



Regional study on the exchange process

Czech Republic Region

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1. Introduction

The activities in the first part of the project have provided each project partner the opportunity to interact with different sorts of stakeholders at different levels, within their own regions and with stakeholders of other regions and countries. This has led to learning and capacity building processes that have allowed not only the generation of the “Towards EMAS Action Plan” but also to improvement and reinforcement of other aspects that concern the competencies of the partners.

This second part of the Regional Study of the Interreg ENHANCE Project aims to present the main lessons learned from the exchange process that has taken place during the two years of the project.

2. Lessons learnt from the SHM, IM & WS

The regulatory reliefs and promotional incentives are important tools for supporting EMAS organisations. Attention towards those instruments is increasing in general, but awareness of them is still very low. There are only a few regulatory reliefs in force and EMAS as the environmental management system compared with ISO 140001 is almost unknown. The ENHANCE project is a unique opportunity to change it at the national level through EMAS experiences in the other states of the EU.

All the project partners have finished an intense learning process, which has been based on the identification and transposition of best practices that can be potentially implemented in their own country or region.

The learning process included not only analysis activity but also capacity building work and knowledge transfer. The debates have been carried out not only among the partners but also within the network of stakeholders that each partner has brought. Accordingly, the most useful project activities, from the Czech Republic's point of view, were the interregional stakeholder workshops and meetings, where many different opinions could be heard and where the practical views and experiences were collected. Also, the visits to Spanish, Italian, Estonian, and Austrian EMAS registered companies and gaining information about industrial and local government symbiosis, were very important. What was most interesting to hear was what reasons and forces are crucial to enhance EMAS in each participating country and which industrial sectors are most involved and interested in EMAS or in environmental voluntary schemes generally. Regarding the reliefs which have been chosen for transposition to the national EMAS Action Plan, the main points which have been learnt are as follows:

Financial support

One of the best evaluated incentives in the Czech Republic were EMAS grant programmes and funding schemes. Those are very successful tools for raising the number of EMAS registrations, but they have some cons as well. The disadvantage of this type of support is the short-term impact and the absence of further motivation to registration renewal. The organizations are motivated primarily to get a financial support, whereas the long-term environmental effect from a request for continuous improvement of key environmental aspects goes down at the moment the support ends. This is caused, besides other reasons, by the high-costs of EMAS audits. Over all, the positive effect is undeniable in terms of propagation and uptake awareness of EMAS. Due to this support, EMAS registered organisations have increased significantly in the Czech Republic. What we have learnt is the fact that we must also create other tools to minimize the fact that

the organizations are leaving EMAS after the three-year-period, when financial support runs out.

Green public procurement

The very highly assessed reliefs are related to the GPP. During the Tallinn workshop, the Austrian's stakeholder presented a useful point – bonification evaluation system in public procurement process. It uses linear interpolation in the competitive procedure with negotiation instead of a weighting mechanism.

Considering EMAS in public procurement, a contractor can require an EMAS certificate as proof related to the tenderer's technical qualification. The problem is that active use of this measure would require a high number of EMAS registered organizations and there is usually no difference between EMAS and ISO 14001. That is why some actions must be taken to put it in practice (public procurer education, information campaign, etc.). The weakness of this regulatory relief is that only big enterprises are targeted. For small companies, EMAS is still too expensive and is practically not spread in the Czech Republic at all. Another issue to be solved is that the possibility of “self-declaration” is given. Also, different opinions across the stakeholder's forum related to the bonus-point assessment of environmental management system (EMAS versus ISO 14001, or against others) did not help to solve the problem. But again the main problem is awareness. There is still very little awareness about EMAS among the contracting authorities. If tendering documents refer to EMAS, ISO14001, or some other, this doesn't improve knowledge about EMAS. Facing all the problems mentioned above, the solution can be to use the system which works in the Catalan region, which is applied in the service sector. The principle is to put a requirement for EMAS into a contract. It means that a service contract will have a clause requiring that the contracted company must have EMAS registration or the company undertakes to implement EMAS during a certain time period. It is the most effective measure for boosting EMAS and can be used to influence the implementation of EMAS.

