Measuring the Readiness of SMEs for Eco-Innovation and Industrial Symbiosis: Development of a Screening Tool

Despite the high business, innovation and sustainability potential linked with eco-innovation and industrial symbiosis, limited implementation can be observed in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In order to enhance the implementation of these concepts in SMEs, the main goal of this paper is to propose a screening tool to identify and evaluate SMEs’ potential for eco-innovation, with a special focus on industrial symbiosis and green business models aspects. In order to accomplish this goal, an action research was developed in two cycles: (1) development and testing of the screening prototype; and (2) improvement and scale-up of the enhanced screening tool, in close collaboration with the research partners. In addition to enabling a better understanding about their own internal processes and activities, the evaluation of the potential of 108 SMEs for eco-innovation provided them with detailed insights about how to reach the potential benefits with industrial symbiosis and green business models. Differently from the identified existing tools, the screening tool proposed in this research aims at supporting companies to understand what their potential for eco-innovation is, combining wider eco-innovation and industrial symbiosis opportunities and green business models, supplemented with a readiness evaluation to explore the existing potential.