

European EMS Forum 2010

The 4th European EMS Forum 2010 took place in Brussels on May 5. The conference was organised by the German Association for Environmental Professionals (VNU) on behalf of the EMS Expert Group of the European Federation of Associations of Environmental Professionals (EFAEP). Participants came from 8 European countries and included representatives from the European Commission, environmental managers, environmental auditors and verifiers, government officials and representatives from civil society organisations.

EMAS Revision

The participants discussed the role and development of the latest EMAS revision (EMAS III) that was presented by Gilles Vincent, representative of the European Commission DG ENV C.1. EMAS III came into effect on January 11, 2010, and, according to Mr. Vincent, aims to facilitate the introduction of EMAS, especially for SMEs. In addition EMAS III allows for corporate EMAS validation, i.e. validation of organisations with several sites. The present activities concentrate on the revision of audit cycles for SMEs, on the cluster approach and global appliance, on the introduction of core indicators and the provision of reference documents.

EMAS Global

“All that glitters is not gold”, stated Lennart Schleicher (Schaeffler Group) who is responsible for the EMAS validation of the global Schaeffler production sites. The group has already had to face the disadvantages of EMAS III being the compulsory annual verification as well as the required (extremely comprehensive) common environmental statement of all the EMAS validated sites of the group. The following discussion between the representatives of the EU Commission and the conference participants revealed the mutual consent and claim that the development of EMAS should focus on the easy application of EMAS III based on comprehensible guidelines.

ISO 14001 - The Role of Environmental Management Systems (EMS)

The further potentials of EMAS III were stressed by Kim Christiansen, representative of Danish Standards, who informed about the future development of the ISO 14000

series of standards, and who acknowledged that EMAS III not only fulfils the requirements of ISO 14001, but goes beyond and above. Mr. Christiansen underlined the valuable role of the EMS as part of any sustainable management ensuring the improvement of environmental performance and as being suitable for serving as superordinate strategic management system. Thus, the EMS stimulates the discussion on values within organisations while taking into consideration the requirements of customers, suppliers and other partners.

Climate Change Impact

Kay Johnstone (U.K. Climate Change Impact Programme) adopted another perspective and presented the experience of organisations on their way to adapt to the climate change. Ms. Johnstone pointed out that the organisations' influence on the climate should be as low as possible, due to the fact that, in any case, stakeholders will have to face the real (climatic) environment to come. In the long run organisations cannot but analyse and prioritise their climate change risk in order to limit and manage the impact. The integration of climate change risks will be, according to Ms. Johnstone, one of the future challenges for all (environmental) management systems.

GHG Reduction Strategy – Emission Trading System ETS

The final speaker, Fred Wenke (DQS GmbH) analysed the EMS as instrument for the GHG reduction and for the Emission Trading System ETS concluding that, whereas many organisations find an environmental management system helpful when implementing a GHG reduction strategy, the EMS has still a broad potential to be developed in this regard.

Future Requirements

The conference closed with a lively discussion - especially about indirect environmental aspects – and with a calling upon the responsible authorities and stakeholders to improve environmental management systems and their respective guidelines by integration of these aspects.

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