

**Promotion of sustainable management on the international level  
by the INEM Network**

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**I. International Network for Environmental Management (INEM)**

INEM is the world federation of national business associations for environmental management and cleaner production centres. This pioneering organisation was founded in 1991. INEM's first large-scale event was to hold the International Industry Conference for Sustainable Development at the Global Forum of the World Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The business associations and Cleaner Production Centres are competence centres for environmental management, aimed at achieving sustainability. Today, INEM includes 33 such member organisations in 27 countries. These member organisations comprise more than 3,000 companies, including many of the world's largest corporations. INEM plans to increase the number of its member organisation to 50 by 2012.

The INEM associations, which taken together employ more than 200 people, help companies and managers to learn about methods to relieve the burden on the environment and at the same time to improve their business success. Key issues are savings in energy, water and raw materials, the development of cleaner production processes and products, and further training of company employees.

There are special programmes designed for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). They are the "hidden giants" of the world's economy, and taken together they can do the most to reduce environmental pollution of planet Earth, unemployment and other social burdens.

INEM's experience shows that the best way to reach companies is by inter-company exchange of opinion, by holding local specialist seminars, and by benchmarking with models that are typical of their particular industry. INEM associations adapt flexibly to local economic and cultural needs, thus meeting one of the key requirements for modern development policy.

Another task of the INEM associations is to provide the companies with information on regional, national and international environmental requirements - the latter may be crucial for export.

INEM member associations in Central and Eastern Europe contribute to implementation of European Union environmental standards in local industry, thus eliminating a major barrier

to EU entry. This considerably improves the local environmental situation. That benefits the population of the region in question, and it also directly benefits the neighbouring countries because it helps to prevent or at least reduce cross-border environmental pollution in the water (rivers, Baltic Sea), and in the air.

INEM is known internationally as a representative of the interests of environmentally conscious SMEs and of the developing countries, particularly in dealings with ISO, the International Organisation for Standardization and UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme.

## **II. Ten reasons for the effectiveness of national business associations for environmental management**

National business associations for environmental management are the most effective means of disseminating and implementing environmental management. There are many good reasons for that. Ten of them are:

### **1 Up-to-date expertise**

The business associations deliver state-of-the-art expertise to companies by means of specialist seminars and by direct exchange of experience among practitioners. It is like a direct injection.

### **2 Practical know-how**

They provide exchange of experience which is directly related to practice, and is tailored to specific industries and company sizes. There are no dissipation losses due to inexact and theoretical nature of the knowledge.

### **3 Providing examples**

The national business associations provide many examples of environmental management in various industries, showing how to improve business success not despite environmental protection, but rather because of it. Environmental protection as a revenue earner and improver – if possible presented by business practitioners themselves – is the best way of inspiring other business managers.

### **4 Appealing to the media**

Case studies presented by practitioners at seminars and publications also arouse the interest of the media. The media disseminate the success stories, thus encouraging and inspiring a large number of both large and smaller companies to imitate the good examples.

### **5 Developing dynamism**

National business associations for environmental management produce an atmosphere of creativity and innovation, generating a dynamism of their own. Ideally, development aid helps people to help themselves; so the provision of support to establish national business associations for environmental management is an ideal tool for development policy.

## **6 Complementing chambers of industry and commerce**

The traditional chambers of commerce and industry give attention to the greening of business, but for them this is just one of several issues. They have to balance environmental protection with factors which may be less environment-related, and have to take account of the many companies which are “lame ducks” in environmental terms. Thus, there can be a fruitful complementary relationship between the business association for environmental management and the chambers.

## **7 Local proximity by regional “cell division”**

National associations can create smaller regional and local units by a process of “cell division”. Examples of this are the regional structuring within the German Environmental Management Association (B.A.U.M.). This enables the organisation to reach many of those responsible in SMEs.

## **8 General improvement of management quality**

The holistic thinking exercised in the national business associations (for example reduction of disposal costs by substitution of materials at the purchasing stage) improves the quality of the whole of management, independently of environmental issues. As the Dow Jones Sustainability Index and FTSE 4 Good index show, environmentally managed companies simply perform better than “normal” companies.

## **9 Avoidance of duplication in research**

Transfer of the know-how obtained by one national association to all the other national associations prevents waste of research and development efforts. It is not necessary for all the countries on earth to go through the same process to gather experience! INEM ensures rapid information transfer, in a manner that is close to practice, and in a common language (English).

## **10 Motivating by a sense of international togetherness**

What is just as important as the information transfer among the national associations is to promote a feeling of belonging together, a sense of cross-border cooperation with the responsible people in other countries in this environmental relief effort.

## **III. Summary**

Business associations for environmental management are expert, independently run and non-for-profit organisations aiming for sustainability. They are the right development policy response to environmental, social and economic problems caused by large, medium-sized and small companies in industrialised countries, in Eastern European countries and in developing countries.