CASE 10: EMAS EASY, HUNGARY

BASIC DETAILS

Name of initiative
EMAS-Easy, project implementation in Hungary

Type of initiative
EMAS initiative / capacity building / direct support measure

Country/Region
Hungary

PART 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Actors involved in the delivery of this initiative
The implementing organisation in Hungary was a “KÖVET-INEM Hungária” the Hungarian Association of Environmentally Aware Management, which is an independent, non-for-profit, professional organisation (http://kovet.hu/). KÖVET was partner to the INEM in developing the proposal for the international framework programme. The project was implemented with the endorsement of relevant ministries (Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Economy and Transport) however, further governmental support was not provided. Actors involved in the implementation of the framework programme were international and local experts on environmental management (EMAS), local EMAS Easy trainers, dedicated experts of participating SMEs, and local EMAS auditors.

Target audience
SMEs

Objectives
The objectives of the framework international programme are:

- to build capacity in the new Member States for the implementation of EMAS in SMEs;
- to demonstrate the feasibility of cost-effective EMAS implementation in SMEs by means of simplified environmental management tools;
- to collect experiences in order to improve the tested model of simplified EMAS implementation in SMEs.

National pilot projects for the dissemination of the EMAS Easy model were started in December 2004 in five CEE countries: Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The goals set at the national level were:

- to train 5 national experts in the application of the Ecomapping© and EMAS easy™ tools;
- to train 10 SMEs and to coach the implementation activities by the above national experts;
- the best performing SMEs acquire EMAS certification;
to collect and evaluate experiences with the implementation in order to integrate them to the EMAS Easy model;

- dissemination of project results.

**Description**

The motto of the EMAS Easy approach is “10 days, 10 pages and 10 people”, which refers to the simplified way it offers to implement the EU’s Eco-Management and Audit Scheme in SMEs. The subject of this case study is the implementation of a pilot EMAS Easy project in Hungary, which was possible in the framework of a larger international programme: “EMAS Capacity Building in the New Member States”.

The ‘EMAS Capacity Building in the New Member States’ international programme followed the classical two-phase implementation sequence where the first phase is the “training of trainers” at the international level, which is then followed by the implementation of projects at the local level with the help of experts trained in the first stage. The model of the framework programme to implement an EMS, naturally, follows the traditional sequence of planning, implementation and operation, checking and correction and finally management review. In the focus of implementation activities there were two simplified (or “light”) environmental management tools, Ecomapping© and EMAS easy™, the united application of which is regarded the EMAS Easy approach. Both tools had been developed specifically for SMEs by Mr Heinz-Werner Engel of INEM and ABECE and his colleagues, in order to provide SMEs with simplified and cost-effective means of EMS implementation.

Ecomapping is a simple and easy-to-adopt method and tool which enables its user to pinpoint issues of environmental concern as well as measures with improvement potential on a simplified map of the workshop/production site. Attention is focused on the different environmental elements and problems such as water, soil, air, energy, waste, risks and urban situation.

EMAS easy™ is a simplified documentation tool, which enables the implementing agent to document its environmental management system with the help of 10 simple (excel) forms based on the results of Ecomapping. The forms have specifically been devised to ensure compliance with EMAS requirements.

Both tools have already been applied successfully in several similar projects. However, they are the subject of improvement on a continuous basis – this was one of the goals of this initiative. In particular, this programme was the first large-scale dissemination of the two tools in synergy in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region, and the integration of experiences from this different cultural and administrative background was an important aspect of the project.

The schedule of implementation was the following:

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1. It was led by the International Network for Environmental Management (INEM). In addition to Hungary, participating countries were: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. For more information visit: [http://www.inem.org/current/emas_easy.html](http://www.inem.org/current/emas_easy.html).
2. Belgian Association of Eco-counsellors
3. For further information about the tools see: [http://www.ecomapping.org](http://www.ecomapping.org) and [www.emas-easy.com](http://www.emas-easy.com).
• training of experts: December, 2004 (in the framework of the international programme);
• training of SME experts and environmental assessment of participating firms: February – December 2005;
• certification of SMEs with best performance: January and February 2006.

