



The 2nd ASEM Working Group Seminar on “Eco-Innovation1 Competence of SMEs” (Concept Paper)

- 9-10 March, Bratislava, Slovakia -

The Seminar is co-organized by ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Center, the Small and Medium Business Administration of the Republic of Korea, in cooperation with Slovak Business Agency in Slovakia.

Background

The importance of the small and medium-sized enterprise sector (SME) in Economic development has been well recognized. Consequently, many countries have been trying to promote their SME sector with various support systems.

Efforts towards sustainable development are gaining momentum throughout the global community. Likewise, the member states of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) have been focusing on the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in achieving sustainable development.

Through eco-innovation, which is innovation for economy and ecology, we can reduce the negative impact on the environment, preserve natural resources, save energy and cost, generate more sustainable business model and creating jobs, and increase income. We can also enhance organization and institutional changes that will promote all of these developments.

ASEM leaders acknowledged the importance of eco-innovation at the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit in 2014, and endorsed the ‘ASEM Working Group Seminars on Eco-innovation Competence of SMEs’. The Working Group provides a platform for policy dialogue, experience sharing and cooperation matchmaking, in order to raise awareness of eco-innovation for sustainable development among SMEs in Asia and Europe.

The first ASEM Working Group Seminar on eco-innovation took place on 10-11 November 2015 in Seoul, South Korea. One objective of the seminar is to present Asian and European efforts supporting sustainable development of SMEs and practices in eco-innovation and to discuss relevant collaboration opportunities for ASEM member states to achieve common goal for green growth.

12 ASEM member states were represented at the meeting, including Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Hungary, Korea, Laos, Mongolia, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Thailand. The delegates debated the preliminary prioritization of the forms of eco-innovation collaboration to be pursued in the context of ASEM.

Objective

The delegates had debated the preliminary prioritization of the forms for eco-innovation collaboration to be pursued in the context of ASEM. Following the roundtable discussions and analysis of needs and expectations of countries, the Working Group selected three main topics for further elaboration:

- Developing training on eco-innovation for SMEs;
- Eco-innovation advisory services for SMEs;

- Eco-innovation capacity building for governments

The seminar may conduct extensive and in-depth discussions on the collaboration opportunity to effect tangible collaboration projects with member states. It is still open for new member states in ASEM who are interested in participation to working group and new topics if newly joined states want to collaborate with member states.

Expected Outcome

The conclusion of the first seminar in Seoul had drawn a concept of tangible collaboration among member states. Two more working group seminars including upcoming of the 2nd seminar in Bratislava and the 3rd seminar in Seoul would be followed moving towards the 11th ASEM Summit in 2016 in Mongolia. We expect the following as the final outcome:

- Draw new collaboration opportunity to support SMEs in the ASEM region
- Report outcomes at the 11th ASEM Summit in 2016
- Establish a catalogue of best practices of ASEM member countries to share with other members

Participation

- Participating countries (delegates) in the 1st Working Group
- Welcome new countries who want to take a part in the working group

Ideally, we expect two delegates from each country; one government officer and one expert. For member states with only one delegate, she/he should be a representative of an organization which could officially implement ASEM activities, or somebody recommended by such organization who could be sponsored by us.

Cost

One delegate from a country (only having an intention to participate in the future collaboration) will be sponsored with a round-trip flight ticket (or train for countries neighboring to Slovakia) and accommodation. Flight tickets and room charges for any additional delegates should be borne by themselves.

Contact

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Appendix: Topics for elaboration

1. Developing training on eco-innovation for SMEs

The first working group focused on bridging the gap in eco-innovation competence of SMEs by developing training modules. The training modules should be focused on development of SMEs' "hard skills" related to innovation of products and processes, as well as development of "soft skills" focused on fostering learning culture in organisation. ASEM will link to the existing organisations and projects that specialise in developing and delivering training to SMEs. The focus of the activity would be to provide 'training of trainers' by having experienced Asian and European trainers working together with eco-innovation experts and SME representatives to design and test SME training modules. In addition, so-called multidimensional learning models should also be explored, where training/advising/coaching and network building is based on the same terms and will provide multiple learning entrances, which also accounts for fostering company culture in training to ensure long-term effects on company practices

In the context of ASEM the focus could be placed on the following activities:

- Reviewing existing eco-innovation training practices in Asia and Europe in order to assess their relevance for the ASEM context;
- Designing and testing basic eco-innovation training modules covering hard and soft skills development at SMEs;
- Establishing and training a team of trainers capable of adopting the training modules to local circumstances

2. Eco-innovation advisory services for SMEs

Similarly to the action on training discussed above, the action addresses the lack of capacities of SMEs in eco-innovation. The group suggested focussing on providing practical advisory services, business to business matching and informing SMEs on ways to deliver eco-innovation business and to transform the company by transferring technology in the various cooperative programs.

In the context of ASEM the focus could be placed on:

- Initiating and delivering Business to Business (B2B) matchmaking events and processes focussed on organising matchmaking events in Asia and Europe, targeting selected SMEs and other relevant stakeholders, notably investors;
- Developing information platform with examples of eco-innovation good practices implemented in Europe and Asia;
- Creating collaboration spaces between big companies and SMEs in order to facilitate innovation collaboration or building SME capacity to meet standards of big companies;
- Designing and delivering advisory and consulting services on relevant topics (e.g. digital economy, financial consultancy, green growth, carbon and water footprint, etc.)

3. Capacity building for governments in eco-innovation policy

(Suggested re-focus: Supporting a dialog between government and SMEs)

The group suggested focussing on the activities on improving the design and implementation of eco-innovation policies to better account for the needs of SMEs. The rationale for the action was based on the limited understanding of the specific needs of eco-innovators by the public sector. The group emphasised the need to create a space for dialogue between public sectors, SME intermediaries and SMEs ('community of practice') in order to improve better understanding of needs, barriers, opportunities for SMEs and develop shared understanding of eco-innovation..

In the context of ASEM the focus could be placed on:

- Sharing existing successful practices in creating participatory policy processes, which effectively involve SMEs into policy making process;
- Piloting a project focussed on creating such a dialogue in selected ASEM member states.