

EMAS – The Credible Environmental Management System

What is EMAS?

The European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a voluntary management tool for companies and other organisations to evaluate, improve and report their environmental performance. The scheme has been available for participation since 1993 and was originally restricted to companies operating in industrial sectors within the European Union. By now EMAS is open to all kinds of organisations whose activities have an environmental impact, independent from size, economic sectors, public or private. With the latest revision EMAS will be applicable worldwide (Regulation (EC) no 1221/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2009).

EMAS provides means for organisations to manage their environmental impacts and to improve their overall environmental performance.

Key elements of EMAS are:

Performance: self committing, harmonised scheme to evaluate and reduce an organisations' environmental impact.

Transparency: Public information on an organisation's environmental performance is an important aspect; it is achieved externally through the environmental statement and internally through employee involvement.

Credibility: The external and independent nature of the EMAS registration and verification process ensures the public credibility.

The core component of EMAS is EN ISO 14001, the world wide known environmental management standard. But EMAS goes beyond and focuses on measurable improvements, internal and external transparency as well as legal compliance.

- Environmental performances, i.e. measurable impacts such as energy efficiency, emissions, waste, sewerage, etc.
- Besides these direct environmental aspects the indirect aspects such as decisions of administration and planning, purchasing procedures are covered as well
- EMAS organisations publish an environmental statement periodically. It provides information for the public and all interested parties on their legal compliance and their environmental performance.



- The process of EMAS implementation includes the involvement of employees in the process of continuous improvement e.g. by increasing knowledge of environmental issues, establishing environmental committees and joint project-based working groups as well as a suggestion system. This increases the job satisfaction, too.
- All EMAS organisations are registered nationally (German register: www.emas-register.de) and European wide www.emas-register.eu
- The EMAS logo is an appealing communication and marketing tool, which raises the awareness of customers, suppliers and other stakeholders of EMAS.

EMAS organisations are verified by governmental authorised environmental verifiers with regard to management system in place, conformity with the organisation's policy and programme as well as compliance with relevant environmental regulatory requirements. This assures the fulfilments of requirements and the correctness of information.

Since adoption in 1993 EMAS – Regulation was revised two times. A revision should take place every five years in collaboration with local authorities, companies, labour unions and environmental associations.

Main innovations were:

2001: Integration of management requirements of ISO 14001, open to all economic sectors and implementation of new standardised EMAS logo (EMAS II)

2009: open to world wide application, adjustment to concerns of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), six standardised environmental indicators for presentation of performance improvement (EMAS III)

How does EMAS work?

EMAS consists of several elements which can be adapted to each organisation's conditions. The management system provides a general framework. Its implementation has to be handled individually.

At the beginning, there is an **environmental review** to be done, considering all environmental aspects of the organisation's activities, products and services, its legal and regulatory framework and existing environmental management practices and procedures.

Based on the review results and the **organisation's environmental policy**, defined by the top management, an effective environmental management system will be established. To start with, an **environmental programme** with aims and measures, responsibilities and target dates should be defined. The management system appoints the designation of personal organisation, means, operational procedures, training needs, monitoring and communication systems.

Furthermore, the organisation has to carry out an **environmental audit**, assessing in particular the management system in place and conformity with the organisation's policy and programme as well as compliance with relevant environmental regulatory requirements.

For providing an appropriate documentation, the organisation produces an **environmental statement** of its performance which lays down the results achieved - compared with the environmental objectives and the future steps to be undertaken in order to improve continuously the organisation's environmental performance. This environmental statement is part of the verification as well.

If correctness is verified, the organisation will be listed in the EMAS register and is allowed to **use the EMAS logo** for marketing and publicity purposes.

The registration is valid for three years. The environmental statement needs to be updated annually as well as the verification to ensure the continuous improvement. Small and medium sized EMAS-organisations may request an extension up to four and two years respectively.

Who benefits of EMAS?

The environment: due to continuously improved environmental performances.

The organisation: due to optimised internal processes and responsibilities, legal compliance, usage of innovation potential, improved reputation and relations with employees, assessing operational procedures can reduce risk levels, costs and resource consumption..

Local authorities: due to less monitoring and increased transparency.

General public: for example employees, customers, suppliers and residents for dealing with a credible and trustworthy organisation.

Where do you find more information?

The Office of the German EMAS Advisory Board provides information, mostly in German: www.emas.de and www.uga.de.

For information in English try:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm