Company interviews at Corvinus

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27-05-2013

General setting

- Poor economic environment and instability
- Poor innovativeness of the country in general compared to other EU countries
- Lingering credit crisis
- Tough economic environment of SMEs and other businesses
- Political issues related to support mechanisms:
  - Discussions about EU funds
  - Availability of funds to SMEs
  - Differences among regions

Interview methodology

- Agreed set of questions
- SME database: e-mails through the internet
- Visits, telephone calls
- Sample companies:
  - Well organised, prosperous
  - Aware of both environmental and resource issues
  - Top performers
  - Innovative, but cautious

Interviewed companies

- Different sectors and sizes
- Stable financial situation in spite of turbulent times
- Conscious management practices regarding:
  - Market opportunities
  - Technological conditions
  - Resource use
  - Environmental issues
- Conservative approach to financing

Findings: typical projects

- Modernisation of machinery
- Energy efficiency improvement of buildings (insulation, new doors and windows, ceiling)
- Product improvements
- Utilisation of wastes:
  - wooden waste for heating
  - construction waste
- Renewable energy: not much happening

Findings: resource efficiency

- Most companies have introduced improvement projects in the recent years

- Major reason: cost efficiency, but also positive impact on product quality, requirement from owners/customers, personal commitment (env. awareness, „engineer's pride")

- Savings: from a few percent to up to 30-40% in certain cases

- Energy efficiency plays a key role

- Major barriers: specific to the company, but instable economic environment and regulatory environment is a recurring problem + technological & location constraints

Findings: financial support

- Uneven experiences with financial support mechanisms (e.g. EU funds)
- Mainly financed by own sources
- Private banking sources: 'stay away':
  - Instable environment – uncertain return
  - Very expensive
  - Not even planned in the future
- Problems:
  - High administrative burden
  - Not flexible, hard requirements
  - Need for pre-financing
  - Problems with availability in central region

Findings: information

- Resondents generally well informed about their businesses and opportunities

- Personal contacts are important

- Major source of information/requirement: owners, who do use efficiency criteria

- Customers may be important, but not directly related to resource efficiency (e.g. quality of raw material – indirect effect)

- Benchmarking: used less (problem: hard to compare, small vs. big size, etc.)

- No formal indicators used, but „we know we are better than others" (modern equipment, personal commitment)

Preliminary conclusions

- Economic stability is the major factor
- Contradicting regulations hinder innovation
- Strong cost incentive exists
- Technological constraints are important
- Size does matter: efficiency in smaller scales can be lower compared to large companies
- Informal approach is common
- Usual suspect: high administration burden of available funds + little flexibility, but good companies can still use them

Dziękuję za uwagę!