

Title of Abstract for the main session III “Sustainable Production and resource efficiency”:

Evaluation on the Effectiveness of the Programme for improving Material Efficiency in German SMEs

Author:

Dr. Kora Kristof, Thomas Lemken, Sandra Kolberg

Affiliation and Address

Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy; Research Group IV – Sustainable Production and Consumption

Döppersberg 19

42103 Wuppertal

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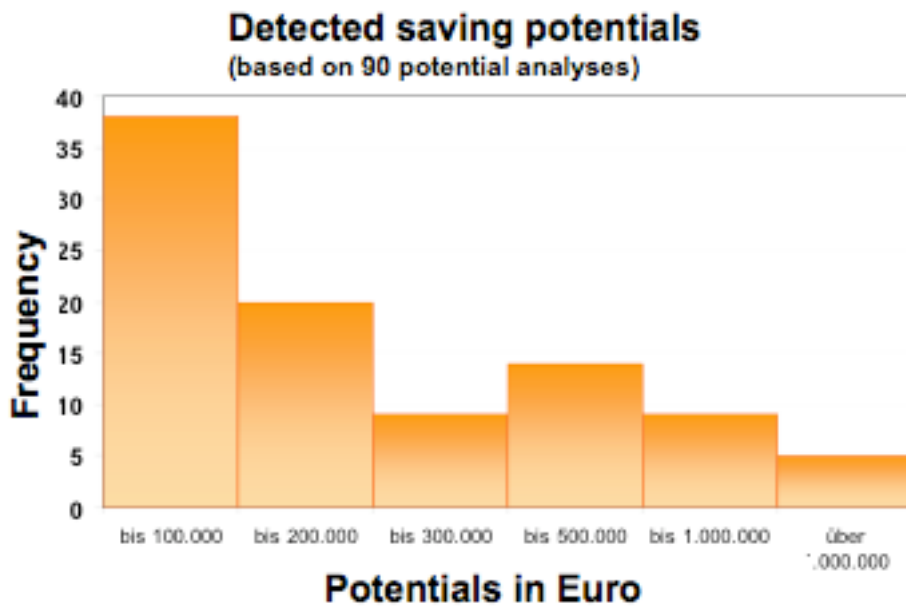
Paper presentation

Abstract:

In autumn 2005, the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology boosted a programme that is designed to foster material efficiency in German business significantly. The programme is based on three pillars: the assignment of the “Material efficiency award”, a programme on consultancy for SMEs in order to improve their productivity and economic profitability by an increased material efficiency (VerMat) and thirdly, a programme that supports the constitution of networks, primarily for SMEs (NeMat). The following paper presents the programme’s outcomes and results after its first 2 years of implementation. The evaluation was undertaken by the Wuppertal Institute from August 2007 until January 2008 and focussed specific effects for German SMEs as well as potentials for further development of the programme. Underlying and guiding question for this purpose was the fact whether the concept of those mentioned 3 pillars proved one selves right and if the institution demea – being in charge of transferring the programme into practice – could actually accomplish its requirements. Thus the evaluation concentrated on the following aspects: Does the programme provide the right design to assist the implementation of resource efficiency measures in SMEs? Does it offer a consistent monitoring of the SME’s progress? Are the right stakeholders approached / involved in the process towards resource and material efficient production? Were the

right measures of Agenda Setting chosen to achieve public awareness concerning material efficiency and resource protection? Was the German Material Efficiency Prize an appropriate tool for it?

Besides analysing the programme's design, the evaluation managed to identify specific potentials for resource savings on the company level: for example, related to the respective corporate turnover, the saving potentials identified reached up to 5% which has to be considered significant, especially for smaller companies.



Strategies to promote consumption and production patterns that correspond to the idea of sustainability should consider the fact that the main reason for most of the ecological problems are connected to a resource consumption that is far beyond the planet's actual capacities. Thus, the question whether production and consumption is ecologically, socially and economically sound and fairly distributed, is strongly connected to the way resources are handled. The establishment of appropriate incentives on the business level as well as the promotion of the implementation of resource productivity and material efficiency in companies and whole value chains are crucial in that context. The concept of this initiative and its effectiveness is worth presenting within this year's European Round Table on Sustainable Consumption and Production because it offers a good example how such programmes could be applied in corporate contexts, it provides further more a exemplary case that gives the possibility for discussions on specific aspects regarding the programme's design and its outcomes as well as its possible transferability.