

SECTION 3

Ecoinnovations

Introduction

Joanna Duda

PhD, AGH University of Science and Technology, Kraków, Poland

In the era of globalization, competitiveness of enterprises is of particular importance. It is determined by many factors both external and internal, but it is the innovation that is assigned a special place, because it is widely regarded as a factor determining the development of enterprises.

Schumpeter, who sees innovation in terms of transferring an innovation into material realities, is regarded as the pioneer of this discipline. It implies practical application of new ideas, specific usage of discoveries or inventions that stem from creative thinking. Schumpeter offers a very broad view of innovation without restricting it to merely technical solutions, and claims that innovation encompasses economic undertakings, e.g. acquisition of a new market or application of a new raw material, and is apparent in areas of organisation, management, marketing and interpersonal relations (Schumpeter 1939, p. 84).

Innovation also denotes introduction of a new or a markedly improved solution to process or product (commodities or services) practices of an enterprise by launching the solution in the market or application of a new or improved marketing or organisation solution to operations of an enterprise (Dworecka 2011, p. 10).

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These definitions imply that innovation can be understood as a tool or process for creating and using new ideas.

However, with increased awareness of environmental risks and the importance of innovation for the competitiveness and economic development, in the 1990s the concept of eco-innovation emerged. Because of the intensified environmental problems and the search for a new, more sustainable paradigm of economic development after the global crisis, eco-innovations are attracting growing interest from researchers and public authorities.

For eco-innovation we can take actions that improve the efficiency of the use of natural resources in the economy, reduce the negative impact of human activities on the environment or enhance resistance to environmental pressures.

This definition indicates that, in addition to the limitations of the harmful effects of economic processes on the environment, it is also important to ensure productive use of natural resources, and so in addition to the ecological dimension, an economic dimension is also important (cost reduction), as is security (reducing dependence on supplies of raw materials).

Therefore, in this chapter we touch upon six important topics, including environmental benefits created from products, energy use, pollution, international standards, state support of the ecoinnovations and state policy. The last chapter contains two examples of the final benefits for users.