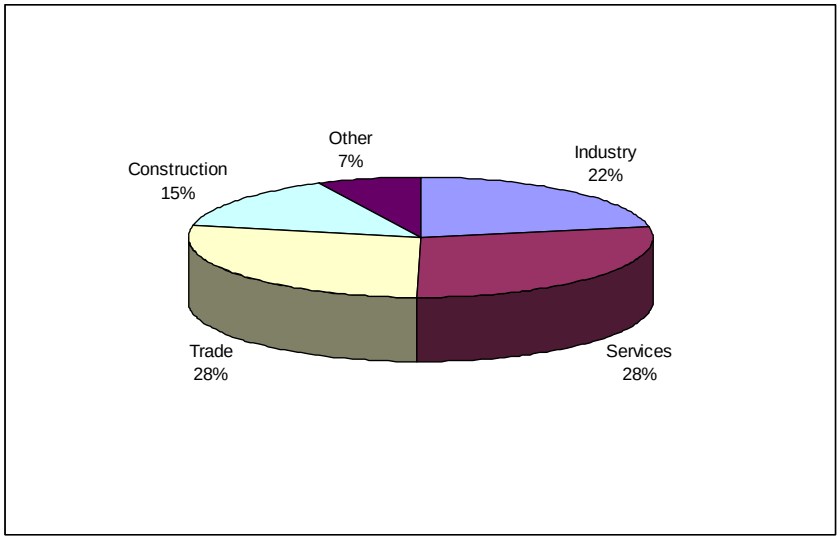

Fig. 1. Total value added created by Lithuanian SMEs in different sectors (Source: Lithuanian Statistics Department)

In 2009, 41,3 % of SMEs sold their products and provided services in the local/ regional market, while 33,3 % of the SMEs have been active in the national market. 16,5 % of SMEs exported their goods and services to the EU countries and 8,9 % SMEs to other countries (Fig. 2).

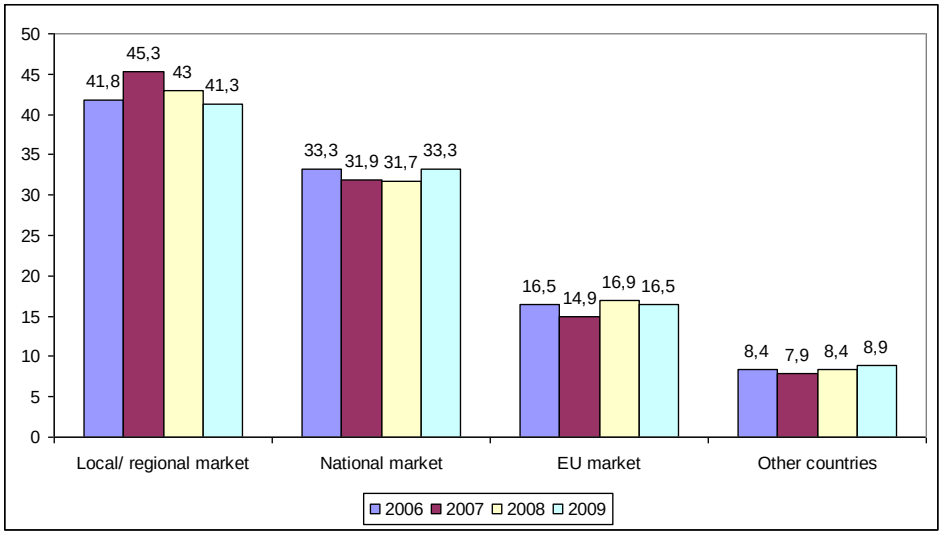

Fig. 2. Sales of goods and services of Lithuanian SMEs, % (Source: Lithuanian Statistics Department)

In 2007, export from SMEs reached 58,2 % from the total export from Lithuania and import reached 67,7 %. The share of SME export in the total international trade from Lithuania was increasing, e.g. in 2006 this increase was 4,9 %, and 9,2 % in 2007. Increase of SMEs' share in the international trade demonstrates increasing international competitiveness. However, import share is bigger than export share and this shows that SME possibilities in export are still smaller that possibilities of big enterprises.

