

### Overview

#### Origin and development

EcoStep was developed between 2001 and 2004 by the "Umweltallianz Hessen" (a cooperation between the government of the German Land Hessen and representatives of industry and trade). EcoStep was established under the idea that because of financial and time constraints SMEs are often not in a position to run several management systems at the same time. A scheme is therefore required that integrates the different demands a company must meet including: issues of corporate management, occupational health and safety, quality, and environmental impacts. EcoStep offers this integrated approach within a scheme that is certified and process-oriented.

Over a period of 6-9 months, groups of up to 15 companies that want to implement EcoStep attend 4-5 workshops with EcoStep consultants. Furthermore, the companies are visited on site 4 times during the process for individual consultations. The scheme is open to companies of up to 500 employees of all sectors. A total of 40 companies have been certified so far.

#### Objectives

The objective of EcoStep is to integrate the basic requirements of different management systems within one scheme to facilitate their implementation by SMEs. The programme is developed on the basis of the main requirements of management systems such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and EMAS which also facilitates an easy step-up at a later stage. Furthermore, it takes into account real processes within companies to ensure that only real needs and possibilities are addressed. The main areas that are addressed are environmental protection, health and safety, and quality management. One of the original objectives of the EMS was to operate without the assistance of external consultants; however, this has not proven to be manageable.

#### Implementation structure

The Environment Ministry of Hessen and the RKW Bremen GmbH (management consultancy) are responsible for the scheme and operate as a contractual relationship with the implementing consultants. The EcoStep scheme is audited and certified by DQS (a German management system certification body).

### EMS in brief

#### Key characteristic

Focus on the integration of different management systems to facilitate their implementation by SMEs

#### Implementing institution

Ministry of Environment Hessen and the RKW Bremen GmbH

#### Available since

2002

#### Geographical scope

Germany, Italy (Emilia Romagna), France (Aquitaine)

#### Target group

Companies from all sectors

#### Size of targeted companies

SMEs of up to 250 employees, larger companies with up to 500 employees require an adaptation of the scheme

#### Total number of certifications

40

#### Number of participants in the process of certification

10

### 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: n/a

#### Barriers

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

☒ Yes

☐ No

The EMS in detail	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Commitment of top management:</b> Required, should be documented in the management handbook.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Environmental review:</b> Direct environmental impacts need to be recorded and evaluated.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Environmental policy or guidelines:</b> A policy on the issues of quality, environment, and health and safety needs to be defined.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Proof of legal compliance:</b> Implementation of all relevant environmental regulation is required as well as the availability of copies of all relevant regulations.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Objectives and environmental management programme:</b> The scope of the management system needs to be defined and documented in the management handbook. Qualitative as well as quantitative targets need to be defined and announced.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Definition of organisational structure at company level:</b> Responsibilities and competences need to be clearly defined and involvement of responsible people needs to be ensured.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Training and education requirements:</b> Not required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Communication (internal and external):</b> Not required.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Documentation requirements:</b> All required steps need to be recorded in an environmental management handbook.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Internal follow- up/ checking and corrective action/ continuous improvement:</b> Regular internal follow-up and the implementation of corrective actions need to be ensured. A plan-do-check-act cycle should also be accounted for. As continuous improvement is required, the EMS acts as a driver for innovation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Management review:</b> Required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Environmental report/ statement or similar publication by the participants of the EMS:</b> Not required.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes/Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially addressed <input type="checkbox"/> Not indicated or not required	

## External audit/certification

Is an external audit required? Yes

**Responsibility for the external audit and qualifications needed:**

DQS is responsible for the certification, auditors are trained accordingly.

**Audit period:** 3 years

**Certification:** Upon successful completion of the external audit, the EcoStep certification is awarded with a validity of 3 years. Within this period, unannounced site-visits can take place.

## Similarities to EMAS

- ☒ Initial environmental review
- ☒ Environmental policy
- ☒ Legal compliance
- ☒ Employee involvement
- ☒ Planning
- ☒ Implementation
- ☒ Checking and corrective action
- ☒ Continuous improvement
- ☒ Management review
- ☐ Environmental statement
- ☐ Validation of environmental statement
- ☒ Certification

Relation of the EMS to EMAS: **Close**

For further information on the EMS, please contact:

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