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ECO-WISE –
CONCEPT, EVOLUTION AND RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

Abstract

Ecologically oriented work-integration social enterprises, so called ECOWISE, have in addition to their socio-economic orientation, an ecological mission. They are acting in the field of work integration while also having an ecological focus when producing their goods and/or selling their services. Previous research on ECO-WISE in Austria indicates that they are important partners in handling current societal problems, like joblessness, ecological exploitation and socio-economic exclusion (Anastasiadis and Mayr 2010). Thereby they have proven to be prototypical actors in realising sustainable development and can be seen as vehicles for social, economic and ecological innovation, especially at regional level. However, there is a lack of sufficient conceptualisation of and investigation into their performance. Therefore, this article delivers an introductory framework for analysing these organisations. It will also describe the institutionalisation process of ECO-WISE in Austria. Finally, the empirical research findings will then be discussed in line with the outlined theoretical criteria, and theses for further research activities will be presented.