Export and import analysis in different SME sectors shows that the biggest share belongs to trade sector followed by SMEs operating in the industry sector. The share of service, construction and other sectors in very small (Fig. 3). In terms of legal status of SMEs, the role of joint stock companies in export and import is dominating and was 92,7 % of total SMEs export and 91 % of SMEs import in 2007. Approximately 5 % of export and import belongs to individual companies.

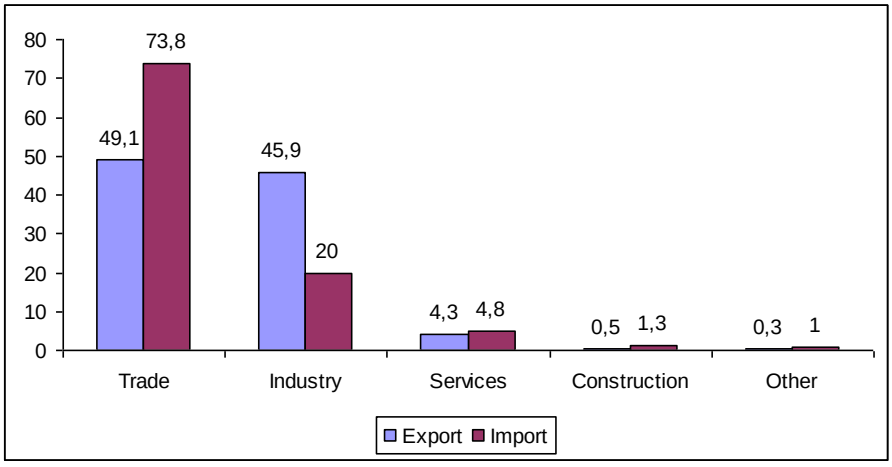

Fig. 3. Volume of export and import in different Lithuanian SME sectors, %. (2007) (Source: Lithuanian Statistics Department)

Approximately 40 % of Lithuanian SMEs are involved in innovation activities (Fig 4). However, the study conducted by the Lithuanian statistics department also revealed that number of enterprises that have implemented innovations in 2009 dropped by 8,4 % in comparison to 2008 (34 % in 2009 and 42,4 % in 2008). Information technologies (computer, internet) was used by 92,9 SMEs (88,6 % in 2008 and 86,3 % in 2007).

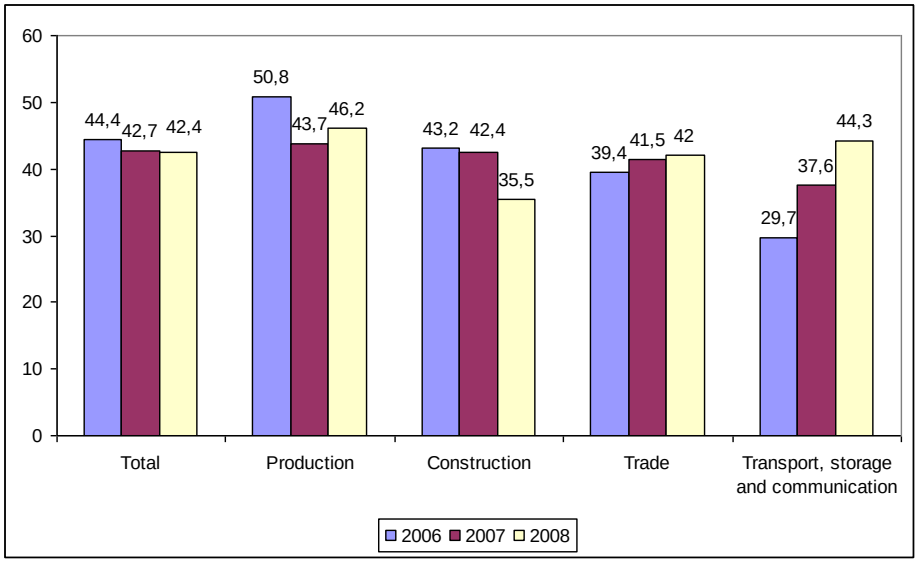

Fig. 4. Percentage of Lithuanian SMEs involved in innovation activities (Source: Lithuanian Statistics Department)

