

Chapter 9

Information scheme for greening SMEs in the Republic of Moldova

This chapter lays out a proposed Information Scheme for greening SMEs in the Republic of Moldova. The proposed information scheme includes five different information based tools. Each tool is introduced with relevant objectives, timeframes, links to other instruments, target audience, and proposed implementing partners highlighted. These tools include a subscription-based “Regulatory Watch” service; direct capacity building and awareness raising events, publications, web-tools, and face-to-face advice. The chapter clarifies the roles of different state and non-state actors, and provides suggestions for a broad performance evaluation approach for the proposed Information Scheme.

Introduction

As explored in Chapter 4 of this toolkit, successful communication is a vital part of supporting the uptake of green SME policies. The strategy developed in this chapter is an Information Scheme to raise awareness among Moldovan SMEs on good environmental management practices and the potential performance and efficiency benefits. It is crucial to emphasise that green practices present SMEs with business opportunities and innovative ways of solving financial constraints of business development. In order for this Strategy to be effective, it should be based on the following principles:

- *Clarity*: Transmitted messages via each information-based tool should be clear, concise and differentiated while targeting different SMEs activity sectors. The roles of institutions and their responsibilities should be defined clearly.
- *Simplicity*: Institutions need to translate complicated terminology they use into simple messages and step-by-step guidance for SMEs.
- *Coherence*: All the information-based tools should be systematic, with uniform mechanism behind them.
- *Co-operation*: Institutions will ensure the success of the strategy if they work together to promote the information-based tools in a transparent manner.

Information-based instruments

This Information Scheme proposes five types of information-based tools for implementation in the Republic of Moldova: “regulatory watch”, direct capacity building and awareness raising events, publications, web-tools, and face-to-face advice. The effectiveness of each tool is increased when combined with others.

The Ministries of Economy, Environment and Agriculture, ODIMM, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Energy Efficiency Agency, Cleaner production centres, sectoral business associations and local authorities are the key institutions for this Information Scheme. The Ministry of Economy will co-ordinate the work of other implementing institutions.

Regulatory watch

Implementing partners: The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova will play the leading role in “regulatory watch” development, to be supported by the Ministry of Environment (general environmental regulation) and the Ministry of Agriculture (environmental regulation in agricultural sector). CCI RM should gather and sort the information prepared by other partners. ODIMM and sectoral business associations could contribute by advising on the website/newsletter structure in order to make sure that it is tailored to the needs of SMEs.

Objectives: This subscription-based service is an easy and effective way to convey the message to SMEs on relevant legislative developments as well as upcoming applicable amendments to regulation. Regulatory watch can take a form of either e-mail or mobile regular updates.

Target audience: SMEs in all sectors.

Key message: In the form of an electronic newsletter (e-mail or mobile) keep the subscribers updated on current and forthcoming environmental regulation. However, this instrument's outreach is limited by accessibility to internet.

Process description: “Regulatory watch” subscription service on regulatory information is a web-based tool, where SMEs are able to choose the regulatory information applicable to their particular type of business. The core practical information on the following topics could be made available at the website of **the CCI RM**: environmental medium-specific and cross-media regulation, applicable taxes and fees, and recent environmental policies. Additional industry-sector and case-specific information, such as personalised guidance (based on the topics, industries or key words indicated during the subscription process) will be sent in a regular newsletter either monthly or quarterly. Subscribers could also indicate their newsletter type preference (e-mail or phone). **The Ministries of Environment and Agriculture** will help with content development in their respective fields. **ODIMM and business associations** will assist the CCI RM in developing a targeted and concise website and newsletter structure by analysing the content prepared by the governmental institutions and providing feedback, while keeping in mind the needs of SMEs.

Timeframe: The website development and newsletter establishment should take from 6 to 12 months. Right after the launch it is strongly recommended that the first 6 months will be a trial no-fee period for subscribers.

Links to other instruments: The CCI RM can also provide an option of a printed newsletter for SMEs in rural areas with limited access to the internet. This could be a short-term option advertised through local community events organised by **local authorities in collaboration with business associations**.

Direct capacity building and awareness raising: workshops, seminars, trainings and community events

Implementing partners: ODIMM should be the lead organisation in direct capacity building and awareness raising of SMEs. Energy Efficiency Agency and cleaner production centres will organise workshops on their respective topics. Business associations and local governments will hold local capacity building and community events. The national government will provide partial financial support for the organisation of relevant workshops, seminars and training events.

Objectives: Direct capacity building seminars, workshops and trainings, and community events help to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge received from other sources (e.g. publications, websites, newsletters) and specific SME business cases (by industry sector, size and specialisation). The constructive knowledge obtained from such events provides better understanding of environmental practices' implications for particular businesses. It also gives an opportunity for local outreach in the regions, which is especially important for business with no or limited access to the internet.

