

**Topic:** III Sustainable Production and Resource Efficiency

**Regional Perspectives on Capacity Building for Ecodesign and Resource Efficiency**

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**Focus of the presentation:**

Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) requires radically new perspectives on reducing the life cycle impacts of the production, distribution and consumption of products and services. The SCP agenda engages strongly with new perspectives on sustainable development policy, new understandings of innovation and new realities of business and communication.

The majority of policy mechanisms for sustainable consumption and production, while inherently global, are delivered at the regional level. This regional perspective presents challenges for practitioners because regional innovation systems are constantly changing in terms of their actors, policy instruments and challenges addressed. From a European perspective, innovation policy is primarily concerned with stimulating regional and national competitiveness but it is increasingly concerned with improving the environmental and social performance of the economy. This current recognition of eco-innovation at a regional level presents many opportunities for practitioners, industry and policy makers alike.

The contribution small to medium enterprises (SMEs) make to regional economies through employment, social capital and innovation is well documented. SMEs are also heavily represented in the sectors that have been identified as having the highest environmental impacts such as food and drink and building products. This constellation of factors contributes to a strong rationale for building of capacity for ecodesign and sustainable innovation in SMEs as a mechanism for encouraging resource efficiency and sustainable consumption.

This presentation will draw on SME and practitioner experiences to date from current ecodesign demonstration projects in four key sectors from Wales, a devolved administration of the UK. These include the application of cradle to cradle design in a furniture manufacturer, the commercialisation of low carbon technologies, the transitioning of a food producer to more sustainable business practices and the establishment of ecodesign benchmarks in an electronics manufacturer. The presentation will explore strategies for capacity building that enable ecodesign and sustainable innovation in SMEs. It will characterise ecodesign practices in SMEs as processes of innovation to help clarify potential future strategies for intervention from a regional perspective.

**Keywords:**

CAPACITY BUILDING, ECODESIGN, SME