



# CASE STUDY – Involving employees in implementing EMAS

May 2018



## BACKGROUND

Ever wondered why or how to involve your colleagues in implementing EMAS? This case study shows the importance of employee participation and illustrates different ways to succeed at it.

**Involving employees is a requirement of the EMAS Regulation.** The [amended annexes](#) published in August 2017 clarify how employees should be involved in the implementation of EMAS.

### What exactly does the EMAS requirement regarding employee involvement mean?

Employees or their representatives are to be included in the process of continually improving the organisation's environmental performance. They should participate in different steps:

- the initial environmental review (assessment of the organisation's environmental impacts and obligations);
- the definition of the environmental action programme;
- the establishment and implementation of an environmental management system (procedures to assess and improve its environmental performance);

- the collection of data (through the organisation of environmental committees or working groups gathering information on the progress of environmental management and the participation of the environmental officer/management representatives along with employees and their representatives);
- the preparation of the environmental statement (report on the environmental performance of the organisation).

This case study will give concrete examples of how to get staff involved in EMAS.



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## WHY INVOLVE EMPLOYEES WHEN IMPLEMENTING EMAS?



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### I. Employees are one of the most important interested parties

Since the revision of its annexes, EMAS has invited organisations to identify the interested parties that are relevant to the environmental management system. EMAS requires organisations to list these interested parties' relevant needs and expectations and to identify which of these needs and expectations it needs or wants to fulfil. Employees are one of the most relevant interested parties of organisations, which means that organisations have to assess employees' environmental performance expectations. If they are directly involved in the definition and implementation of measures, their needs are more likely to be satisfied.

### II. They are a valuable source of information and ideas

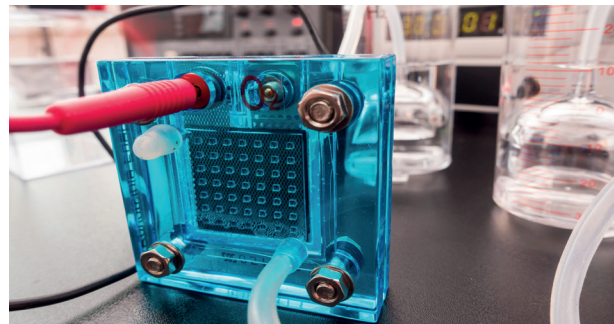
The ideas and experience of your staff can help you identify areas for improvement. They usually know best what the workflow is, where weaknesses occur, and which solutions are the most practical.

Sometimes these ideas lead to innovations that save both resources and money.

"Employee involvement" should be understood as including both direct employee participation and the provision of information to employees and their representatives. Demonstration of commitment, responsiveness and active support by the management is a prerequisite for the success of this process.

### Methanol fuels cells at the UK Environment Agency

After the UK Environment Agency urged its staff to think up ways to reduce its carbon footprint, employees came up with the idea of using methanol fuel cells to power the agency's fish counting equipment. Since the batteries no longer need to be changed so frequently, employees save 1.5 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year per fuel cell, totalling more than 50 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year. The cells paid for themselves within six months, while the agency saves travel costs related to the replacement of batteries.



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### "Management's commitment is key to mobilize teams"

*Mr. Schmitz runs a family business where there is a common desire to combine economic growth with environmental performance. He argues that the management's commitment is crucial for convincing the "20% of people who doesn't believe in the project at the beginning".*

*The management also found a solution to overcome the staff rotation in the Green Team (in charge of monitoring the implementation of EMAS) and to keep the motivation level consistently high: each member of the staff is invited to take part in the Green Team in turns, with the one who leaves training the one who enters.*

*Finally, thanks to good internal communication of the positive results achieved through the implementation of EMAS, the entire team takes ownership of the approach and is enthusiastic about pursuing it. A good example of staff mobilization!*

### III. They are happier and more productive

#### Looking for an easy way to boost happiness at work?

As employee involvement increases, the employees' internal Happiness Index will increase too.