Concrete activities of the project at the national level were carried out in the following way:
• Significant environmental impacts were identified by the experts of KÖVET involving the nominated environmental deputies of SMEs, with the help of the Ecomapping© tool.
• Environmental compliance conformity checking was performed by the experts of KÖVET and SMEs were informed about occurring non-compliance and necessary correction actions.
• The training of SME staff was carried out in two phases. First SME managers and their environmental deputies had been trained in the framework of four joint group sessions by the experts of KÖVET. In the second phase further staff members were trained by the experts of KÖVET separately, which, in some cases, this was further extended by training conducted by the SME managers / their environmental deputies.
• The implementation and documentation of the EMS was performed jointly by the environmental deputies of SMEs and the experts of KÖVET with the help of the EMAS easy™ forms. During this period the experts of KÖVET were available for consultation either in person (on site) or by electronic means.

The main features of this pilot application were (later, at the evaluation section these features will be referred to again):
• group learning sessions of 10 participating firms;
• wide range in the primary activity field of participating SMEs;
• country-wide geographical dispersion of participating firms; and
• different backgrounds in relation to the general management practices of participating SMEs.

Main intended benefits for SMEs
According to earlier implementation experiences in Western Europe, the application of the EMAS Easy approach has the following benefits (over conventional models of implementation):
• 150% less effort for the implementing agent
• 20% of verification and certification costs
• 3 times less individual consulting effort
• Experienced EMS consultants can adopt the approach in 2 x 2 days

Main outputs
The goals set at the start of the project have been successfully accomplished by the implementers: five local experts have been trained for the dissemination of the EMAS Easy approach; 10 SMEs, out of which so far three have already acquired EMAS certification got trained in EMAS and the EMAS Easy approach; and the results of this pilot run have been integrated into the model of implementation.
Similar initiatives
Though already several environmental management training programmes with various curricula have been conducted in Hungary, specifically for SMEs, this project was the first attempt to provide assistance specifically in the implementation of EMAS.

PART 2: COMMUNICATION

How SMEs are made aware of the opportunities under this initiative
SMEs were made aware of the EMAS Easy project in Hungary via the existing network of KÖVET, by direct e-mailing (4000 recipients) and phone calls as well as by the website of the project. Since the initiative was a pilot project, able to involve a limited number of participants, there was no active marketing strategy of the initiative. However, one is to be prepared soon, since they are in the process of securing funding for continuation.

One of the key lessons learnt with communication was that it is particularly hard to persuade firms to take part in the initiative. It is to a great extent part of the well-known problem that due to the SME sector’s relatively early stage of development in the region, employees are already overburdened with core business activates (and have no time for activities from it in their perception). Therefore in the future the benefits of implementation must be even better emphasised and creative ways of involvement devised.

PART 3: BUDGET

Total budget
The total budget of the initiative (international framework programme) was €50,000 out of which the Hungarian implementation cost €10,000.

Source of funding
The source of funding was the European Commissions’ ad-hoc budget.

SME contributions
Participating SMEs contributed on average €800 each.

Steps taken to secure long-term finance
They are currently in the process of securing further funding for the continuation of the project.

Cost effectiveness
To evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the EMAS Easy approach the relative costs of implementation (compared to traditional ways of EMAS implementation at SMEs) may serve as good measures. Such figures have already been provided in the “Background” section of this case study.

PART 4: EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS

Delivering improved compliance with environmental legislation and/or improved environmental performance
In ideal cases full environmental compliance and improved environmental performance of participating organisations was ensured by the EMAS system itself: certified organisations have to demonstrate sustained improvement of environmental performance and be fully in compliance with relevant environmental regulation. Even in cases where certification has not (yet) taken place, the capacity building of local staff and the ensuing consultation activities did deliver improvements. However, sustained improvement until registration cannot be guaranteed.

Outcomes, ie changes in behaviour
Change in the awareness of management and employees has been measured during the national evaluation of the project and proved to be significantly positive.

Impacts, ie physical changes in the environment
Evidence on improvements in physical terms has not yet been calculated.

