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Platform

A tailored approach to improving SME resource efficiency

Introduction

The I-GO initiative, developed by the Green Industry Platform, with the support of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), aims to scale up resource efficiency efforts for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Resource efficiency offers considerable business value for SMEs, including significant cost savings, enhanced competitiveness in global value chains, modernization and improved employee health and safety, as well as improved sustainability performance. Unfortunately, the business case for resource efficiency is not always well understood by SMEs. Due to the large number of SMEs across diverse business sectors, it is often difficult for SME intermediary organizations to engage effectively with a sufficiently sized group of SMEs to bring about a scaled uptake of resource efficiency.

I-GO's core objective is to help SMEs access resource efficiency guidance and support services most relevant to their activity, location, and business needs. It does this by providing a support structure that connects the sustainable business requirements of SME clients, the vast array of existing support services from SME intermediary organisations and the specific needs of individual SMEs.

The challenge of SME resource efficiency

The average SME is focused on its core business, with little capacity to invest in resource efficiency efforts beyond the typically basic level required by regulation. For such an SME to realistically consider impactful resource efficiency improvements as part of its daily operations, it must be first motivated by a clear business case. It then must be able to access support services adapted to its specific needs to be able to implement cost-effective resource efficiency measures on an ongoing basis.

I-GO aims to address several key challenges that both SMEs and SME intermediary organizations often encounter in relation to resource efficiency uptake:

- Systematizing the business case for resource efficiency
- Helping large numbers of SMEs identify their individual resource efficiency opportunities
- Simplifying access for SMEs to customized knowledge and support services
- Supporting SMEs implement ongoing effective measures and easily report on progress



How I-GO works

The main objective of I-GO is to develop a clear business case for resource efficiency and then align the relevant guidance, capacity building and financing with the daily operations of an individual SME.

I-GO has been designed as a support structure to underpin the complete resource efficiency implementation cycle. Aiming to achieve a strong and collective approach by all related stakeholders in supporting SMEs integrate resource efficiency into their operations, the I-GO target audience, in addition to SMEs, includes:

- SME client companies (with a focus on those sharing the same supply chains)
- SME intermediary organizations such as business associations, NGOs, government agencies, development organizations and financial institutions
- SME service providers

The I-GO support structure is based on the integrated provision of interactive tools and development of strategic partnerships, as detailed below.



I-GO interactive tools

The I-GO support structure has at its core three key interactive tools, primarily targeted at SMEs and SME service providers:

1. [SME Support Centre](#): An online library that brings together the vast array of resource efficiency knowledge (guidance, case studies and tools) and support services (training and financing solutions) made available to SMEs on a country and regional level by the many different organizations.

2. [Rapid operational self-assessment tool](#): An online tool for SMEs to understand their resource efficiency status in relation to such requirements as client sustainability criteria and local regulations. This tool then provides the SME with priority recommendations and a tailored list of support services from the SME Support Centre that can help it implement the specific recommendations. This tool is currently available as a Beta version.
3. *Implementation manager*: A tool aimed at supporting an SME track technical audit data, access sector specific benchmarking, manage implementation of resource efficiency measures and report on performance of implemented measures. This tool will be developed in 2022.

I-GO partnerships

I-GO focuses on facilitating private and public sector partnerships to develop coordinated business drivers for resource efficiency uptake and maximize the combined impact of support services from multiple SME intermediary organizations:

- *SME large client companies and business associations*: I-GO collaborates with the [UNIDO Industry Working Group](#) to coordinate the sustainability efforts of large companies that share the same supply chains. Engagement with industry on this level ensures that SMEs in supply chains improve their resource efficiency to comply with well-designed sustainability procurement criteria.
- *International and local SME intermediary organizations*: I-GO works with SME intermediary organizations on a national and regional level to ensure that available knowledge and support services are easily accessible by large numbers of SMEs and according to an SME's specific needs. The interlinked I-GO support structure approach also ensures that these organizations can get comprehensive feedback from SMEs to improve existing, or develop new, knowledge products and support services, engage with each other through peer-to-peer networks and have access to potential collaborative funding resources.

I-GO status

I-GO is currently being piloted, in collaboration with the [GO4SDGs](#) initiative, in three target regions – Africa, Latin America and Caribbean (LAC), and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The I-GO regional pilot also includes country-level test deployment in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras in LAC, and Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan in EECCA (in collaboration with the UNDA SPP project).

The results and lessons learned from the I-GO pilot phase will be used to finalize the design of the I-GO support structure before being fully launched in 2022.