Here are the reasons why:

- People find more harmony between individual values and the organisation's values;
- They gain a stronger feeling of belonging to the company, higher job satisfaction and a higher level of motivation;
- Environmental education actions (awareness raising, trainings, etc.) give employees new motivation and feed their personal development;
- And you should never underestimate the power of employees' positive influence on all types of stakeholders!

#### Environmental and social responsibility at the Ritz-Carlton Berlin, Germany

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Berlin enjoys a high level of recognition for its strong commitment to environmental protection and social responsibility. The hotel produces its own honey from beehives on the roof and organises local community projects. Employees feel proud to be part of the company, which has had a very positive impact on their customer service.

Happier and more committed employees can reduce absenteeism. EMAS can also be used in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), yielding social benefits.

#### On the way to carbon neutrality at Metallbau Haslinger GmbH, Germany

In 2015, Metallbau Haslinger GmbH, a medium-sized German business producing steel constructions and overhead cranes, achieved carbon neutrality despite its energy-intensive processes. Its business model is highly successful due to the motivation and engagement of its employees, who see themselves as "sun welders". They work in shifts from sunrise to sunset in order to make maximum use of the photovoltaic power produced throughout the day.

## WHY INVOLVE EMPLOYEES WHEN IMPLEMENTING EMAS?

Mobilizing employees can and should happen at every step of the Deming Wheel, the famous "PLAN - DO - CHECK - ACT" cycle<sup>1</sup> that governs environmental continuous improvement. Examples of employee participation tools and methods are presented below, following this cycle.

### I. Participating in the initial review

#### *The Green Team, key element of a structural participation approach*

A broad voluntary cross-section of the organisation with a good knowledge of the organisation's operations, a willingness to learn, and a commitment to continual improvement: that is the ideal composition of an effective Green Team. To fulfil their role effectively, the members of the team must be given the authority to pursue implementation of the EMAS process, and must be able to propose new ways of working that benefit the environment, the company and its people. The intensity of management's approval and recognition, the quality of the individuals assigned to this effort, the correct use of the process, and a friendly and pleasant atmosphere within the team will directly determine its ultimate success.

One of the first and core activities of the Green Team can be performing the environmental review that will help identify the company's current level of environmental performance. Thoroughly identifying the significant environmental aspects<sup>2</sup> of your company is critical to implementing EMAS because they will become the primary focal points for your environmental management system.

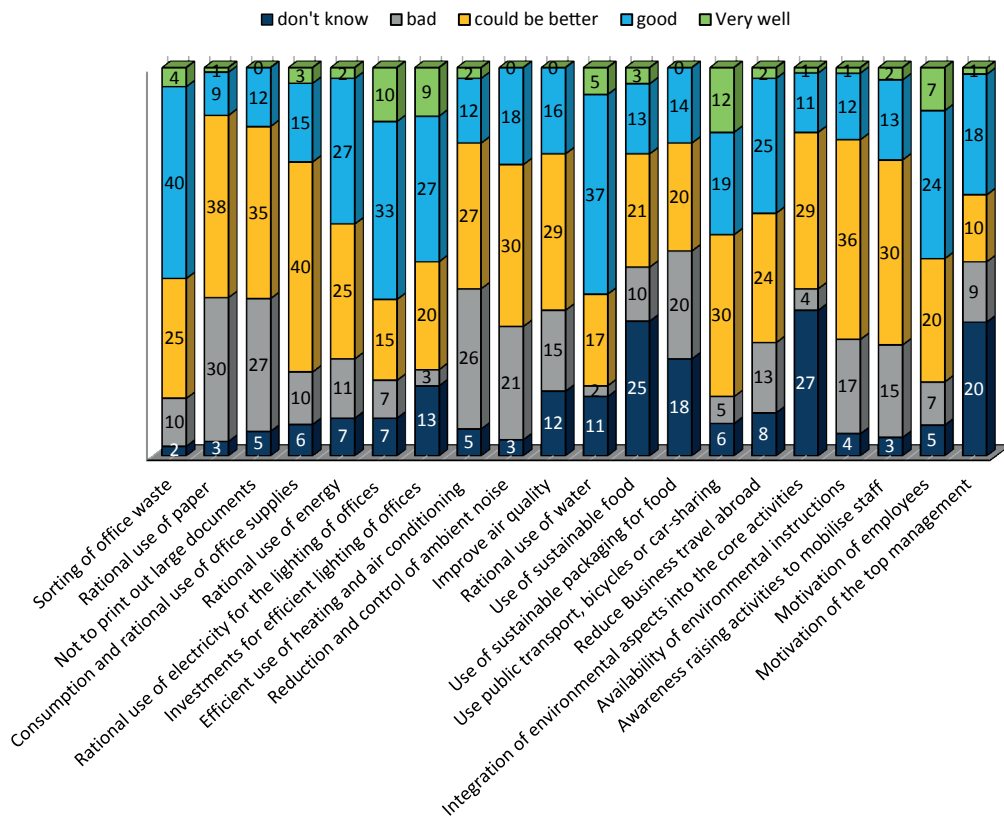
#### *Asking people's opinion about environmental performance through opinion polls*

