

## Press Release

# SWITCH-Asia RPAC Regional Dialogue Promotes the Uptake of Eco-design Approaches to Green SMEs in Asia

**Bangkok, 30 November 2021** – The EU SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Advocacy Component (RPAC), funded by the European Union, in partnership with Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) and Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) organised a regional dialogue on eco-design to increase understanding of eco-design approaches taken by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Asia, exchange knowledge and good practices on eco-design thinking, discuss implementation challenges and benefits in the region, and gain perspectives on enabling factors and solutions that influence and support SMEs to incorporate eco-design approaches in their businesses.

SMEs in Asia play an important role in driving the economy, employment and innovation and, therefore, are core engines for the transition towards green growth. In Asia Pacific, SMEs account for 97% of all enterprises and 30-60% of GDP. The reduction of aggregate environmental impact of SMEs through achieving and going beyond environmental compliance in both manufacturing and services is therefore a key success factor in greening the economy. Implementing eco-design approaches with products and services holds the potential to help minimize the use of resources and energy, reduce negative environmental and social impacts, while meeting users' needs of functionality and quality.

**Dr. Mushtaq Memon**, EU SWITCH-Asia RPAC Manager and Resource Efficiency Sub-programme Regional Coordinator at UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted: *"Today, we are focusing on eco-design since 90% of local economies are driven by SMEs and the latter are and will increasingly be key players in the post-pandemics green recovery."*

**Dr. Wijarn Simachaya**, President of Thailand Environment Institute and Secretary General of the Thailand Business Council for Sustainable Development (TBCSD) welcomed participants and expressed his sincere thanks to the organizers and guest speakers for joining this event. He added, *"eco-design is not only an essential way to decrease negative impacts on the environment, but it is also of great importance in terms of trading for SMEs to run their eco-friendly business."*

**Prof. Dieter Trau**, Dean of AIT School of Engineering and Technology and Director of the AIT Entrepreneurship Center, reinforced AIT's commitment to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *"Across the globe, businesses and industry leaders are implementing innovative strategies aimed at promoting socially responsible and sustainable practices within their operations. And we, at the Asian Institute of Technology, believe that SMEs should be part of the goal to be net zero. We are committed to helping make this happen"*, he said.

During his opening remarks, **Mr. Thibaut Portevin**, Head of Cooperation, European Union Delegation to ASEAN highlighted the support the European Union is providing to Asia through the EU SWITCH-Asia programme. *“Eco-design is important in the context of the EU Green Deal as it contributes to sustainable business growth without deteriorating the environment”*, he said.

Throughout the webinar, participants acknowledged existing challenges and lessons learned from the implementation of eco-design approaches across sectors. This dialogue also opened the doors to new reflections on the way forward to advancing sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in the region, and the importance of establishing strong multi-stakeholder partnerships.

For further information about SWITCH-Asia Programme, please visit [www.switch-asia.eu](http://www.switch-asia.eu).

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