

3rd European EMS Forum 2009 in Brussels

On May 12th, 2009, participants from 9 European countries followed the invitation of EFAEP (European Federation of Associations of Environmental Professionals) to join the 3rd European EMS Forum in Brussels organised through VNU e.V., Germany. The high-level presentations and discussions from leading experts and respected professionals concentrated on the comparison of the two major Environmental Management Systems (EMS) EMAS and ISO 14001.

Innovation by means of EMS

Dr. Schemmer, global environmental manager of Bombardier Transportation opened the series of lectures by pointing out the relevant differences between EMAS and ISO 14001. He particularly stressed that sustainability and the reduction of factors increasing the greenhouse gas effect would lead to a favourable return of investment for the business. According to Dr. Schemmer, the predominant impact towards climate change is the products so that the highest potential in this respect is to be seen in an innovative product design.

EMAS Revision

The representative of the European Commission, Marianne Muller, underlined that organisations registered under EMAS have continuously improved their environmental performance over the past years. She explained the essential amendments integrated into the EMAS III Revision which is estimated to come into force before the end of 2009. Marianne Muller emphasised that EMAS represents a highly efficient system for any business to achieve legal conformity and increase the environmental performance due to the fact that EMAS provides guidance documents for specific branches as well as key performance indicators.

ISO 14001 in Business and Industry

Martin Baxter of IEMA CEnv U.K., who as an EMS expert is involved in different EMAS and ISO bodies, assessed the success of ISO 14001 by means of the high number of certified organisations in more than 80 countries worldwide. He appraised the features of ISO 14001 facilitating the link to other management systems. In the lively debate some conference participants recommended the prospective ISO-

14001-Revision to put a stronger emphasis on the quality assurance during the certification process.

EMASeasy for SMEs

A solution to the problem how the access to Environmental Management Systems can be facilitated for small and medium enterprises was demonstrated by Heinz Werner Engel of EMAS Helpdesk who developed with EcoConseils the ECOmapping and EMASEasy tools. He impressively illustrated that the easy approach to EMS by implementing the ECOmaps and by clustering the enterprises into a convoy would lower the barriers for SMEs and would reduce the time and costs for validation.

Implementation of Legal Compliance

Anja Oels of TÜV Rhineland Group in Spain pointed out that despite the relatively elevated number of Spanish organisations participating in an Environmental Management System, the established methods of implementation would only lead to a varying level of legal compliance. According to the ISO Annual Report 2007 and to the European Commission website, Spain would be in the 5th position in the ranking of the EC member countries regarding the number of ISO certified organisations and in the 2nd position with regard to the EMAS validated enterprises. Nevertheless, Anja Oels referred to the partially insufficient infrastructure, e.g. in the waste separation and disposal, as well as to the public administration lacking to some extent a more practical approach - being the reason for a less effective implementation of the requirements of the EMAS provision. She regretted the fact that an increasing number of small hotels would terminate their participation in EMAS as soon as the implementation of the Environmental Management System would not show its effect in the number of bookings.

Database System BOMcheck

Dr. Aidan Turnbull, ENVIRON U.K., presented the web database BOMcheck, procuring a cost-effective and efficient platform for substances declarations in order to assure legal compliance, especially for organisations applying for an EMAS validation. Already in use in the electronics industry, BOMcheck informs the complete supply chain from the manufacturer to the various suppliers and sales

persons about the up-to-date hazardous substances in a product according to the RoHS directive and the REACH regulation. The relevant data is only entered once, but at the same time at the disposal of all (authorised) participants to the system who receive an automatic notification as soon as requirements change.

EFAEP's 3rd European EMS Forum 2009 closed with a very positive response from its international participants who expressed their demand for a 4th European EMS Forum in May 2010 !