

Barcelona Treball

Summary of sector trends: Environment industry

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European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS): competitive factor for companies

Environmental sustainability and protection are currently some of the major concerns in the political, business and social spheres. Given this situation, many organizations choose to implement environmental protection systems. Far from being an obstacle to their competitiveness, these systems can boost businesses and organizations.

One of the main objectives of the European Union (EU) is to protect the environment and promote sustainability. The EU promotes measures leading to an improvement in the organizations' environmental performance (businesses, social organizations, public administration, etc.).

In this regard, EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) is one of the key measures promoted by the EU. **EMAS is a management tool for organizations (industries, utilities, government agencies, etc.) which aims at evaluating, showing and improving their environmental performance.** The EMAS is presented as a symbol of modern **environmental management, transparency and involvement in the environment.** It is a system increasingly adopted by organizations willing to voluntarily evaluate and improve their environmental performance, and disseminate relevant information on environmental management both the general public and other stakeholders. Specifically, the EMAS wants **to promote continuous improvement of the organizations' environmental performance** through the following:

- The implementation of environmental management systems.
- The systematic, objective and periodic assessment of the management systems' performance.
- The dissemination of information on the organization's environmental performance.

- Open dialogue with the audience and other stakeholders.
- Professional and permanent training of the personnel, which requires active participation in the improvement of the environmental performance.

This management system was developed in 1993, and it has expanded over the years as it has been shown to be an effective tool for the continuous improvement of the organizations' environmental performance. The latest update of the EMAS (called EMAS III) was performed in 2009 by Regulation (EC) N°.1.221/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council. Initially, EMAS was developed mainly for industrial companies; now, it is currently open to all kinds of organizations (public or private), regardless of their industry, who want to improve their environmental performance. **The number of EMAS registered organizations has grown considerably** in Europe; it has gone from 3,911 in early 2002 to 4,581 in early 2012. The upward trend has continued with the entry into force of EMAS III, since 2009 until early 2012 the number of registered organizations has increased by almost 500.



Impact on the sector

EMAS has a wide adoption among Catalan and Spanish organizations.

EMAS club provides data of Catalan companies that have implemented EMAS. Some of the areas where EMAS is growing further growth are waste management, public administration, construction and museums, among others.

Over the years, EMAS has been shown to provide a number of benefits and advantages to those organizations who had implemented it. **The main benefits are to acquire a quality environmental management** and compliance with the environmental legislation (which favors obtaining public aids, permits and licenses). But beyond these generic benefits, companies and organizations that have adopted the EMAS suggest a number of more specific advantages.

From the savings point of view, there is a reduction in the consumption of natural resources (energy, water, raw materials, etc.) and a minimization of waste generation, thus decreasing the cost associated with its control and maintenance. It also reduces costs for transportation, storage, packaging and cleaning, and environmental remediation resulting from accidental releases. Finally, the adoption of EMAS allows savings in penalties for breaking the law and an insurance cost reduction for environmental risk.

The EMAS often works as a marketing tool because, **from the brand point of view, it improves the image of the organization** for customers, shareholders, partners, employees, media and general audience. It has to be kept in mind that EMAS registered companies can make their environmental commitment visible to their customers through a logo.

From the competitiveness point of view, the EMAS improves the relationship with public authorities, allowing easier access to aids, grants, permits, etc.

The EMAS allow for easily complying with the environmental regulations. It also provides access to new business opportunities and eases a better assessment in government contests.

From the human resources point of view, it encourages motivation and involvement of all employees in the organization

in the achievement of common goals. The adoption of EMAS implies that workers have to acquire knowledge and sensitivities in the environmental field, so companies often must conduct training activities in this area.

It has been shown that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages of EMAS; despite of this, the adherence to EMAS also needs an extra effort for companies, which should involve people and invest time and financial resources to deploy it. Experience shows that, sometimes, external support (technical or financial) is also required. In any case, the establishment costs can oscillate depending on the type of organization (size, sector, etc.). The main costs are:

- Provision of financial resources for the implementation of the system, such as spending on staff training, reporting, etc.
- Costs of environmental management, such as waste management or debugging emissions.
- Costs of system auditing.
- Costs of environmental testing.
- Costs of technical and organizational measures to resolve legal breaches.

Catalonia represents 33% of EMAS registrations in Spain and 7% of the overall EU, and is one of the top three countries with more EMAS registrations per million inhabitants.

The EMAS organizations are exempt from Catalan Regional Government periodic inspection of environmental prevention and control.

Sometimes, organizations willing to implement the EMAS should resort to external support of consultancy firms specialized in the environmental field.

Impact on professional profiles

Businesses demand Graduates with environmental expertise to fulfil the position of Director or Manager of the environmental management system.

Among the core competencies, the one concerning to the bargaining with the public administration has a special importance.

One of the key aspects concerning the proper implementation of EMAS is that every worker has a role and responsibilities clearly assigned. Everyone involved should clearly know what to do and when to do it. EMAS implementation in an organization involves **creating a new figure, the Director or Manager of the environmental management system.**

Some companies choose to create a new job, so they hire a skilled person to handle these functions. Others opt for assigning the functions to a company employee. The figure of the Manager of the environmental management system is key because it acts as a **boss of the whole environmental system and as a partner with the leaders of the different areas of the organization** (production, management, marketing, etc.). This professional must know the business processes and the corresponding main problems, and should have authority to ensure compliance with the commitments.

It should be noted that the proliferation of environmental management systems indirectly causes an **increased demand for consultants specialized in environmental issues.** Companies often use engineers and external consultants to help them implement the system. These consultants are involved in the definition stage or in the revision of the system, while the daily management is performed internally by the staff of the company adhered to EMAS.

The professional profile of Manager of the environmental management system usually requires a **university degree, preferably in environmental sciences**, biology, chemistry or engineering. However, companies tend to prioritize specific training in the sector in which the company operates. For example, a chemical company will most probably require graduates in chemistry.

In terms of **technical skills**, the Manager of the environmental management system should have general knowledge of the different environmental factors applicable to the business. He or she shall monitor and control the activities of the company from an environmental standpoint, and must also have technical and strategic skills, aimed at integrating environment into the general policies of the company (to identify opportunities for improvement and innovative solutions that enhance company's competitiveness).

Regarding **organizational skills**, the Manager of the environmental management system must have capacity to organize and manage the company's environmental protection and, therefore, requires knowledge on how to design environmental management systems and make the relevant auditing and evaluation.

Finally, the Manager of the environmental management system should have **interpersonal skills** such as communication, participation and awareness, which are key in the EMAS and other environmental management systems. Competencies in green marketing (competitive positioning of the company by adhering to the brand the environmental sustainability) are also crucial. It must be said that, apart from these technical skills (organizational and relational) the Manager of the environmental management system must also have cross-cutting skills such as **leadership, teamwork, resource management skills, adaptability and innovation.**

More information about the industry is available on the Barcelona Treball website [Market > Industries > Environment industry](#)

This section of the website contains a report on the industry covering employment aspects, where you can see job files for various job profiles and find out the main resources you need to find work in the industry.

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