

ECOPROFIT

ECOPROFIT, the "**EC**ological **PRO**ject **FOR** Integrated Environmental**TE**chnology", is a programme for sustainable economic development designed by the Environment Department of the City of Graz, Austria, in 1991. The programme is especially suited for greening small and medium enterprises and has found widespread European and international diffusion. ECOPROFIT is an international registered and copyrighted trademark. Project managers are allowed to use the trademark and the associated programme through a licence agreement.

The programme supports the development of activities focused on corporate energy and resource management to ease the burden on the environment and cut costs. It is operated in the form of a public-private partnership: First, local authorities join the ECOPROFIT initiative and in a second step, local firms sign a co-operation contract with an external consultant. This strong co-operation between local authorities, businesses and consultants enables an effective flow of information and promotes proactive environmental strategies.

The programme is the leading product within existing environmental management approaches and has been accepted as a pre-stage to a full audit according to the Eco Management and Audit Scheme III. Its service covers the full variety of environmental aspects like water, waste and mobility management as well as air pollution and energy and climate issues. Very importantly, as part of the programme a check with legal requirements in the field of energy and the environment is provided.

The permanent further development of the project is of central importance. As a reaction to the wishes of project participants, special programmes were developed for tourism as well as small businesses with less than 10 employees. Each year the participating local authorities meet and discuss new ideas. Also, each year the material for use in the workshops and for submission by the participating companies is updated and extended. Most recently, due to the rising importance of energy and climate aspects, energy topics have been strengthened within the framework of ECOPROFIT in Germany. Economically speaking, ECOPROFIT is a low-cost CO₂ abatement programme. For example, calculations for the City of Munich show consultancy costs being as low as 0.20 € per tonne of CO₂ on average. Each year more than 12.000 t of CO₂ are avoided by the ECOPROFIT scheme in Munich.

An important factor in the success of ECOPROFIT are the standardised common training programmes and networking platforms. The development of environmental measures is achieved in workshop sessions and direct visits of the consultants in the participating firms. The free exchange of information between companies works as an engine for the individual development of environmental and climate protection measures. Simultaneously this exchange is the unique selling proposition of ECOPROFIT. As an eco-innovation network it promotes proactive environmental strategies of small and medium enterprises. In particular, the ECOPROFIT club is recognised as an opportunity to ensure continuous learning in the field of the environment, monitor future opportunities for eco-innovation of products, production and organisational processes and to expand the business network.

In Germany the diffusion of ECOPROFIT is quite a success story. Ever since the first ECOPROFIT workshop held in Munich in 1998, more than 100 cities and 3.000 companies have successfully realised ECOPROFIT in Germany.

As both an economically and ecologically successful local business instrument the implementation of ECOPROFIT is recommended on a wider international level.

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