

Benefits of a Step-up from EcoStart to EMAS

A step-up from EcoStart to EMAS can provide organisations with significant additional benefits: organisations can experience financial benefits due to, for example, efficiency improvements and better risk management. Through a regular review of the EMS by management, as required under EMAS, the effectiveness of the scheme can be significantly increased. Further, employee involvement and training under EMAS can lead to improved employee morale and a better implementation of the EMS. An EMAS registration will also provide organisations with improved communication possibilities through a validated environmental statement. As EcoStart is currently only implemented in Finland, organisations might also benefit from the larger geographic scope of EMAS. This might be of special interest to organisations with an international client base. Finally, EMAS offers the advantage of being legally recognised through a European Council Regulation and certified organisations are listed in a public register.

Introduction

Origin and development

EcoStart was launched in 2006, with the goal of developing a less formal EMS for small and medium sized enterprises. EcoStart was developed by the Employment and Economic Development Centres of South-Savo, the Regional Council of South-Savo, and the Jyväskylä Regional Development Company Jykes Ltd. Employment and Economic Development Centres (T&E Centres) in Finland operate under the Ministry of Trade and Industry and are based on the combined forces of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. EcoStart can be implemented in either a manufacturing or a service company. A total of 7 companies have successfully implemented the programme so far and 58 companies are currently in the process of certification.

EcoStart is a subsidised service model, where consultants are closely involved in the EMS process together with the representatives of the company. EcoStart consultants are environmental experts approved by the Employment and Economic Development Centre, who is the authority responsible for running the EcoStart EMS. Management and other key persons of a company receive guidance on maintaining the environmental management system after an initial consultation.

As of 2009, a total of 7 companies had successfully implemented the programme and 58 companies were in the process of certification.

Objectives

EcoStart is being conducted for SMEs to improve eco-efficiency and to enhance their environmental performance. The basic programme is 4-10 days consisting of initial review, workshop sessions, development of an environmental programme and a follow-up session. One of the criteria concerning EcoStart was to build it so that it would be easy for a company to continue on to ISO14001 or EMAS.

Closeness to EMAS

EcoStart can be considered as a beginning step towards EMAS, as a successful EcoStart certification means that some important steps towards EMAS certification have been taken. However, its easier implementation also means that certain additional steps will have to be taken in order to register under EMAS. The most fundamental of these additional steps lie in the areas of employee involvement, training, communication, documentation, emergency preparedness, management review, and the environmental report. These steps are outlined on page 2 of this brochure.

For further information on the EMS, please contact:

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From EcoStart to EMAS: Additional Steps

Please note that this document provides an overview of additional steps that need to be taken by an organisation to 'step-up' from EcoStart to EMAS. For further details on each requirement, please see the EMAS website on www.ec.europa.eu/environment/emas.

EcoStart already fulfils all EMAS requirements under Step 1 and Step 2. However, to obtain EMAS registration, the additional steps that would need to be taken in addition to those already required under the EcoStart include:

Step 3 - Implementation

- **Employee involvement**
An employee participation scheme at all levels needs to be implemented.
- **Training and awareness raising**
Training needs for individual employees need to be defined and especially given to those who cause significant environmental impacts. An employee awareness plan should also be established.
- **Communication**
Procedures for internal and external communication should be defined.
- **Documentation**
Documentation is not necessarily sufficient under the EcoStart and requires a record of other documents regarding operation and control.
- **Control of documents and operational control**
Procedures need to be established to control situations that might create significant environmental impacts. Procedures related to significant environmental impacts arising from the use of goods and services need to be communicated to the suppliers where necessary.
- **Emergency preparedness and response**
Procedures to mitigate potential risks need to be defined and tested periodically.

Step 4 - Check and Act

- **Management review**
Management needs to review the entire EMS at planned intervals, including recommendations for improvement and need for changes.

Step 5 - External Recognition and Environmental Report

- **Environmental report/ statement**
EMAS requires that an environmental report that includes a description of the organisation, environmental policy, environmental impacts, objectives and targets, summary of available data, reference to legal requirements, name or licence of environmental verifier and date of validation, is updated annually and made available to the public.