Target audience: Two types of capacity building events should be distinguished: those targeting SMEs in specific industry sectors and those for trainers and/or assistance providers.

Key message: Training SME managers on how to integrate good environmental behaviour into business practices and on the basics of environmental management. Additionally, SMEs will be provided with information on such cleaner technologies, resource and energy efficient practices, and their cost saving potential. The trainers and assistance

providers will learn the key issues and techniques that SMEs of the relevant sector should be aware of and incorporate into their business planning.

Process description: “Train-the-trainer” workshops could be directed at company managers and experts that are members of local business associations. Such events will be supported by **the Ministry of Environment** in collaboration with the **Ministries of Economy and Agriculture** when applicable. As the end result, environmental management should become a mainstream element in the business strategy. **CCI RM** should also contribute to such training events through the existing industry fairs and exhibitions, where they can introduce new technological advancements that will be helpful for the greening of SMEs. This instrument can also be used as direct capacity building for SMEs; however, it is suitable only for medium-sized and sometimes small enterprises, which can afford to send an environmental manager or another representative to such an event. **Cleaner production centres** can provide training for trainers (business associations’ representatives, preferably environmental managers) through the National Cleaner Production Programme.

As the lead organisation, **ODIMM** should be responsible for holding regional and national level workshops, seminars, trainings and round tables in the framework of its “Efficient management of business” educational module with a focus on greening SMEs. ODIMM can also provide trainings on green innovation and efficiency of environmental management, where SMEs will be able to share their experience and learn new business practices. ODIMM will likewise use its capacity by creating and chairing an annual knowledge sharing platform, where SMEs would have an opportunity to learn from larger companies’ environmental best practices. **CCI RM** and ODIMM may want to hold industry sector-specific events at the regional level in order to promote relevant green practices. Business associations (sector-based) are encouraged to collaborate in organisation of, or participate in, local capacity building events.

The **Energy Efficiency Agency** could organise seminars, conferences or exhibitions tailored to the needs and capacities of SMEs to promote energy efficiency measures and renewable energy sources. The optimisation of energy consumption presents an important costs savings opportunity for SMEs. Furthermore, during awareness raising and capacity building events SMEs may learn about funding possibilities offered by the Energy Efficiency Fund.

Similarly to the Energy Efficiency Agency, the **cleaner production centres** will tailor their capacity building events to the needs of SMEs. They need to formulate a clear message with supporting cases from local practice on business advantages of cleaner production and resource efficiency practices and deliver it at their training events and seminars.

Local authorities and business associations should ensure the regional outreach of the capacity building and awareness raising events to SMEs in rural areas.

Timeframe: In the short term, for the period of two to four years, capacity building events should be conducted more intensively, especially at the local level. Workshops and seminars will be conducted whenever relevant in the long term. Local community events will be held on a bi-annual basis during the first two years and thereafter on an annual basis.

Links to other instruments: This instrument is highly interlinked with other information-based tools. It presents an opportunity to disseminate information on available and forthcoming publications, as well as web-based tools. Communities with low or no

access to the internet will have opportunities to learn about the “regulatory watch” led by CCI RM and the Advisory website developed by the Ministry of Environment.

Publications (compliance guidance, best practice guidance/case studies, methodological materials, industrial journals, print newsletters, policy highlights, policy manuals)

Implementing partners: The Ministries of Economy, Environment and Agriculture will provide their inputs on compliance guidelines, their respective policy updates through policy highlights and manuals, as well as final products of projects conducted jointly with international organisations, NGOs and academic institutions. Cleaner production centres, the Energy Efficiency Agency, ODIMM and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry will disseminate information in their respective fields by creating best practice guidance and compiling case studies of business success stories, preparing methodological materials, industrial magazines and print newsletters, with ODIMM as the project leader.

Objectives: Printed materials are of high importance for regional SMEs that do not have access to the internet. This instrument also helps communicating and explaining to SMEs the existing policies for the support of green practices. “Pocket guides” (succinct “how to” brochures on green practices for specific activity sectors) will promote business opportunities (enhanced performance and cost savings) generated by green practices.

Target audience: SMEs in all sectors, civil society, business associations.

Key message: Best practice guidance and methodological guides will illustrate the “business benefits first” approach explaining how to turn environmental challenges into business opportunities. This includes conveying the information on how to reduce costs through energy and resource efficiency along with using cleaner production practices.

Process description: **The Ministry of Economy** will provide its policy documents on the green economy with their implications for green transformation of SMEs in all industry sectors. The Ministry should highlight new business opportunities (including cost savings) created by green economy policies.

The **Ministry of Environment** will develop general and industry sector-specific compliance guidance documents, whereas the **Ministry of Agriculture** and the **Energy Efficiency Agency** will prepare guidance for the agricultural sector and cross-sectoral guidance on energy efficiency, respectively. The guidance documents should distinguish between mandatory elements of compliance with the law and recommended green practices beneficial for business performance. Furthermore, the **Energy Efficiency Agency** and **cleaner production centres** should issue technical reports and methodological guides explaining to SMEs how small business can follow such practices.

CCI RM should produce the print equivalent of the “regulatory watch” newsletter for SMEs with limited or no access to internet, or those that prefer print materials.

Jointly with other institutions, **ODIMM** should establish the framework for environmental industry magazines and brief “pocket guides” on green practices. Industry magazines could be issued on a quarterly or bi-annual basis. They may cover topics on air quality, conservation, energy, food and packaging, land management, sustainable construction works, transport and waste and recycling, etc. Short business stories will highlight the most innovative, performant and efficient green business in each industry. Support organisations should provide their respective inputs to ODIMM, with CCI RM contributing the most.

Local authorities should select publications relevant to the business activity of their regions and ensure the dissemination of these materials to local SMEs.

Timeframe: Guidance materials will be prepared in the course of the first two years, with regular updates to be made in the longer time perspective. Case studies are an effective practice for keeping SMEs informed in the short term (up to five years), but their relevance will diminish in the long term. Industrial magazines and newsletters should be distributed on an annual or bi-annual basis (in some cases newsletters can be distributed on a quarterly basis, if there is a need for more frequent updates). Other publications will be prepared for dissemination upon availability.

Links to other instruments: Print material is a valuable instrument in the short term. This tool will help address the outreach issue for the “regulatory watch” newsletter and promote the web based tools and capacity building events at the initial phase of the Strategy.

Web-based tools (compliance guidance and green practices website)

Implementing partners: The Ministry of Environment should be the leading institution for the website working group. The Ministries of Economy and Agriculture, the Energy Efficiency Agency, cleaner production centres, CCI RM, ODIMM and business associations will participate in the working group for the website content development.

Objectives: A government-sponsored environmental guidance website will serve as an assistance tool created particularly for SMEs.

Target audience: SMEs in all sectors, business associations and civil society.

Key message: As a joint initiative of the government, CCI RM and several business associations, the website will cover two types of information: guidance on environmental compliance and good practices adapted to each industry sector.

Process description: The website could be developed in two ways. The **Ministry of Environment** can re-design its webpage for hosting environmental guidance tailored for SMEs. As an alternative, a specialised site on sector-specific green practices could be co-founded by the government (including **ODIMM**), **CCI RM** and several **business associations**. In the latter case, Moldova’s Official Business Portal could serve as a platform to host such website.

The website will be linked to relevant government websites, as well as to websites of the partner organisations in the **working group**, so that the compliance information is made available. The working group will put its efforts and resources in populating the website contents, covering a wide range of environmental topics. In addition, such website will feature factsheets on best environmental management practice in at least six industry-sectors, contacts database for advisory service providers, information on upcoming events for direct capacity building and awareness raising tools, and other relevant information. Further in the process of the website development, such features as interactive learning modules, self-assessment questionnaires and other tools could be added.

Timeframe: The website should be developed and populated with the core information in the course of the first two years. Additional features will appear progressively in the medium term (up to five years). Information will be updated continuously in the long term (over five years).

Links to other instruments: The website will have links to methodological materials, policy updates, “pocket guides”, recent and upcoming capacity building and awareness

raising events and other relevant products of this Scheme. Additionally, compliance guidance and green practices website could host the “regulatory watch” subscription service. In this case, the Ministry of Environment would play a leading role in implementing both instruments, which could also save costs for the internet-based tools development.

Advice (face-to-face)

Implementing partners: The Ministry of Environment, cleaner production centres, ODIMM.

Objectives: Similarly to other direct capacity building tools, face-to-face advice helps to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge obtained via other information instruments and their practical implication.

Target audience: SMEs in all sectors

Key message: Providing enterprise-specific advice on technical environmental aspects not covered by the general and sector-specific guidance to a particular enterprise. Even though most of the environmental issues would be covered by the general guidance, face-to-face advice will help to eliminate or prevent the misinterpretation and uncertainty.

Process description: Most frequently, face-to-face advice is provided through audits of different environmental management aspects. The **Ministry of Environment** can provide advice to SMEs during its environmental inspections, or by distinguishing between the compliance visits and the advice and guidance visits. In this case, the environmental inspector will also be the advisor, which is better perceived by the enterprises. (This, however, will require recognition by the Ministry of Environment that compliance promotion is an essential part of its mandate.)

