

## **Sustainable Innovation 2010**

### **EuroCrafts 21 – Developing competencies for sustainable management in European handicraft**

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It is adequately proved that SMEs in which sustainable management is firmly established in the corporate strategy and in the every-day working processes obtain a competitive advantage and achieve a significant contribution on the way to a future-orientated sustainable economy.

To make full use of this potential for both SMEs and economy, it is a necessary condition to enhance the status of professional and methodical knowledge and competencies concerning sustainability in general and sustainable management in particular. This can be achieved by the application of instruments and qualification materials that also consider the specific needs of SMEs. Most SMEs in Europe are located in the crafts sector. Therefore this sector is of great importance for the change towards a sustainable economy as it represents high structural sustainability in its core areas: regional purchase of raw material, durable products of high repair-friendliness as well as an operational market function. The production is decentralised and the supply of differentiated trade goods and services is located primarily in the region in which the company operates.

Against this background, a partnership of nine European institutions (universities, chambers, institutes) is working on the implementation of the project "Euro Craft 21 – developing competencies for sustainable management in European handicraft" (see [www.eurocrafts21.eu](http://www.eurocrafts21.eu)). The main target of Euro Crafts 21 is to establish a significant added value in the European vocational education through an innovation transfer from an already completed pilot project in Germany, that was dealing with the development of an overall qualification and consulting concept for sustainability management in the handicraft sector of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The target group of Euro Crafts 21 consists of instructors and teachers of vocational education, entrepreneurs and executives of the handicraft sector as well as multipliers like consultants and chambers. At the beginning of the project, the German qualification and consulting concept was introduced and partly tested within train-the-trainer workshops with more than 50 European trainers of the partner countries. By realising country-specific pilot-testings with trainers and enterprises, the special qualification demands of the partners countries were identified and will be transferred into concrete qualification materials.

The main product of the project will be a European qualification and consulting concept consists of flexible qualification and consulting modules for European SMEs in the crafts sector. Apart from two basic modules, of which one covers an introduction into sustainability and the other constitutes a self-check for craft enterprises, there will be about 15 specific modules in English and different partners' languages. The didactic design of the modules is activity-orientated and supports the competencies which are necessary for sustainable management.

As the two year lasting project will end up in autumn 2010, the full paper will deal with the main outcome and lesson learnt from the project. It will reflect the results of the pilot-testing-phases of the project and will present the structure and the content of the finalised European qualification and consulting concept. Furthermore, the impact and the conclusions for further improvement will be discussed.