Employees' opinions are never far from reality. In order to know what points you should focus on, the Green Team can prepare a simple and potentially anonymous environmental survey to assess employees' behaviours regarding different environmental topics (waste management, energy, mobility, internal communication etc.), as well as their willingness to adopt more sustainable behaviours. You will then be more able to adapt your focus points, your communication and your action plan. This is a first step towards having your target audience participate in the process. Attractive and informative graphs can then be created and shown to them in the future.

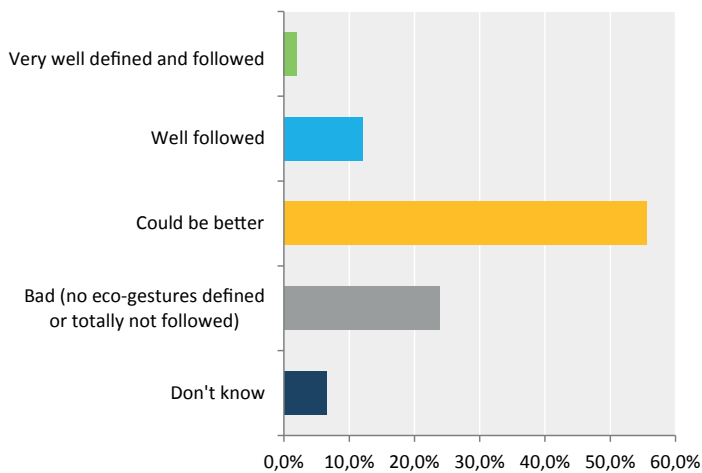
1. For further information, see : [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/join\\_emas/how\\_does\\_it\\_work\\_step0\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/join_emas/how_does_it_work_step0_en.htm)

2. i.e. activities of your organisation that impact the environment negatively or positively.

Figure 1 - Example of results of an opinion poll



Q: Eco-gestures and measure for the rational use of paper: trying not to print out large documents. How well is this implemented



Don't forget to leave open questions that will bring new ideas and suggestions from employees directly into the discussion. These suggestions that come from the staff, once implemented, might be more suitable for the reality of the company, and hence find greater acceptance among staff, than top-down decisions coming from the management. This will improve the performance of the environmental management system.

## II. Setting goals and defining the content of the action plan

*World Caf :* Have lots of people discuss different topics in small roundtables!

How can you take action while involving employees once the initial review has been completed? The 'World Caf ' is an animation technique that allows big groups of employ-

ees to discuss different topics in a relatively short period of time. You can start your World Café with a presentation of the environmental review:

- The results of the opinion poll
- Some numbers on your company's environmental footprint
- Pictures and records of bad environmental practices

Employees can then divide into five-to-six-person groups, each discussing concrete actions linked to one specific topic (waste production, mobility, paper consumption, procurement policy, etc.) for 15 to 20 minutes. After this discussion time, each group moves to the next table -- and hence topic -- and continues discussing concrete actions for the next topic, and so forth. The next turns can then be shorter and shorter as action plans are filled up. Once a dozen actions have been proposed, each participant can prioritize the five most relevant and urgent actions to implement from his or her point of view.-- and continues discussing concrete actions for the next topic, and so forth. The next turns can then be shorter and shorter as action plans are filled up. Once a dozen actions have been proposed, each participant can prioritize the five most relevant and urgent actions to implement from his or her point of view.

### III. Defining the roles and responsibilities of employees

Under the new requirements of the EMAS regulation, roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined and communicated.

#### The 'Environmental Responsibilities' tool to clarify roles and responsibilities

EMAS tools have been developed to support the implementation of EMAS. They can be accessed [here](#). Tool 3 allows you to assign responsibilities when starting EMAS through the RACIS Matrix (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Inform, Support). This exercise can be done in a Green Team workshop in around an hour and a half, with small groups of three to four people each working on one part of the matrix.

The Green Team is now ready to study the feasibility of each of the prioritized actions and include them in the EMAS action plan.

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Figure 2 - A Green Team session ending with the selection of 10 ideas for improvement for each environmental topic

#### The 'Environmental ID cards' tool to communicate these responsibilities

Once roles and responsibilities have been established, they can be gathered for each function and presented to the interested people: procurement procedures for the procurement service, internal control procedures for the management, trainings for the human resource department, etc. The purpose of the Environmental ID cards is to communicate the different tasks that the people at your organisation are to perform in order to keep the environmental management system running smoothly.

Remember to include management in the validation process and to make sure everyone agrees with what has been proposed.

### EMAS Job Profile – Head of Resources

<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin-bottom: 5px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <b>PICTURE</b> </div> <p><b>Name:</b> John Mc Gill</p> <p><b>Function:</b> Head of Resources</p>	<p><b>Our department's environmental objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching EMS effectiveness (achievement of objectives)</li> </ul> <p><b>I am accountable for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointing (a) specific top management representative(s) who, irrespective of other responsibilities, shall have defined roles, responsibilities and authority in order to ensure an environmental management system in compliance with the EMAS Regulation and report to top management on the performance of the environmental management system. The top management representative(s) may be (a) member(s) of the top management of the organisation.</li> <li>• Ensuring the EMAS Steering Committee establish environmental objectives and action plans</li> <li>• Ensuring the Green Team, supported by the Environmental Coordinator, involve employees or their representatives through joint working groups</li> <li>• Ensuring the different process managers establish operating criteria and control facilities, equipment and operational processes (printing, waste sorting,...)</li> <li>• Making sure the Security Officer and the Facility Team Leader prepare for emergency situations</li> </ul> <p><b>I am responsible for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing overall direction of the environmental management system (intended outcome) and accountability, with the support of the Green Team and the EMAS Steering Committee</li> <li>• Ensuring human and financial resources are available for implementation and maintenance of the EMS</li> </ul> <p><b>I support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Procurement/Purchasing Department in establishing and communicating environmental requirements to contractors and suppliers linked to our organisation's contracts</li> </ul>
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Figure 3 - Example of an Environmental ID card: Tool created by 21 Solutions for EMAS, adapted directly from the Regulation and the EMAS implementation tool 3 mentioned above





Figure 4 - Example of internal Environmental ID cards on employee lockers - MCA recycling

### Establishment of environmental identity card – Martin's Hotels

Since staff is the driving force behind the Martin's Hotels group's activities, it uses simple gestures to reduce the company's daily environmental impact. Good practices were transcribed onto environmental identity cards that were individually delivered to each staff member. Training is also provided on a regular basis to keep the knowledge and involvement of staff members up-to-date. Communication with staff on various environmental topics is ensured during staff meetings, monthly checks and annual internal audits as well as via a targeted display, a suggestion box and an e-mail address to contact the "Restricted Committee" with any questions or suggestions.

## IV. Raising employees' awareness and communicating information

All staff of an EMAS organisation should be informed about the environmental objectives and recommended practices at the company. Newcomers should receive training. Employees involved in more specific procedures (ICT staff, cleaning staff, procurement service, etc.) should receive more adapted trainings in order to better perform their jobs.

