

Benefits of a step-up from QuB to EMAS

A step-up from QuB to EMAS can provide organisations with significant additional benefits. Organisations that decide to step up to EMAS can expect additional environmental benefits since EMAS considers not only the direct but also indirect environmental aspects. This can also lead to additional financial benefits as resources are saved and efficiency is improved. However, especially for small companies, it needs to be carefully considered that the implementation of EMAS itself leads to important additional costs for the company. Additionally the company benefits from an increased legal security and health and safety aspects inside the organisation will be tackled in a systematic way when integrating EMAS. The publication and verification of an environmental report is not obligatory and stepping up to EMAS can lead to improved communication possibilities. If the organisation is working internationally or has an international client base the fact that EMAS is recognized all over Europe leads to important additional benefits. 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

An environmental management system for handicraft companies in Bavaria was developed in 1997 through an initiative of the President of the Chamber of Handicraft Mittelfranken. In 2005 the EMS was renamed Qualitätsverbund Umweltbewusster Betriebe (QuB – Quality Association of environmentally conscious companies) and the focus was broadened to allow non-handicraft companies to participate in the EMS. Additionally the geographical focus broadened over time. Whereas the initial focus was exclusively on Bavaria, Chambers of Commerce and Handicraft from other federal states (Hamburg, Bremen, Saxony, Thuringen, Schleswig-Holstein) also started to implement the system. As of June 2009, a total of 647 companies (of which more than 550 in Bavaria) have participated in QuB.

Government departments, Chambers of Commerce and Handicraft, and environmental institutions are responsible for the implementation of QuB. The Chamber of Handicraft in Mittelfranken remains the leading implementing agency. External consultants are responsible for the environmental audits.

Objectives

It is the main objective of QuB to have an EMS that is tailored to the needs of SMEs. Apart from environmental management, it also includes issues of quality management, occupational health and safety and organisational development.

Closeness to EMAS

QuB can be considered as a stepping stone to EMAS since a successful certification with QuB implies the application of a number of EMAS criteria.

QuB does not provide a guideline on how to step up to EMAS, but developed a tool that supports those companies interested in getting registered under EMAS by providing information on all criteria that still need to be fulfilled after having been certified under QuB.

For further information on the EMS, please contact:

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For further information on these guidelines, please contact:

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From QuB 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 QuB to EMAS. For further details on each requirement, please see the EMAS website on www.ec.europa.eu/environment/emas.

Step 1 - Setting the Baseline

- **Commitment of top management**
The EMS needs to be reviewed and a management representative appointed to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Environmental policy/guidelines**
An environmental policy is required to fulfil EMAS requirements.

Step 2 - Planning

- **Environmental aspects and review**
Indirect environmental aspects need to be identified and evaluated to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Proof of legal compliance**
Legal compliance and implementation of procedures that enable the organisation to constantly meet requirements are necessary to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Definition of objectives, targets and programmes**
Ability to prove that EMS and audit procedures are based on the current environmental performance, and ensuring that environmental objectives and targets cover all relevant environmental aspects are necessary to meet EMAS requirements.

Step 3 - Implementation

- **Roles and responsibilities**
Top management needs to ensure that required resources are made available to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Employee involvement**
Each person causing significant environmental impacts needs to receive appropriate training to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Training and awareness raising**
All EMAS criteria related to training and awareness raising need to be fulfilled to comply with EMAS requirements.
- **Communication**
To fulfil EMAS requirements procedures for internal communication need to be established, it must be ensured that communication from external interested parties is replied to and environmental information needs to be revised periodically.
- **Documentation**
Other documents such as records regarding planning, operation and control need to be included into the documentation to comply with EMAS requirements.
- **Control of documents and operational control**
All criteria related to control of documents and operational control need to be fulfilled to comply with EMAS requirements.
- **Emergency preparedness and response**
Potential risks and procedures to mitigate these have to be defined and tested periodically to fulfil EMAS requirements.

Step 4 - Check and Act

- **Checking and corrective action**
Procedures for non- conformity and for taking corrective actions are necessary to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Control of records**
Records should be maintained to demonstrate conformity with the different requirements to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Internal audit**
Regular internal audits should be carried out by impartial auditors and results should be communicated to management to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Management review**
Management should review the entire EMS at planned intervals, including recommendations for improvement and need for changes to fulfil EMAS requirements.

Step 5 - External Recognition and Environmental Report

- **Third-party auditing and audit frequency**
Provision of necessary information to top management is required to fulfil EMAS requirements.
- **Environmental report/ statement**
All criteria related to an environmental report or statement must be fulfilled to comply with EMAS requirements.