Performance Indicators at the National Level
- Training of experts for further dissemination: 5 out 5 (100 %)
- SMEs successfully accomplished the training: 10 out of 10 (100%)
- Best performing SMEs acquire certification: so far 3 firms has been certified
- Evaluation of the pilot implementation and integration of experiences: successfully accomplished

Other performance indicators based on the questionnaire survey conducted by KÖVET (0 – no effect; -1 – negative effect; 1, 2, 3 – positive effect, strength in ascending order):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of participating interviewees: 16</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How successful was your firm in achieving the goals set at the start of the project?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How successful was Ecomapping© in evaluating the environmental impacts of your firm?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful were the EMAS easy™ forms?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent has the programme improved the management of environmental aspects in your firm?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the effect of the programme on the environmental compliance of the firm?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the programme resulted in the improvement of environmental performance?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent was the programme successful in integrating environmental aspects to the everyday routines of the firm?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

International Experience
Summing up the evaluation of the programme at the international level, local experts were explicitly satisfied with the Ecomapping© tool as they found it simple to use and
very “hands on” to work with. Workers in most enterprises also shared this feeling. The EMAS easy™ forms were a little more difficult to understand, especially for younger consultants who have not yet acquired sufficient experience in the documentation and operation of a management system. Several modifications or clarifications have been proposed, which have now been integrated in the new version of the tool. Among firms that have already had a quality management system or other sort of management framework in place, about two-thirds decided to use the EMAS easy™ system to integrate all management systems together in their firm.

Main strengths

- Application of proven simplified and cost-effective tools, specifically designed for SMEs;
- Group sessions provide a cost effective way of training
- Sharing of experiences among participating firms ensures a particular added value.

Main weaknesses

- Due to the wide range of activities of the involved firms, there was not sufficient time and/or enough opportunity to deal with sector (activity) specific issues.
- The regional dispersion of firms meant that representatives had to travel to the capital for the seminars. Also, issues on the regional level often emerged e.g. communication with regional authorities etc.
- The scheduling of seminars and consultation (two weeks between the sessions) was perceived to be too long.
- Differences in the experience of participating SMEs with general management systems made it hard to keep the same pace with the different firms.

All the above identified problems have been analysed and logical solutions, e.g. introduction of sector specific programmes and with regional coverage etc, suggested for the later implementation the project. However, it is to be noted that it will be a big challenge to attract sufficient numbers of SMEs for such programmes in the region. The weakness of the EMAS Easy approach itself is that it focuses on the production (or other core) activities of firms and there is little attention paid to the environmental aspects of ancillary activities like procurement, logistics etc, which can add up to significant impacts. Further, it is difficult to assess service providing SMEs. Both issues can be easily tackled by the extension of the approach with some smart tools, for instance questionnaires and check lists etc.
PART 5: TRANSFERABILITY

The EMAS Easy approach can be transferred to other EU Member States easily due to its proven approach and results both in Western Europe and through this pilot programme in the new Member States. An overall key lesson learnt with the implementation of this pilot project related to transferability was that the cultural and administrative background (i.e. the SME sector’s general level of development, management culture, employee behaviour etc.) has to be addressed. Further key lessons learnt in relation to potential transferability can be found in part two (communication) and four (evaluation, weaknesses) of this case study.

PART 6: CONCLUSIONS

The EMAS Easy approach is a very useful instrument for simplified and cost-effective implementation of EMAS in SMEs. Problems and initial weaknesses of the approach have been successfully identified into the project and their potential solutions as well as lessons learnt have been integrated into the model of implementation. It is recommended that in order to cover the full spectrum of activities of firms and to give more opportunities for improvements (drivers of improvements) at ancillary areas like procurement, logistics, accounting etc, the EMAS Easy approach should be extended, with further easy-to-use tools e.g. questionnaires and checklists.

Sources of information/people interviewed

- Ms Renata Ortner (KŐVET): Survey based evaluation of the EMAS Easy Project in Hungary
- Interviews with Mr Imre Pap, KŐVET-INEM Hungária
- Interviews with two participating SMEs

The compilers of the study would like to express their special thanks for KŐVET INEM Hungária for making the information available.