

Benefits of a Step-up from Green Network to EMAS

A number of additional steps need to be taken by organisations that want to step-up from the Green Network to EMAS. Taking these steps can provide organisations with significant benefits. Improved operational control, control of documents and emergency preparedness and response are likely to lead to risk minimisation and efficiency improvements within organisations. In addition, they can lead to environmental benefits due to a reduced number of environmental incidents. Further employee involvement and training under EMAS can lead to improved employee morale and a better implementation of the EMS. An EMAS registration will also provide organisations with improved communication possibilities through certified third-party auditing. As the Green Network is currently only implemented in Denmark, organisations might also benefit from the larger geographic scope of EMAS. This might be of special interest to organisations with an international client base. 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

The Green Network is a regional network in Denmark promoting sustainability in companies. It is voluntary and mutually binding for the partners: public authorities and companies. It was founded in 1994 within a "Green City" competition in the Danish region Vejle promoting the greening of local businesses. In 2002 the focus was broadened to include sustainability. Today, more than 250 companies issue a statement in one or more of the areas: environment, social commitment, and health & safety. Green Network is also offered to private and public companies through the environmental networks (organised under Key2Green – each one operating in an area of several municipalities (only 1 municipality in Copenhagen). Each network offers a diploma and a flag as a sign of approved environmental reporting.

Green Network is a regional network that involves several municipalities and private companies. The chairman of Green Network has to come from the private side. Green Network has different types of membership options adapted to the requirements of companies. The Green Network is also part of the Nordic Environment Network.

As of 2009, approximately 1013 organisations are Green Network certified in Denmark.

Objectives

Private companies and public sector partners work together in Green Network to achieve greater sustainability in the fields of environment, social commitment and occupational health and safety. The slogan of the EMS « Growing responsibility » makes Green Network's mission even clearer. It is a matter both of the members of Green Network taking on ever more social responsibility and also of Green Network developing more sustainable methods. The company chooses the manual or manuals they will use and commit themselves to continuous improvements within the chosen work area: social commitment, environment or occupational health and safety, or a combination of these.

Closeness to EMAS

Green Network can be considered as a beginning step towards EMAS, as a successful Green Network certification means that some important steps towards EMAS certification have been taken. However, its easier implementation also means that certain additional steps will have to be taken in order to register under EMAS. The most fundamental of these additional steps lie in the areas of employee involvement, training, communication, documentation, emergency preparedness, management review, and the environmental report. These steps are outlined on page 2 of this brochure.

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

Green Network already fulfils all EMAS requirements under Step 2 and Step 4. However, to obtain EMAS registration, the additional steps that would need to be taken in addition to those already required under the Green Network include:

Step 1 - Setting the Baseline

- **Environmental policy/guidelines**

The environmental policy should be made available to the public.

Step 3 - Implementation

- **Employee involvement**

An employee participation scheme at all levels needs to be implemented.

- **Training and awareness raising**

Training needs for individual employees need to be defined and especially given to those who cause significant environmental impacts. An employee awareness plan should also be established.

- **Documentation**

Documentation is not necessarily sufficient under the Green Network and requires a record of other documents regarding operation and control.

- **Control of documents and operational control**

Procedures need to be established to control situations that might create significant environmental impacts. Procedures related to significant environmental impacts arising from the use of goods and services need to be communicated to suppliers where necessary.

- **Emergency preparedness and response**

Procedures to mitigate potential risks need to be defined and tested periodically.

Step 5 - External Recognition and Environmental Report

- **Third-party auditing and audit frequency**

The role and tasks of an external auditor need to be sufficiently clarified. The certificate needs to be issued under one of the accreditation procedures recognised by the European Commission.