

EMS Factsheet

EMAS



Overview

Origins and development:

The Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a voluntary management tool for companies and other organisations that was designed to evaluate, report, and improve their environmental performance. Since 1995, companies have been able to participate in the scheme. It was originally restricted to companies in industrial sectors but has widened its focus in 2001 and participation is now open to all economic sectors including public and private services. In July 2008, the European Commission proposed to revise EMAS to increase the participation of companies, especially SMEs, and to reduce the administrative burden and costs related to the implementation of EMAS.

Objectives:

The objective of EMAS is to ensure continued improvement of the environmental performance of public and private organisations by addressing a number of key issues: the establishment of an environmental management system; the systematic, periodic and objective evaluation of this system; the provision of information on environmental performance and an open dialogue with the public and other stakeholders; active involvement of employees in the organisation; and compliance with legal requirements.

Implementation structure:

A number of different actors are responsible for the implementation and the promotion of EMAS in the EU. While the European Commission develops and supervises EMAS at EU level, all Member States are obliged to create national registration and verification schemes which allow a smooth implementation of EMAS at the national level. Most important actors on the national level are the EMAS Competent Bodies and the accreditation bodies. The Competent Body is responsible for issuing registration numbers to organisations, collect fees and to respond to enquiries of national organisations. The Accreditation Body is an independent, impartial institution or organisation responsible for the accreditation and supervision of environmental verifiers and designated by the Member State. Member States may use existing accreditation institutions, the EMAS Competent Body or designate any other appropriate body. Environmental verifiers are accredited organisations or EMAS experts that verify the organisations registering for EMAS.

EMS in brief

Key characteristic

Legal recognition through
European Council Regulation

Implementing institution

European Commission/ National
Competent Bodies

Available since

1995

Geographical scope

European Union and European
Economic Area

Target Group

All sectors

Size of targeted companies

Small and large organisations,
including public and private
services

Total number of certifications

7319 sites and 4356 organisations

Number of participants in the process of certification

n/a

Most important drivers and barriers

Drivers

- ☒ Available Marketing Tools
- ☒ Cost/resource savings
- ☒ Customer/supplier demand
- ☒ Environmental benefits
- ☒ Legal Security
- ☒ Political Support/ Financial Incentives
- ☒ Proof of Corporate Social Responsibility

Other:

Barriers

- ☐ EMS not widely recognised
- ☐ High implementation costs
- ☐ Little similarities to EMAS or ISO 14001
- ☒ Perceived complication/ unattainability

Other:

☒ Yes

☐ No

The EMS in detail

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commitment of top management: Top management needs to declare its environmental commitment in the environmental policy.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environmental review: An initial environmental review is necessary with the most important aspects to be included: legislative, regulatory and other requirements, environmental aspects, criteria to assess identified aspects, environmental practices and procedures, past incidences such as complaints, and accidents which had an effect on the environment.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environmental policy or guidelines: With the environmental policy the organisation commits itself to continuous improvement, preventing pollution, involvement of employees, and compliance with relevant legislation. The policy needs to be documented, publicly available, and reviewed on a regular basis.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Proof of Legal Compliance: Full legal compliance is required. It is necessary to demonstrate legal compliance during the audit.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Objectives and environmental management programme: The environmental programme is designed based on the environmental aspects identified during the environmental review. It serves to manage environmental aspects and to control pollution. The programme should include environmental objectives and a plan that include activities, indicators, targets, timetables, and responsibilities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Definition of organisational structure at company level: It is necessary to define a programme coordinator, who is responsible for the implementation of EMAS. Additionally, active employee participation in all steps of EMAS is required.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Training and education requirements: Two different types of trainings are required under EMAS, on the one hand a general baseline training on the importance of environmental management and the roles within the organisation to achieve EMAS and on the other hand specific activities and skills training for those units that may be the cause of significant environmental impact.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Communication (internal and external): The three following activities have to be considered in regard to communication: procedures to facilitate internal communication; a system for receiving and responding to communication from external parties; and a structure to determine whether the organisation will communicate externally on its significant environmental aspects.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Documentation requirements: All key elements of the EMS need to be documented. This includes objectives and targets; the structure and responsibilities; EMS core elements and their interaction; documented procedures etc.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Internal follow-up/ checking and corrective action/ continuous improvement: An internal audit needs to take place annually. Corrective action and continuous improvement are key elements of EMAS. Annual improvement is required, which means that the scheme acts as a stimulus for innovation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management review: Management has the responsibility to review the EMS on a regular basis.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environmental Report/ statement or similar publication by the participants of the EMS: An environmental statement needs to be prepared, verified, published, and updated on an annual basis.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes/Required <input type="checkbox"/> Partially addressed <input type="checkbox"/> Not indicated or not required	

External audit/certification

Is an external audit required? The audit can be completed internally or externally, however verification must be done externally.

Responsible for the audit and qualifications needed: The EMS and any performance data need to be audited to be registered with EMAS. The audit can be carried out internally or externally as long as the auditors are independent of the elements being audited.

Audit Period: The external audit cycle must not exceed 3 years.

Validation: An independent expert (accredited environmental verifier) examines the organisation to see if all EMAS requirements are met. If all results are positive, the company's environmental statement is validated and sent to the national EMAS Competent Body. The company is then officially registered under EMAS.

For further information on these factsheets and EMAS, please contact:

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