In terms of innovation type, product innovations clearly prevail (59,8 % of all innovations in 2008). This type of innovations was most popular in all sectors, except of transport, storage and communication where management and marketing innovations prevailed. New production processes or methods (technological innovations) were implemented in 59,8 % of production companies, and 50 % of construction companies. Organisational innovations were popular among transport, storage and communication companies 54,5 %). Marketing innovations were applied by 66,2 % of transport, storage and communication companies as well as 60,6 % of trade companies.

3. Framework situation for development in SMEs and innovation implementation

A survey conducted by Lithuanian Statistics Department concerning business conditions for SMEs revealed that the most serious problem in 2009 for enterprises was personnel costs (67,8 %), while in 2008 the biggest problem was availability of qualified work force (72,3 %) (Lithuanian Statistics Department, 2009). The latter problem moved to the third place in 2009. Taking into account problems associated with insolvent customers, availability of credit possibilities and decreased profitability, it could be concluded that business conditions for SMEs in 2009 became worse and are difficult primarily because of economic crisis that hit Lithuanian economy at the end of 2008.

Generally, regulations/ legal requirements do not differ for SMEs and big enterprises in Lithuania. All legal requirements are applicable to all enterprises without any reference to their size. Applicability of legal requirements may depend on size of particular operations, but not on size of enterprises.

Development of SME sector in Lithuania is governed by the Law for Development of Small and Medium Business of the Republic of Lithuania (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2008). This Law provides SME definition and specifies options of governmental support for SME sector.

The key SME related national programmes and strategies are the following:

- *Long-term Strategy for Development of Lithuanian Economy to 2015*, underlines that small and medium sized business is one of the key drivers for economic development and development of SME sector is one of the key directions of Lithuanian economic policy (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2002).
- *National Strategy for Long-term Development*, approved by the parliament of Lithuania in 2002 envisages establishment of social, economic and technological infrastructure for small and medium sized business, development of legal and institutional environment supportive to SMEs, development of a system for co-operation with science and education institutions) Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2001).
- *National Strategy for Development of Small and Medium Sized Business* specifies the following strategic directions: promotion of innovations and technology development, increase of SME sector competitiveness and promotion of co-operation. Implementation of this strategy is also supported by

Special Programme for Economy Development and Increase of Competitiveness developed by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania in 2008 that specifies measures to create submissive environment for start-up and development of business, for promotion of entrepreneurship and competitiveness of SMEs.

- *National Programme for Improvement of Business Environment "Dawn"*. The aim of this programme is to remove unnecessary regulatory burden on business and to develop measures that would help SMEs to remain competitive (Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009)
- *Lithuanian Strategy for Innovations 2010-2020*, developed jointly by the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Education and Science. The aim of the strategy is to use governmental resources effectively in development of competitive economy based on state of the art technologies and qualified human resources. This strategy is first comprehensive long-term strategic document that lies down specific objectives, targets and results to be achieved. The following objectives have been specified in the strategy: (i) to increase integration of Lithuania in global markets; (ii) to support development of creative and innovative society; (iii) to promote innovations; and (iv) to apply systems approach to innovations (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2010).

Various sources of financial support are available for SMEs in Lithuania to finance innovations. These sources include national and EU funding in the form of various funds in the framework of different programmes. EU support can be provided directly (e.g. EU subsidies) or through programmes administered on national level, e.g. EU structural funds. National support is provided in accordance to The Law on Development on Small and Medium Sized Business, which states that governmental support is provided in accordance to national, regional and municipal programmes for small and medium sized business development. Support for SMEs can be provided through: tax reductions (in accordance to existing legislation); financial support (soft credits, compensation of particular costs, including bank interest rate for credits, quality certification costs, etc.), subsidies for establishment of new work places; consultations, training for SME managers and employees; and establishment of business incubators, technology parks and their services.

In 2007 – 2013, EU structural support to SMEs in Lithuania is provided in line with the Strategy for Use of EU Structural Support, approved by the European Commission on 26th April 2007. The Strategy specifies priority investment directions of the EU structural support. There are several financial measures that provide support for technical feasibility studies, support for applied scientific research in development of innovative products, services or processes and/ or technological development, support for diffusion of knowledge and technologies, support for acquirement of new productive equipment (high technology), support for implementation of modern management processes or control systems (Fig. 5).

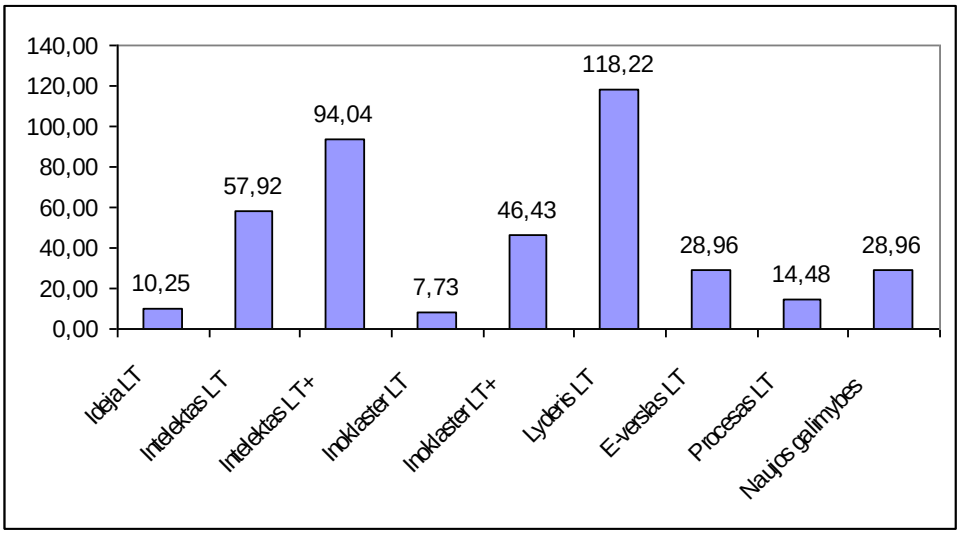

Fig. 5. Funding available for SMEs from the EU structural funds in Lithuania, million EUR (Source: Danilevičius, 2009)

SMEs may also use financial support provided in the framework of "Special Programme for Economic Growth and Increase of Competitiveness". The programme is developed in line with the Strategy for Use of EU Structural Support in 2007 – 2013 to avoid duplication of the measures funded. This programme is administered by the Ministry of Economy, Lithuanian Economic Development Agency and Joint Stock Company "Investments

and Business Guarantees". The Programme specifies measures to create submissive environment for start-up and development of business, for promotion of entrepreneurship and competitiveness of SMEs. Significant attention is given to public services for business development, improvement of quality of these services and for strengthening of financial support for SMEs as well as for training, consultations and other business promotion measures aimed at regional economic and social problems.

To promote development of small and medium sized business and to improve conditions for financing of small and medium sized business, Government of the Republic of Lithuania established Joint Stock Company "Investment and Business Guarantees" (INVEGA). This institution provides guarantees for credit institutions when loans are taken by SMEs and administers on of the state support mechanisms – partial compensation of the credit interest. Moreover, INVEGA administers provision of micro-credits to SMEs.

One of the mechanisms that proved to be effective to promote development and implementation of eco-innovations in Lithuania is a system for identification, development and implementation of preventive environmental innovations developed by the Institute of Environmental Engineering, Kaunas University of Technology. Up to 2009, financing of innovation implementation in the framework of this system has been ensured by a special revolving facility to finance cleaner production investments, established in the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) in 1998. The main objective of this facility was to provide soft loans for the implementation of high-priority investments with rapid payback that yield environmental and economical benefits ("win-win projects"). The facility provided financing directly for a project and the loan was repaid by the company in accordance to the payback period. The maximum loan size was equivalent to about EUR 350 000. Unfortunately, financial support within this scheme is currently not available. 52 projects have been financed by NEFCO in the framework of this system. Average pay-back period of the implemented projects was ~ 3 years. The system is based on preventive strategies; the process of innovation generation and development is carried out jointly by researchers and industry from the very beginning; the system is sophisticated "one stop shop" comprising innovation generation, assessment, financing, implementation, and monitoring stages. The system was presented/ applied in the framework of UNEP, UNIDO and EU projects in companies in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Vietnam, Uganda, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and China. The system has been acknowledged by the "Energy Globe 2008 National Award" and Award by Lithuanian Ministry of Environment in the category of "International cooperation 2008".

