



# EMAS Awards

## Factsheet & Application form

### 'Effective eco-innovations supporting improvements in environmental performance'

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emasawards/index.htm>

#### Introduction

The European EMAS Award is the most prestigious award in environmental management and has been presented to EMAS registered organisations nearly every year since 2005. The EMAS Awards were established by the European Commission and reward the best performance of EMAS registered organisations.

For this year's edition of the EMAS Awards, the Forum of Competent Bodies and the European Commission have decided to acknowledge the achievements of EMAS organisations which have excelled in **taking innovative measures that resulted in significant improvements of their environmental performance** and whose achievements can inspire others to do the same.

Implementing eco-innovation in companies and other organisations focuses on the creation and implementation of novel and creative solutions in an organisation's production process, throughout its value chain, in the organisation itself and in its business model. This will lead to an organisation's improved environmental performance.

Eco-innovation is about reducing our environmental impact and making better use of resources with new solutions. This means developing new products, techniques, services, processes or business models that can create benefits for the environment, for example by reducing pressure on natural resources and/or the emission of pollutants. At the same time, eco-innovation can improve economic competitiveness. The environmental goods and services industry is growing fast in EU Member States. Like information technologies a few decades ago, it can enhance the competitiveness of other industries. For this reason many EU Member States' governments see eco-innovation as a major driver of green growth. The European Union (EU) is looking to maximise the impact of eco-innovation measures in the context of EMAS. That is why the EU wants to identify the best eco-innovation measures taken by EMAS registered organisations, promote their replication across the EU and boost their visibility.

For the assessment of the level of innovation of an EMAS award nominee the jury will use the OECD/Eurostat definition of innovation<sup>1</sup>. Eco-innovation measures taken by EMAS registered organisations in all the 6 categories represent a key opportunity to contribute to overcoming the world's sustainability challenges while contributing to boosting the world market for environmental

<sup>1</sup> OECD & Eurostat. The measurement of scientific and technological activities. Proposed Guidelines for collecting and interpreting technological innovation data. Oslo Manual. 2005. The document defines innovation as: the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations. By definition, all innovation must contain a degree of novelty. Moreover, three types of novelty are distinguished: an innovation can be new to the firm, new to the market or new to the world. The first concept covers the diffusion of an existing innovation to a firm – the innovation may have already been implemented by other firms, but it is new to the firm. Innovations are new to the market when the firm is the first to introduce the innovation on its market. An innovation is new to the world when the firm is the first to introduce the innovation for all markets and industries.

products and services. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a major role in this regard. This is why separate nomination categories are reserved for small and medium-sized organisations.

### **Eligibility**

EMAS registered organisations in the following six categories can apply: micro-organisations, small organisations, medium-sized organisations, large organisations, small public administrations and large public administrations. Nominees from each of these categories are selected at national level each year.

The EMAS Award nominees from the member states will be evaluated by a special independent EMAS Awards Jury, consisting of renowned experts in the field of EMAS and innovation. One representative of one of the organisations that recently won an EMAS Award will also become a member of the jury.

Organisations / companies who have won an EMAS Award in the past must wait two consecutive years before they are allowed to apply for the same measure for the EMAS Awards again.

Because eco-innovations sometimes require a long period of work (research & development, implementation, assessment, etc.) all eco-innovation measures that have been implemented during the last 3 years are eligible for nomination on the condition that the organisation is able to demonstrate that it was already EMAS registered for at least one year at the time the eco-innovation measure was implemented. It is a prerequisite that the measures taken have resulted in (significant) improvements of the environmental performance which is documented in the EMAS environmental statement. This means that the year in which the environmental improvements resulting from the eco-innovation were described in the environmental statement for the first time count as starting date.

