

Benefits of a Step-up from EcoCompass to EMAS

A step-up from EcoCompass to EMAS can provide organisations with significant additional benefits: environmental benefits, for example, can be expected as indirect environmental impacts of the organisation will need to be identified and evaluated under EMAS. Moreover, organisations can experience further financial benefits due to reduced use of resources, efficiency improvements and better risk management. Through a regular review of the EMS by management, the effectiveness of the scheme can be increased significantly. An EMAS registration will also provide organisations with improved communication possibilities through a validated environmental statement. As EcoCompass is currently only implemented in the Helsinki metropolitan area in Finland, 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 EcoCompass EMS is an easier and less expensive version of ISO 14001 and EMAS; however it also allows companies to progress up to these EMSs later. EcoCompass is a three-year joint municipality project that was launched in the Helsinki Metropolitan area in 2008. During the 3-year pilot phase, EcoCompass will target the tourism and printing industries. From 2011 onwards, it will be open to SMEs in all sectors. The project aims to strengthen environmental management in small and medium-sized companies in the area. EcoCompass is also part of the Nordic Environment Network, together with Eco- Lighthouse in Norway, Key2Green in Denmark and Environmental Diploma in Sweden, to develop common strategies for non-formal EMS. An operating model for voluntary environmental cooperation between the cities and the SMEs is created, and customised environmental advice is offered to the companies. The EcoCompass EMS includes an initial analysis of the situation, an evaluation of the environmental impacts and the creation of an environmental management programme together with the company. After fulfilling the programme for 6 to 12 months, the company reports on its implementation to the City of Helsinki Environment Centre. After reporting, an external audit is performed. If the company passes the audit, it receives the EcoCompass certificate, which is valid for three years. The project is coordinated by the City of Helsinki Environment Centre and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre. The EcoCompass project works in close cooperation with the economic and enterprise services by training the business advisors to include environmental issues in their advisory work. As of 2009, approximately 25 organisations are going through the EcoCompass certification process in the Helsinki area.

Objectives

The aim of the EcoCompass EMS is to encourage real actions that enable the companies to both enhance their business operations and decrease their environmental impact. The EcoCompass system is developed specifically for SMEs: the companies receive easy tools and customised support for the implementation and maintenance of the system.

Closeness to EMAS

EcoCompass can be considered a stepping-stone to EMAS as a successful EcoCompass certification means that a number of important steps towards an 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 procedures related to documentation and operational control and emergency preparedness and response, management review and the environmental statement. These steps are outlined on page 2 of this brochure.

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

EcoCompass already fulfils all EMAS requirements under Step 1. However, to obtain an EMAS registration, the additional steps that would need to be taken in addition to those already required under EcoCompass include:

Step 2 - Planning

- **Environmental aspects and review**

Indirect environmental aspects need to be identified and evaluated.

Step 3 - Implementation

- **Control of documents and operational control**

Procedures need to be established to control situations that might create significant environmental impacts.

- **Emergency preparedness and response**

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

Step 4 - Check and Act

- **Management review**

Management needs to review the entire EMS at planned intervals, including recommendations for improvement and need for changes.

Step 5 - External Recognition and Environmental Report

- **Environmental report/ statement**

Some criteria related to an environmental report or statement should be fulfilled to comply with EMAS requirements. Under EcoCompass, an environmental report is required but it is not made public, nor is the environmental reported validated.