4. Eco-innovation development and implementation in SMEs

In management of environmental/ sustainability aspects, reactive approach is still widely used. Enterprises often take action when particular problem surfaces. However, many of such problems could be prevented when proactive (preventive) approach is used. Moreover, preventive approaches, e.g. cleaner production methodology in some cases enable to eliminate the need for end-of–pipe technologies or to reduce required capacity of pollution treatment facilities. This could lead to significant financial savings in addition to reduced impact to the environment and possibly improved work conditions and improved product quality.

Additionally, decision-makers in SMEs are often "too quick" in finding solutions to particular problems. Seldom real causes of a problem are analysed as solution often seems to be "obvious", e.g. when new legal requirement concerning emission of particular pollutant is introduced, decision makers are often tempted to go the easiest, but not the most efficient and economically viable way – to look for pollution control technology that would enable to capture pollution. Additional data collection and analysis could help to identify more alternatives to solve the problem, e.g. material substitution to eliminate the pollutant in concern (product innovation), production process modification to reduce pollutant generation, or even better control of the process as a result of non-technical innovation. Theoretical statement that there are many ways to solve any particular problem has been proved in practice in a number of projects implemented jointly by industrial enterprises and Institute of Environmental Engineering, Kaunas University of Technology. Finally, enterprises often underestimate performance improvement potential from small innovations that are easy implement and often do not require significant financial resources. Innovation is often considered by SME representatives in its narrow sense as development and implementation of new advanced technologies and introduction of conceptually new products.

Therefore, there is a clear need to intensify use of information dissemination about eco-innovations and proactive approach in solving environmental problems, and associated capacity building activities. This would also promote generation of new eco-innovation ideas rather than just adapting technologies or methods developed elsewhere (which is by no means the bad approach in many cases).

When asked about innovations, enterprises often believe that innovation development is the role of research organisations. Despite the fact that a system of research in Lithuania is not sufficiently oriented towards applied research and there is a need for closer interdisciplinary co-operation in scientific research needed for eco-innovation development, it should be stressed that research organisations generate knowledge and only joint

efforts of business and science could lead to desired result. In the context of eco-innovation development, there is a need to promote closer co-operation between SMEs and research organisations.

When the most efficient solution for a problem is identified SMEs usually need assistance in preparation of a loan application including assistance in calculation of cost savings and environmental benefits. Assistance to the applicant in communication with the financing institution and preparation of loan documentation is also needed.

As presented in the chapter 3 of this article, a number of different options are available for SMEs to secure financing for implementation of innovations. However, a survey carried out among participants of SPIN project seminar participants revealed that most of SMEs know about opportunities to receive external financing from the innovation implementation support measures, but most of them were reluctant in applying. Data presented in Table 1 confirms that popularity of the financing measures is far too low. Taking into account significant resources available in the EU structural funds, one could expect greater number of applications. Less than 20 % of the total sum allocated for SMEs in the EU structural funds has been used to date.

Table 1. Application number and finance use in selected nationally administered innovation support measures (EU structural funds) (Source: Danilevičius, 2009)

Title of the measure	**Assigned sum (mln. LTL)**	**Number of applications**	**Contracts signed**	**Used sum**
Idėja LT	35,4*	152	63	5,7
Intelektas LT	200,0*	102	90	97,1
Intelektas LT+	324,7*	39	21	36,6
Inogeb LT -1	32,6	27	14	22,2
Total EU structural funds:	**861,2**	**320**	**188**	**161,6**

The main reason for such low interest from SMEs in available financing opportunities is perhaps not the structure or administrative side of these measures, but lack of developed innovations ready for implementation in SMEs. None of the available financing support programmes/ measures designed to promote innovation and to increase their implementation provides support for innovation development. It could be concluded that the main problem is innovation development, not availability of external financing for innovation implementation.

