

# How promoting and spreading ecodesign in companies?

## Introduction

The European Commission (DG Enterprise & Industry), with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), would like to organize a side-event to **inform national delegates about the potential of Ecodesign to support the transition towards a resource efficient economy as well as quality, high added-value and innovative products (competitiveness)**. The side-event will largely base **on success stories and concrete experiences from developing countries**, such as Costa Rica, Mexico and Vietnam, **and developed countries** from Europe and Canada. The organisers are currently in the process of identifying speakers from the before-mentioned countries.

Ecodesign is taking into account the environmental dimension of a product or service from the early stage of design and throughout the life-cycle. On average, **80% of products' environmental impacts are determined at the design stage**. Ecodesign deals with all environmental impacts and all life-cycle phases of products (mining, production, transport, use, waste management).

The design of eco-innovative products and services is based on **good understanding of users' needs**. If properly implemented, an Ecodesign approach normally leads to meet customers' expectations both as regards **reduced environmental impacts** and **better quality, functionality and innovative design**. As a result, eco-designed products are usually high added-value goods, with *at least* equivalent profitability compared to "traditional" products. Most of the time, implementing an ecodesign approach based on Life-cycle thinking therefore **creates value** for the company itself and for its customers.

## 3 pillars for the side event

### 1. FACTS

#### **Ecodesign benefit both business and the environment**

An 18-month research (2008-2009) based on ~40 interviews investigated whether eco-designed products are profitable. Most interviewed firms reported economic benefits, in particular through **cost cutting and additional sales** (new customers). In 24 cases, firms increased their net profits due to the sale of eco-designed products from the first year. The study concluded that the **key to ensure successful ecodesign** approach was to focus on **increased product functionality**.

### 2. TOOLS

#### **Support to companies, in particular SME**

To get involved in an ecodesign project ("foot in the door"), SME primarily need **information and training** tools. For example, companies need to acquire the know-how to use LCA tools. SMEs need access to **skilled resource centres** to get support and be accompanied in the first steps of their ecodesign projects.

### 3. NETWORK

Numerous LCA methodologies exist worldwide. But only a few knowledge centres have developed **ready-to-use Ecodesign and LCA tools for SMEs**, as well as an **expertise how to guide and accompany new comers** in the ecodesign field. Tools can be generic or sectoral. Moreover, it is possible to create **specific tools according to the firm's level of expertise** in Ecodesign (beginner/ advanced / front-runner). Now, **existing knowledge centres should get in touch to create a global network under the 10-year UN Framework Programme on Sustainable Production and Consumption** to exchange experience and best practices on how best promoting and spreading Ecodesign in companies.

This side event will present various practices of different resources centres in Costa Rica, Mexico, Vietnam, Canada and Europe. It will focus on the existing tools for **awareness raising, technological and methodological transfer, training kits and general guidance.**