## **Award criteria for eco-innovative measures related to environmental performance**

The EMAS Awards recognise exceptional organisations with a strategic vision and a verified Environmental Management System according to EMAS. Continuous improvement of an organisations environmental performance is the hallmark of EMAS. The following main and supportive criteria for the EMAS Awards focus on different aspects of innovation in the context of EMAS implementation:

### **Main EMAS Award criteria (max. 70 points)**

The two main EMAS Award criteria are the environmental innovation and/or business model/business practice measure(s) an organisation implemented and the (significant) improvements of the environmental performance that resulted from this.

#### **1. 'Innovativeness' of the environmental innovation (max. 35 points)**

Under this award criterion the organisation must describe how it improved its environmental performance in its core business through the generation and adoption of environmental innovations that are vital to improve the sustainability of the production processes or the business model of the organisation. This means that for example innovations of the business model or business practices itself are eligible but also innovations that are integrated in the production process (*cleaner production measures*), or innovations that add on measures to reduce the negative externalities of production in the last stage of the production process, for example by including specific filters to reduce pollution (*end-of-pipe technologies*).

A business model identifies a company's value proposition, target customer types, distribution channels, customer relationships, core capabilities, partner network; and cost and revenue structure. Companies and other organisations that have changed their business model as a result of environmental and sustainability considerations and opportunities are role models for others. This could for example be illustrated by a description of such a business model in the environmental statement and/or sustainability or CSR report published by the organisation, the execution of special projects/actions in the context of CSR etc. Other illustrative examples could be the development and introduction of new services/products by an organisation, or changing existing product ranges/families of products/services in order to lower the environmental impact of the organisation or improve its environmental performance. Further examples could be the dematerialisation of products/services and/or a change in the proportion of products versus services, or significant changes in the business model for example in comparison to bad business practices in a certain sector (such as planned obsolescence). Illustrative examples can also be found on the dedicated webpages of Eco-innovation. These websites list good practices<sup>2</sup> in the area of eco-innovative products, processes, services and business models and also list projects awarded under the eco-innovation – market replication<sup>3</sup> initiative.

The jury will assess the level of innovation of the environmental measure that was developed / implemented. The jury will differentiate between “one off” innovative measures which cannot easily be repeated and a continuous process of innovation which may have been on-going for a number of years. Innovations in general focus on how companies or other organisations create, deliver and capture environmental and economic value. As described before, this also means innovation of an organisation's business model / business practices as such. The EMAS Awards jury will therefore also assess the willingness of organisations to change their business model / business practices.

Substantial eco-innovation in the product or service must bring improvements in environmental performance over comparable alternatives, whilst at least maintaining functional performance. There must be continuous improvement in performance regarding the organisation's stated environmental objectives as demonstrated by regular monitoring and reporting. The organisation is also requested to submit information on the duration of the development process behind the eco-innovation. This because the time-frame behind the eco-innovation can be relevant in judging the "innovativeness" of the measure and/or the achieved improvement in environmental performance, as well as the organisation's level of commitment (see also supportive criterion F). Sometimes, if an eco-innovation has a very significant impact on the organisation, it may even be managed under multi-year corporate plans/programmes. In order to take this into account, eco-innovation measures that were developed/implemented during the last 3 years are eligible for nomination.

## **2. Improvement in environmental performance resulting from the innovative measure (max. 35 points)**

Under this criterion the organisation is requested to provide information that will allow the jury to assess the achieved improvement in environmental performance – either absolute or as intensity – achieved by the innovative measure(s) outlined under 1. An indispensable prerequisite for benchmarking environmental excellence is collecting information and measuring environmental performance - as the management adage goes: "you cannot improve what you don't measure!" Information baselines will generally enable the organisation to identify, track, and measure inputs and outputs in the form of products, wastes and emissions. The information provided here will generally be documented in the environmental statement. EMAS registered companies should at least monitor the effects of their eco-innovation