### Campaigns to raise awareness on environmental issues

International or European days are excellent occasions for organising an awareness-raising campaign on a chosen topic. They make your actions visible and are a way to create a link with what happens outside your company. Whether it is the European Waste Reduction Week, Earth Day, World

Water Day or the Mobility Week, you have more than one environmental topic per month that the Green Team can use to propose and organise actions that will raise awareness among the staff: debates, film screenings, sustainable breakfasts, photo contests, visits to environmentally friendly buildings, team-building actions in nature... you will find plenty of ideas on the websites dedicated to these events... or maybe in your opinion poll!

### Use of nudges to engage staff in different good practices in a fun way

Inspired by change psychology and the Fun Theory<sup>3</sup>, some companies have started using nudges to surprise their target audience and to instil a positive attitude towards a given change in behaviour.

Participatory film-making, for example, can help the staff to better integrate good practices.



Figure 5 - Example of a nudge: fun and simple communication makes people follow rules better

### A coherent attitude

Behavioural change is a challenging process that will be facilitated by a positive attitude, kindness and openness to listening to new ideas without any judgement. Participatory tools also need to be adapted and contextualized to the reality of the company culture.

<sup>1</sup> According to the Fun Theory, the easiest way to change people's behaviour is by making it fun to do so. See videos here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Bbyy3bds>. The nudges are a concept in behavioural science that encourages positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions in order to make behavioural change easy, quick and almost unconscious.

### Creating a space for failure

The Flanders Environmental Agency (Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij, VMM) develops internal knowledge by organising discussion sessions and conferences with external experts on a regular basis. Pilot projects are then incorporated into the organisation, for example to apply the concept of sharing economy. Such experiments, which are allowed to fail, are a real source of pride for employees.

The agency uses the 7E model, a method of organising communication actions around the 7 axes of change: Enlighten (inform), Enthuse (make people enthusiastic), Exemplify (show the good example), Encourage (support), Enable (facilitate), Engage (involve), Experience (offer a positive experience). The EMAS coordinator completed a thesis on the topic of involving employees: Gevers, K. (2016) EMAS en de VMM, studie naar implementatie, betrokkenheid en participatie (in Dutch only).

## V. Monitoring and setting actions for continuous improvement

### Collaborative platforms to support collective work

Thank to online collaborative platforms, employees can work collectively to gather data, share new ideas and carry out pilot actions. Analyses and graphics are available to everybody, making the EMAS process more transparent.

### *“Live my life”: a fun and interactive way to understand your colleagues’ responsibilities*

Trust is often identified as a key element of team collaboration. Here is a fun idea to build trust among your teams, or even between companies.

For one day or even a few hours, put yourself in someone else’s shoes: exchange seats with one of your colleagues from another department or with a different job! You will then gain an understanding of his or her daily life and constraints. This also allows you to see things from a different perspective, and you might even identify key elements for the initial review as well as bring concrete solutions to your colleagues’ issues. This fun and unexpected team-building approach also creates stronger bonds among employees and teams.

You can also use a variation on this approach: bring your team to another company by organising a group visit, and both teams will learn from your different ways of working.

## GOING FURTHER

Involving employees through EMAS is not so difficult and can have many positive impacts on the company. We invite you to test some of the methods described above and to exchange best practices with EMAS-registered companies.

To learn more about employee participation methods, the following sources can be useful:

- Tools for group facilitation:
  - from Seeds for Change: <https://seedsforchange.org.uk/tools.pdf>
  - from Learning for Sustainability: <http://learningforsustainability.net/facilitation/>
  - The World Café method: <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>
- Nudges:
  - Thaler R., Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness. <http://nudges.org>

- Behaviour change solutions: <https://nudgeup.biz/>
- Book (in French): «Green Nudge: Changer les comportements pour sauver la planète »

- Guides for trade unions:

- European trade unions and sustainable development: <https://www.etui.org/Publications2/Guides/European-trade-unions-and-sustainable-development>
- Green Workplaces: A Guide for Union Representatives: <https://www.etuc.org/publications/green-workplaces-guide-union-representatives#.WuCrsvVOFOL4>

- New ways of working:

- Laloux, F. 2014 Reinventing organisations

**For more information on EMAS, the registration process and its benefits, please visit the EMAS website:**  
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/>