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The role of SMEs and user-involvement in enhancing innovation in the renewable energy sector

Progress report abstract

The focus of the 4 months research at IAS-STG is to map the possible Living Lab activities in Austria by targeting the renewable energy sector. The aim of the research is to get a clear overview about the company's (located in or around Graz) innovation activity in order to create a base for an Austrian-Hungarian comparative analysis executed after the scholarship period in Hungary.

As a first step, a literature analysis related to renewable energy and open innovation was continued at the library of TU Graz; and -in order to create a theoretical base for an appropriate interview guideline-, detailed description about European Living Labs operating in renewable energy or energy efficiency field were collected and analyzed through the database and contacts provided by the European Network of Living Labs. There are already 4 interviews done, and 5 further appointments fixed with the representatives of municipalities and consulting companies, and also further interview asks are in process targeting especially the manufacturing companies and end-users of renewable energy technologies.

Based on the interviews executed so far, open innovation, and more specifically user-involvement is working in practice in cluster Eco World Styria and also through the activity of the Austrian Biomass Association. According to the opinion and experience of the interviewees, it is assumed, that user-driven innovation might be mostly present in service innovation in the renewable energy sector. Based on these first assumptions, further interviews are targeting more specifically this research area.