Taking into account that most of Lithuanian SMEs do not have sufficient financial and human resources to develop eco-innovations on their own, there is a clear need for external technical support. Such support could be provided by research organisations, particularly when there is a need for a thorough analysis of enterprise's activities, products and services, identification of eco-innovation potential and generation of performance improvement ideas. When SME has clear idea for eco-innovation, technical assistance from consulting organisation having adequate capacity and experience might be sufficient to turn the idea into an investment project. In an ideal case, financing of these services (external technical assistance) should be at least partly covered from public funding sources. This would also promote closer co-operation between SMEs and research.

Financial support for capacity building activities in SMEs is another important need (Staniškis and Arbačiauskas, 2004). Generally, SMEs in Lithuania have sufficiently qualified and well educated technical personnel. This is a good pre-condition for eco-innovation development and implementation. However, many SMEs lack of understanding of environmental problems and sometimes have limited information (particularly when it comes to details) concerning their activities, products and services from the perspective of sustainable development or more specifically, performance improvement potential. SMEs also lack methodological competence in terms of identification of eco-innovation potential and eco-innovation development.

Therefore, there is a need for capacity building activities in the country, primarily targeted at SMEs. The key activity in capacity building is training programmes. Both long-term training and short-term training programmes are important in this regard. Experience of cleaner production programmes in Lithuania demonstrated that a long-term training programmes emphasising on-the-job training are the most effective for capacity building in enterprises. There is a need for long term training programmes for SMEs that combines theoretical training and practical work. Such programmes would result in a number of eco-innovations ready for implementation. Practical case studies could also be developed during such programmes and used in information dissemination activities to further promote eco-innovation development and implementation in the country.

5. Conclusions

1. SMEs play a major role in economic growth, and provide most new jobs. At the same time, SMEs pose serious environmental problems due to their high numbers and their cumulative effect. To survive in the rapidly changing business environment, SMEs have to be flexible, dynamic and open. In this context, there is clear need for more intensive development and implementation of eco-innovations.
2. To increase eco-innovation development and implementation, there is a need to intensify information flow on eco-innovations and support for application of proactive approach in solving environmental problems in SMEs. Increased co-operation between business and research organizations is particularly important in this regard.
3. Several financing mechanisms in the framework of EU structural funds are available for SMEs in Lithuania to finance innovations. However, most of SMEs are reluctant to use these financial support mechanisms due to lack of developed innovations ready for implementation. None of the available financing mechanisms provides support for innovation development. The main problem is innovation development, not availability of external financing for innovation implementation.
4. International project SPIN (Sustainable Production through Innovation in SMEs) is under implementation in the Baltic Sea region to ensure increasing the exploitation of the innovation potential from SMEs in order to enhance sustainable production processes in SMEs leading to the creation of public benefits and private profits whilst reducing economic and environmental costs.

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Darni gamyba taikant inovacijas mažose ir vidutinėse įmonėse Baltijos jūros regione

Straipsnyje pateikta informacija apie tarptautinį projektą „SPIN" (Darni gamyba taikant inovacijas mažose ir vidutinėse įmonėse), kuris diegiamas Baltijos jūros regiono šalyse siekiant intensyvesnio eko-inovacijų kūrimo ir diegimo. Straipsnyje pateikti pirminiai studijos, atliktos šio projekto rėmuose, rezultatai, t.y. mažų ir vidutinių įmonių sektoriaus apžvalga (įskaitant sektoriaus struktūrą, mažų ir vidutinių įmonių indėlį į šalies ekonomiką ir situaciją dėl inovacijų diegimo mažose ir vidutinėse įmonėse) o taip pat apžvelgiama inovacijų rengimo ir diegimo aplinka (įskaitant finansinę paramą). Straipsnyje taip pat aptariami pagrindiniai mažų ir vidutinių įmonių poreikiai inovacijų kūrimo bei diegimo požiūriu.

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