

Abstracts

Capacity building for Ecodesign in Central-American Industry

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Abstract

Introduction

CEGESTI (Costa Rica) and Delft University of Technology (The Netherlands) jointly execute the 2-year project "Ecodiseño CentroAmerica", with national counterparts in the other countries involved - Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras. The project is partially funded by the Dutch Ministry for Development Co-operation, and partly by the counterparts themselves and the industries that participate.

Ecodesign, or sustainable product and system development, is seen as a chance for industrial innovation and increased competitiveness coupled with reduction of environmental impact. A large part of the region is recovering from a long period of civil war. The current peace process offers new opportunities to the region. The need to combine industrial and economic development with sustainability now becomes essential, and ecodesign is considered both a practical and a fundamental concept for this. First, the practice of Ecodesign was proven in a number of small and medium sized companies, and regional tools and manuals were developed. With this experience and examples ready, an interconnected set of actions towards enlarging the regional capacity for ecodesign was started in 1998, and still continues (status June 1999).

Analysing how to build up Central American capacity

Capacity building is defined as an iterative process, in which a series of interconnected initiatives and activities take place in the societal context, and in which a number of well-defined interventions can be made. As a start towards capacity building, a regional analysis was made of stakeholders already involved or potential new partners in the development process. Next, five key clusters of actors were defined and functions described:

- Advisors/consultancies: technical/management advice, project deployment
- Research organisations: Research projects, information support
- Industry organisations: Project deployment, information support
- Governmental organisations: Regulation, supportive measures
- Financial organisations: Financing, supportive project deployment.

Activities for capacity building

On the basis of this analysis, an interconnected set of tools and interventions for capacity building was defined and is currently executed. Among them are follow-up projects, training and education, stimulating funding mechanisms and policy advice. Flexibility and synergy are key words in this, and a number of short-term results that truly enhance the capacity for sustainability in Central American industry have already been reached. The challenge is now to also establish instruments (policy, funding) that are essential for maintaining and enlarging capacity on the longer term.