

# PRO WISSEN: Success factors for a regionally embedded process of knowledge transfer with the objective of introducing sustainable products and services in small and medium sized crafts enterprises<sup>1</sup>

*Daniele Haiböck-Sinner, Ingrid Kaltenegger*

*JOANNEUM RESEARCH, Institute for Sustainable Techniques and Systems, Graz, Austria;  
daniele.haiboeck-sinner@joanneum.at*

## **Abstract**

The introduction of sustainable products and services is an essential part of sustainable management. Austria can be called a model country in this field. Nevertheless there is still a potential concerning the introduction of sustainable products and services by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

One obstacle for the better introduction of sustainable products and services is the lack of knowledge and know-how on the topic in SMEs. This lack of knowledge comprises not only the knowledge about technological solutions, but also the way how to introduce these solutions. Nevertheless there are some outstanding entrepreneurs who have gathered the necessary knowledge by themselves and who are successfully working in a sustainable way. The basic idea of PRO WISSEN is that by the means of a regional knowledge transfer process, SMEs can profit from the knowledge of these pioneer entrepreneurs and the introduction of sustainable products or services can thus be supported.

The project PRO WISSEN takes a step back from the concrete implementation planning of sustainable products and services and gives attention to the question on how the readiness of SME for innovation can be increased. The goal of the project is to build up management competencies for the introduction of sustainable products and services by SMEs.

Concerning SMEs, PRO WISSEN focuses on crafts enterprises: two pilot regions which already established networks of crafts enterprises and want to put an emphasis on sustainable product-service-systems serve as model regions for the investigation of possibilities and framework conditions for such a regionally embedded process of knowledge transfer. Aspects of formal learning are integrated as well as aspects of informal learning and empowerment – strategies and methods designed to increase the self-determination and autonomy of entrepreneurs in order to act in a sustainable way.

The paper will present the results of the first two work packages and tries to answer the following research questions:

1. Which (theoretical) knowledge, (practical) know-how and additional support is needed for the introduction of sustainable products and services by small and medium sized crafts enterprises?
2. Which shortcomings of information, qualification and support can be observed? What should a regionally embedded process of knowledge/know-how transfer thus focus on?
3. What are possible contributions of regional actors/institutions and what is their benefit?
4. How can success factors for such a process be formulated?

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<sup>1</sup> This project is carried out within the funding programme „Factory of Tomorrow”. This programme is transacted by order of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology.