



European
Commission



CASE STUDY

Involving public bodies and
cooperating institutions in the
promotion of

EMAS

Environment

BACKGROUND

By helping organisations improve their environmental performance, EMAS benefits public authorities and citizens indirectly. It can be used to achieve environmental goals, to save resources for authorities (e.g. costs from environmental damages), or to improve an industry's image and competitiveness. **This is why a wide variety of stakeholders have an interest in promoting EMAS:** public authorities, industrial associations, consumer organisations, environmental organisations, etc.

Yet the evaluation of EMAS carried out by the European Commission in 2015 showed that the uptake of EMAS is limited, and that this can be explained by two factors: **consumers' and business partners' lack of awareness of EMAS, due to the lack of promotional activities, and public authorities' lack of recognition of the instrument.**¹ Following this observation, the Commission launched

the RAVE study (Reinforcing Added Value for EMAS)², which looked at best practices from Member States to recognise the contribution of EMAS-registered organisations and encourage more to join, for example through regulatory or tax relief. Some of these measures lighten the administrative and financial burden both for the authority and the organisation, and should be replicated in other Member States.

To develop EMAS, it is thus necessary to increase stakeholders' awareness of EMAS, notably among public authorities, which have the means to provide advantages to EMAS organisations. Communication efforts could focus on the capacity of EMAS to achieve different stakeholders' goals (lower environment impacts, legal compliance of organisations, higher competitiveness, etc.). **EMAS representatives could target public authorities, as well as business or consumer associations, to make them "multipliers" of EMAS.**

This case study aims to **highlight best practices from Competent Bodies in the Member States to promote EMAS** with the help of public bodies and other institutions. It intends to provide inspiration to other Competent Bodies, and also to highlight to other audiences the work that is done to promote EMAS at different levels.

BEST PRACTICES FROM MEMBER STATES

1/ Collaborating with public authorities

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Workshops

The RAVE study highlighted that **Member States with higher numbers of registrations** were most positive about EMAS added value, particularly regarding legal compliance and third-party verification. This appreciation is built via **regular informational workshops and exchanges between public authorities and environmental verifiers**, which

increase their trust in EMAS and the auditing process. While workshops can be costly compared to other promotional activities, they appear to be necessary for stakeholders to understand EMAS well. To make them as successful as possible, attention needs to be given to the selection of participants, methods of participation and follow-up activities.

¹ Fitness Check: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas_publications/policy/fitness_check_en.htm

² Reinforcing Added Value for EMAS (RAVE) study: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas_publications/policy/RAVE_study_en.htm

The environmental agency of Germany organised a series of workshops to discuss the future of EMAS with multiple stakeholders in 2017- 2018. The 6 workshops were organised in different federal states and aimed at EMAS organisations, business associations, chambers of industry and commerce, environmental verifiers and public authorities (state ministries, enforcement authorities). The mix of participants was key for the success of the workshops. Each workshop had its own thematic focus: energy management, law enforcement, supply chain management, public procurement, EMAS development and CSR Reporting. The final conference, “Sustainable Management for the Agenda 2030”, was hosted by the German Ministry for the Environment in Berlin. The workshops

aimed to both share news on EMAS with stakeholders and collect ideas to develop the scheme. The topics were

- EMAS as a **climate management** tool for companies
- EMAS as a tool for **supply chain management**
- EMAS’ role in the transition to **sustainable finance**
- Integrated strategies for EMAS – **the policy framework**

The findings of the final conference will be published in a conference transcript in 2019. Find out more about the conference here.

The Catalan government is the lead partner of the Interreg Europe project **ENHANCE**, running from 2017 till 2020. The main objective of ENHANCE is to promote EMAS so as to improve the implementation of regional policies to increase resource efficiency. The project encourages the exchange of experiences among public authorities. For example, data from enforcement authorities on the performance of EMAS- registered organisations will be collected to justify policy makers; adoption of regulatory relief (such as fewer inspections).



b Programmes to “adopt EMAS”

Another way to collaborate with public authorities is to support them in implementing EMAS. Such collaboration needs to be well thought out so that the adoption of EMAS does not appear political and is not stopped after an election. Sometimes politicians do not understand that adopting EMAS is a long-term project that ensures the transparency

and environmental performance of the administration, rather than an initiative related to the political programme of a specific party. One strategy to counteract this can be to first encourage public authorities to be more sustainable, and second recommend EMAS to them.



The Government of the Basque Country issued a “Guide for responsible governance of Basque public entities”, which recommends EMAS to public authorities. Basque municipalities have to report on their impact on the environment every year and are assessed through a ranking system. Public authorities use EMAS to comply with the guide (obligation of transparency and environmental risk management) and to achieve a higher position in the rankings. They also use the EMAS logo to communicate their achievements.

In Italy, municipalities can register for EMAS jointly. In 2006, **49 municipalities in the province of Cuneo launched a joint registration process** at the impetus of a local action group (GAL, in charge of rural development). They **defined a common strategy** to improve environmental performance and **coordinated their actions** to optimise results and reduce costs. The same year, the **Val Di Non Community in Trentino** coordinated a project to register **33 municipalities**. It divided its region into 6 areas to develop synergies at the local level. This facilitated the comparison of performance between municipalities, and although each municipality got its own registration number, **only 6 environmental statements** (including a separate sheet for each municipality) **had to be produced** instead of 33.

Such **coordination and networking opportunities** within a territory are an **advantage of EMAS** compared to other tools.

Italy has implemented various initiatives to encourage public administrations to join EMAS. These can be replicated in other countries:

- Organising **national EMAS Awards**, with a category dedicated to public authorities
- Organising a **seminar on best practices** within public administrations
- Creating a **forum to exchange experiences at the regional level** and develop a common strategy (such as in the Italian Piedmont region)
- Providing **training courses for public employees** to increase knowledge of EMAS and promote references to EMAS in calls for tenders

The best promoters of EMAS in a territory are the public administrations that are already registered, as long as all of their employees understand EMAS. The meetings organised in the Piedmont region served to make EMAS recognised as a tool for internal and external management. Employees acknowledged **internal benefits** such as:

- Regulatory compliance
- Savings in terms of environmental costs
- Environmental awareness of employees
- Dialogue between the technical side and the political side

And benefits related to more **external factors** such as:

- Knowledge of the territory: environmental impacts and critical issues, economic and productive issues
- Being an example and information point for organisations
- Increased communication with stakeholders through the environmental statement
- Use of the logo for tourism purposes



According to the Italian Competent Body, “**the problem is convincing public authorities** that giving benefits or regulatory relief to an EMAS-registered organisation doesn’t mean “giving a present” but simply recognizing that they have invested money in environmental protection – the same money that in most cases would have been spent for the same purpose by public authorities themselves.” By having public authorities adopt EMAS themselves, they become better able to recognise these efforts.

2/ Collaborating with business associations and trade unions

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Agreements

Collaboration with stakeholders can be negotiated and formalised, so that both parties achieve their objectives.

The **Basque Country** signed two agreements in 2017 with the [CONFEBASK](#), the Basque Business Confederation and [ACLIMA](#), the Environmental Industry Association of the Basque Country (which is an EMAS-registered organisation), in which they committed to participate in the [European BRAVER project to stimulate the uptake of EMAS in other regional environmental policies](#), along with the competent authority regarding the EMAS application. Furthermore, a contract with the Competent Body regarding the EMAS application and simplification of administrative formalities (e.g. checking the possibility of using electronic processing, comparing legislative changes aimed at streamlining thanks

to EMAS) has been signed. The **associations also declared that they would promote the goals, scope and benefits of EMAS** to their members. The Basque **Country provides grants to business associations willing to carry out such promotional activities** (up to 10,000€) in addition to subsidies for organisations willing to implement (up to 15,000€) or renew EMAS (up to 6,000€). The agreement between the two business associations and the public authority came about at the initiative of the associations. The agreement is not only about EMAS but also addresses further environmental issues. For the associations, this initiative is a way to live up to their great responsibility in the Basque Country.

In Sardinia, some trade unions offered industries and public administrations the initiative “[Pact for EMAS](#)” to **combine the economic development needs** of the metropolitan area of Cagliari **with environmental protection** and the **protection of public health**. This agreement on EMAS certification would strongly enhance the local economy of this area and would enable authorities to use EMAS as a governance tool.

In Bibione, the project “[Polo turistico di Bibione](#)” was launched by the municipality of San Michele al Tagliamento (VE). The project led to the implementation of an environmental management system which was incrementally extended to the whole municipal area with particular attention to the tourist centre of Bibione. Within the project, **all the main economic organizations and public authorities** (municipalities, ARPA, local and trade associations, service companies) **participated in defining a common Environmental Programme** with specific objectives defined in relation to the specific skills and activities.

3/ Collaborating with NGOs

An easy way to raise the visibility of EMAS is to participate in or sponsor events organised by NGOs so as to share resources.



An “**ultra clean**” marathon was organised in 2018 by environmental associations in Catalonia. The concept: jogging and collecting waste at the same time. The event was created to link the European initiative “Let’s Clean Up Europe» with «Nature Week», a regional event that promotes

environmental and natural heritage protection. It was **sponsored by a few EMAS-registered organisations**, notably **Denso Barcelona**, which provided icepacks for the runners to cool down. Denso Barcelona is a manufacturer of electrical components for the automotive industry; in their first life, the icepacks had been used to regulate the temperature of its electronic compounds.

Donations from the participants will be dedicated to the projects of the environmental NGOs involved in the race. They collected more money with the help of EMAS.

Ideas for collaboration opportunities with NGOs can be taken up from EMAS-registered organisations. The Catalan Competent Body is organising EMAS Awards in October that will include for the first time a category related to EMAS-registered organisations' collaboration with NGOs.

4/ Collaborating with schools and universities

Competent Bodies sometimes give speeches on EMAS in schools and universities. This can lead to joint projects.

Portugal's PMEmas project is about to publish sectoral EMAS guides. These have been developed with a Portuguese university with expertise in the implementation of environmental management systems. The aim of the project is to give SMEs from the culture sector, the military sector and the olive production sector step-by-step support to implement EMAS. PMEmas has been a very fruitful project so far. Launched in 2006, it has already published many guidelines for many sectors – from printing, wine and olive oil to hotels. Find out more about this best practice joint project [here](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The examples above show that a wide variety of stakeholders can support EMAS and that it is particularly valuable in some sectors or environmental areas. Depending on the regional context, some stakeholders should be prioritized as targets, either because they are likely to be receptive to EMAS or because their involvement would be especially beneficial in terms of available resources and reach. We would therefore recommend that the EMAS community:

- **Identify institutions that can support EMAS** (NGOs, trade unions, universities, etc.) and **provide them with information and materials**.
- **Link EMAS to other policies or topics** that are more attractive to stakeholders, for example sustainable governance, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sectoral best practices (see [sectoral reference documents](#)), etc., to indirectly promote EMAS. This is a way to reach a wider target audience.
- Try to **support the implementation of EMAS in sectors which are highly visible** to the public (public transport, tourism, cultural sites, etc.) or are essential for the region or Member State. Again, this will ensure that a higher number of stakeholders feel concerned and will broaden awareness of EMAS.

For more information on EMAS and the latest news, please visit the EMAS website: emas.eu.



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