

# Ecodesign as driver of innovation in the Baltic Sea Region

→ *The project's aim is to increase the capacity of design centres, professionals and lecturers in ecodesign, leading to an advanced performance in non-technological innovation. Applied, EcoDesign can have an impact on the circular economy model in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) by reducing carbon emissions and increasing employment.*

Priority area	Innovation
Specific objective	Research and innovation infrastructure
Project acronym	EcoDesign Circle
Lead Partner	Federal Environment Agency, Germany
Project partners	1 DE, 1 EE, 1 FI, 1 LT, 1 PL, 1 SE
Project budget*	Total EUR 2,3 MM
*preliminary figures before contract signature	



## Summary

In 2015 the Club of Rome published a case study on the impact of the circular economy model and the use of ecodesign and lifecycle design on the Swedish economy. The study found that by 2030, carbon emissions would go down an estimated 70 % and employment would increase by more than one hundred thousand jobs.

Ecodesign is one way to move towards a circular economy, as its aim is designing for durability and easy maintenance, with a strong consumer-manufacturer relationship. The end of life cycle can be managed through existing recycling systems and rapid disassembly is enabled, as ecodesign items are by and large non-technological.

Currently, ecodesign is only sparsely applied. Small and medium sized enterprises (SME) are focused on traditional linear business models, while their potential for innovative products and more sustainable profit-making business models remains largely untapped.

Know-how concerning the environmental impact of products and services is available, but needs translating from environmental science to business reality.

The design centres in the BSR are innovation actors that can promote the use of ecodesign. They are focal points for design clusters in their countries. However, many design centres and their affiliated designers lack the instruments to support client

companies in *ecodesigning* innovative products and using appropriate business models – mainly because no transnational cooperation structures for ecodesign currently exist.

One output, “Ecodesign Sprint”, will support SMEs in developing new ecodesigned products targeting altered consumer needs. The primary aim is to introduce and deepen the use of ecodesign and bring it into the core operations of the enterprise, increase the understanding of ecodesign as a competitive edge and find an appropriate external designer to carry out the clients’ ecodesign project.

The challenge to translate environmental science into business reality is tackled by two educational products to be used by design lectures at universities and art schools, but also in design training courses.

The “Ecodesign Lernfabrik” allows for testing ecodesign concepts in a real production environment.

“Ecodesign in Practice” brings reality into the schools and universities. The project develops plugin modules (such as films) that design lecturers can use in their classes for illustrating and highlighting how EcoDesign methods function in practice.

The project strives to establish the “Competence Network Ecodesign”, which will be organised under the umbrella of BEDA – the Bureau of European Design Associations. This will allow complementary cooperation among the design centres and will provide policy makers supporting the transition towards a circular economy via the means of ecodesign with an efficient implementing body.

The project EcoDesign Circle is an important step towards making the Swedish case study a realistic scenario for the whole of the BSR.