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<sup>2</sup> Eco-innovation Action Plan–Good practices: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoap/about-eco-innovation/good-practices/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoap/about-eco-innovation/good-practices/index_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Eco-innovation Action Plan–Market replication: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eco-innovation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eco-innovation/index_en.htm)

measures in respect to the following environmental core (performance) indicators specified in the EMAS Regulation: a) energy efficiency; b) material efficiency; c) water; d) waste; e) biodiversity and f) emissions. In many cases the environmental statement will suffice as supporting evidence (possibly supplemented by the environmental policy and/or objectives of the organisation). As far as possible, the environmental effects of the eco-innovation measure must be specified individually for each environmental core indicator and/or in relation to the objectives and targets for environmental performance improvement regarding each of the core indicators. Although the improvement on environmental performance cannot always be linked directly to the core performance indicators, e.g. if the result of the eco-innovation measure is an improved end-product that has an improved environmental product performance during its use phase, it is welcomed if the environmental benefits of the eco-innovation measure are specified by environmental core indicators wherever possible<sup>4</sup>.

## **Supportive EMAS Award criteria (max. 30 points)**

Supportive EMAS Award criteria are mostly EMAS-specific criteria that are relevant for all EMAS registered organisations. Truly excellent organisations are expected to be able to provide substantial information on their best practices relating to these aspects.

### **A) Supply chain and customers (max. 5 points)**

You can make a commitment to the environment in your own work, but your efforts will be multiplied by involving your suppliers, service providers and customers. Successfully integrating these business partners in actions to improve your organisation's environmental performance requires creative instinct. Companies that are successful in this respect can be an inspiring example to others. Relevant information in this context would help answer e.g. the following questions:

- Has your organisation actively involved its suppliers and/or customers when implementing actions to improve the environmental performance of your products and services? If yes, in what way?
- Did you use a life cycle perspective to improve the eco-design of your products/services and did you involve your suppliers/customers in doing so? If yes, in what way?

### **B) Stakeholder engagement / employee involvement (max. 5 points)**

Under EMAS, organisations are stimulated to engage in a regular and systematic dialogue with stakeholders (employees, suppliers, customers, non-governmental organisations, etc.) with feedback of the results into management decision-making. EMAS registered organisations are also encouraged to closely involve their employees in all aspects of environmental management, and to organise capacity-building in other areas. Relevant information in this context could help answer e.g. the following questions:

- In what way has your organisation taken into account the opinions of its (main) stakeholder(s) for example in screening environmental aspects, drafting the environmental statement, external communication activities etc.?
- Have you actively involved your employees in:
  - the definition of new environmental objectives;
  - peer audit activities (i.e. intra business function);
  - the analysis of non-conformities or preventive actions;
  - the management review;

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<sup>4</sup> The European Commission is aware that, depending on the eco-innovation, the improvement on environmental performance cannot always be linked directly to the core performance indicators. Improvements of the environmental performance can also consist of an improvement on the final product that leads to an environmental improvement in the product performance during its use phase. The same can apply to eco-innovations related to a service or process not directly linked to one of the EMAS core indicators.

- drafting your organisations environmental statement;
- the evaluation of significance of the environmental aspects.

### **C) Communication and transparency (max. 5 points)**

EMAS organisations are also stimulated to establish an open dialogue with the public and other interested parties with regard to the environmental impact of their activities, products and services in order to identify the public's and other interested parties' concerns. In addition, it is desirable that the organisation adapt its EMAS environmental statement to the interests and information needs of its target audiences. Also, the corporate mission and policy statements (including its environmental policy) must be consistent with the aim of continuously improving environmental performance. Also, principles such as the precautionary approach or environmental risk management should be respected and promoted by the organisation. Relevant information in this context could answer the following questions:

- Has your organisation tailored its EMAS environmental statement to the interests and information needs of your different target audiences (e.g. by drafting different sections of the environmental statement)?
- Has your organisation taken further actions (besides publication alone) to communicate the contents of the environmental statement to different external stakeholders?