The majority of SMEs cannot afford a dedicated environmental manager. **ODIMM**, in collaboration with **sectoral business associations** and **NGOs**, could provide an “ad hoc environmental manager” service through their business support instruments. Given the general lack of such experts in Moldova, ODIMM could prepare a contacts database of available experts, whereas the sectoral business associations and NGOs could provide trained experts. There could be a possibility of co-financing such an expert by ODIMM. The role of this manager will be to help an SME to deal with its environmental management issues with very limited on-site presence (one or two days per month).

Similarly, **cleaner production centres** could use their resource and energy efficiency audits to advise SMEs on green practice opportunities to improve their business performance.

Timeframe: The integration of advice into environmental inspectors’ site visits should be done in the medium- to long-term perspective. An “ad hoc environmental manager” service could be introduced already in the short term. Resource efficiency and cleaner production audits will continue to play an important role in the short and medium term (up to five years), but the demand for them could be expected to decrease in the longer term if other instruments of this Scheme are implemented in an appropriate and timely manner.

Links to other instruments: Representatives of the sectoral business associations and possibly NGOs could participate in “train-the-trainer” events to become “ad hoc environmental managers” and provide help to SMEs with limited capacities to manage their environmental activities.

Performance evaluation of instruments

Performance evaluation of instruments included in this Information Scheme could consist of a combination of quantitative compliance assistance indicators and additional qualitative measures. Quantitative indicators may include:

- number of activities or services provided by an institution over a given period
- number of events and participants who attended them
- number of copies of printed materials disseminated, etc.

The data for qualitative evaluation of outcomes could be collected through assessment forms, such as targeted satisfaction questionnaires. They could be collected either online (for “regulatory watch” newsletter subscribers, possibly on a quarterly basis, or hosted on the environmental guidance website) or in print (during capacity building and awareness raising events, exhibitions and face-to-face advice). The questionnaires should also be differentiated depending on the target audience (SMEs, business associations, civil society).

Financing

This Information Scheme does not cover budget aspects of the implementation of various information-based tools. However, it is suggested that most activities be co-financed by governmental funds. Some funds could be raised through payments for provided services. For example, the costs of some activities, such as a “regulatory watch” subscription service, could be partially recovered through fees paid by subscribers.

An additional study to elaborate a detailed budget forecast for the short-term and long-term implementation periods could be conducted by the National Institute of Economic Research or another organisation.

Conclusion

A well planned and implemented information scheme will be vital to greening Moldova’s SMEs. Although this plan is structured with Moldova’s specific state and non-state actors, the principles are broadly applicable to other EaP countries, with modifications for their national specifics. A good information scheme is multidimensional, and integrates a wide range of stakeholders, including those in the private sector. This helps provide legitimacy and encourage the successful delivery of information, as well as providing a conduit for feedback and an accessible method for SMEs to seek further guidance more directly. To avoid confusion and duplication, however, it is vitally important that there be clearly defined overall co-ordinating body who can also signpost resources and other actors.

Table 9.1. Role of institutions in implementing specific information-based instruments

	Regulatory watch	Capacity building and awareness raising	Publications	Web-based tools (website)	Face-to-face advice
Ministry of Economy		“Train-the-trainer” events, co-organising or co-funding workshops/seminars	Green economy policy documents highlighting new business opportunities	Website contributor: member of the working group	
Ministry of Environment	Content contributor/ environmental regulation	“Train-the-trainer” events, co-organising or co-funding workshops/seminars	General and industry sector-specific compliance guidance documents	Leading role: environmental guidance website, supported by the working group	Environmental inspections/guidance visits
Ministry of Agriculture	Content contributor/ regulation in agricultural sector	“Train-the-trainer” events, co-organising or co-funding workshops/seminars	Guidance for the agricultural sector	Website contributor: member of the working group	
ODIMM	Advisor	Leading role in direct capacity building and awareness raising of SMEs	Leading role: industry magazines, “pocket guides” on green practices	Advisor	“Ad hoc environmental manager” database of experts
Chamber of Commerce and Industry	“Regulatory watch” would be hosted on the CCI website (leading role)	“Train-the-trainer” events, industry fairs and exhibitions	Print newsletters, magazines; assist ODIMM in “pocket guides” development	Website contributor: member of the working group	
Energy Efficiency Agency		Seminars, conferences or exhibitions to raise awareness and build capacity of SMEs	Cross-sectoral guidance on energy efficiency. Assist ODIMM in “pocket guides” development	Website contributor: member of the working group	
Cleaner production centres		“Train-the-trainer” events and seminars for SMEs	Technical reports and methodological guides; assist ODIMM in “pocket guides” development	Website contributor: member of the working group	Advice through resource and energy efficiency audits
Business associations (sectoral) and NGOs	Advisor representing SMEs	Regional outreach, community events		Advisor representing SMEs	“Ad hoc environmental manager” experts



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