### **D) Indirect environmental aspects of your product/service range (max. 5 points)**

EMAS is indirectly interrelated with product-/service ranges/offers. Implementing EMAS can help to prompt new ideas for products and services by introducing a focus on environmental issues. Relevant information in this context could answer the following questions:

- Has your organisation carried out a life cycle assessment in order to identify and assess your direct and indirect environmental aspects?
- Did your organisation use a life cycle assessment approach to determine or revise its environmental objectives?
- Is the communication of the environmental performance of your products/services based on the results of a life cycle assessment (study)?

### **E) Replication potential and benchmarking (max. 5 points)**

At its best the implemented eco-innovative environmental measures must constitute good (if not best!) practice. They should also have the potential to be replicated/shared with other organisations (e.g. through business networks, dissemination at conferences, involving other organisations in the same EMAS cluster<sup>5</sup> etc.).

Relevant information in this context could answer the following questions:

- To what extent could the eco-innovation be copied / implemented or further developed by other actors / other organisations in the same sector or other sectors?
- To what extent has the implemented eco-innovation demonstrated market-readiness (successful examples are mentioned under eco-innovation market replication<sup>6</sup> initiative)?
- To what extent did the eco-innovation stimulate additional investment(s)?

Monitoring and measuring environmental performance is paramount for improving that performance. Evaluating the effectiveness of the environmental measures is also the basis for benchmarking exercises. EMAS registered companies that are committed to a continuous

<sup>5</sup> A cluster of organisations committed to a continuous improvement of cluster environmental performance through the application of common environmental policies and objectives and EMAS registration of organisations (EMAS article 37).

<sup>6</sup> Eco-innovation Action Plan–Market replication: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eco-innovation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eco-innovation/index_en.htm)

improvement of their environmental performance are especially interested in benchmarking exercises. By benchmarking they can compare their own environmental performance to that of the best performers in their sector. The European Commission supports the benchmarking of environmental performance by developing EMAS Sectoral Reference Documents (SRDs)<sup>7</sup>. These documents describe benchmarks of environmental excellence together with the relevant performance indicators. This helps organisations to identify possibilities for environmental improvement. (Final) drafts of EMAS SRDs for the following sectors are available: Retail, Tourism, Construction and Public Administration.

Relevant information in this context could answer the following questions:

- To what extent did your organisation compare its environmental performance with relevant benchmarks of the sector (i.e. EMAS SRDs, BREF documents, sectoral environmental reports etc.)?
- What was the novelty and origins of the implemented eco-innovation(s)?

#### **F) Organisational commitment (max. 5 points)**

In this context the level of commitment an organisation has demonstrated to achieve environmental excellence is assessed. If an eco-innovation measure has such a profound impact on the organisation that it needs to be managed under multi-year corporate plans/programmes, this will be considered a plus for the nomination of an organisation compared to organisations that only 'harvest' the 'low hanging fruit'.

The level of commitment of the organisation towards achieving excellence in environmental performance, environmental innovation and sustainability issues in general is reflected in the first place by aspects like e.g. the resources allocated to environmental activities and the time frame during which the commitment is upheld (the time-period needed to achieve an eco-innovation measure). The organisation is requested to submit information that can be used to assess the amount of resources allocated by the organisation to improve its environmental performance, to lower its ecological footprint, and to implement the eco-innovation measure in particular (economic resources, human resources, engagement of other interested parties, development of agreements with others, partnerships, etc.). This means that organisations succeed in maintaining a strong commitment to eco-innovation for many years, even if the management changes or if the economic prospects are less favourable. Relevant information in this context could help answer e.g. the following questions:

- Describe how the environmental issues and the commitments to environmental performance improvements influence your business model and organisational decision making.
- Are environmental aspects of your organisation a key factor when defining your competitive business strategy?
- Are environmental concerns a common area of all your business departments?
- Did your commitment to environmental performance improvements have a significant effect on one or more of the following aspects: company's value proposition, target customer-groups, distribution channels, customer relationships, core capabilities, partner network; and cost and revenue structure?

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<sup>7</sup> Best Environmental Management Practices: <http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/activities/emas/index.html>