Inspections and audits

Another regulatory relief which was discussed very deeply was reduction in the frequency of inspections for EMAS organizations. Reduction of environmental inspection seems to be one of the most feasible steps to support those EMAS organizations which are controlled within the Industrial Emissions Directive. EMAS can be a relevant point in the risk assessment process related to inspection frequency. The problem pointed out in the meeting was the different financial cost related to obligatory inspection compared with EMAS audit expenditures. The weakness of this relief is also the small number of companies affected by environmental inspections and the number of EMAS companies, considering the fact that the real effect it has is only for companies at a high-risk level. Moreover, in other countries, most sites already have a prolonged inspection frequency. There have to be other benefits, for example the new standards in control process with a full-check system, e-database with all non-conformities to enable all the monitoring in a shorter time and more comfortable for both sides.

Collaboration with verifiers has shown one of the negatives of the EMAS registration process. A barrier which was identified in the Austrian meeting related to the environmental control procedure, is the lack of communication and mutual trust between control authorities. Control bodies perform their duties through prescribed procedures and do not take into account the results of previous audits and inspections concerning the same areas. One of the solutions that has been discussed is training of inspectors and auditors, focused on exchanging information and experience, and improving communication with the organizations. Part of this approach shall be the creation of a combined checklist covering duties of both the inspectors and the verifiers. This could help to improve and simplify the monitoring process and represent a real advantage for registered entities.

3. Interaction and cooperation with stakeholders

As mentioned before, the Czech Republic is a country with insufficient support of EMAS with 9 related regulatory reliefs and 20 registered organizations. Therefore, the role of the stakeholders was very important, not only in the assessment phase, but mostly in the networking and sharing their practical experience. The stakeholders were the representatives of EMAS organizations, and also of another public institutions such as the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of the Industry, or the certification companies – verifiers. Interacting with the stakeholders has allowed us to realize the relevance of communication when it comes to the implementation of regulatory reliefs. The lack of information on the side of potential EMAS registered organizations makes every given effort useless.

The second important benefit of the exchange process has been the possibility to work together with other stakeholders in the Czech Republic. It brought a wide range of knowledge, considering their technical possibilities, limits and economic needs, related to the implementation of specific regulatory reliefs and incentives. The main burdens which have been identified are the restrictions due to state bureaucracy related to enforcing environmental legislation, which produce many reporting obligations and, finally, a lack of will.

Our organisation collaborates with stakeholders in many specific ways. Firstly, CENIA has been asked from one of the stakeholder group members to be a participating organization in the public procurer's educational programme called Public Investment Academy at the Ministry for Regional Development. This is big opportunity to increase the interest towards to the green economy, respectively how to incorporate the GPP's principles into the public sector management. The second way to support EMAS is to continue in collaboration with the verifiers. The goal is to create a set of rules and professional standards covering the uncommon situations related to EMAS registration, mostly the

exceptions and derogations at a corporate level. Another participation in the IPPC's working-group by the Ministry of the Environment is probably coming soon.

Participation of our colleagues in the micro-stakeholder meetings was useful. One colleague from the IPPC department and another from the Waste department provided us with wider context of the IPPC and waste management processes in a very informal atmosphere.

Since EMAS in the Czech Republic is a not very well used instrument, the stakeholder group is not very wide. Whole group consists of about 60 people, but the meetings have attended by just 20 people on average. Some of them are not that interested in participating in the project, others would have to travel very long distances to attend the meeting, or had different plans. To summarize, 20 people is still a small number. There were also 17 people who responded our survey, so the result of that is that the opinion of just a few stakeholders is not very representative.

A positive aspect which could be seen is that all the stakeholders who participated in our workshops have been very active and gave us their feedback.

4. Main lessons learnt from professionals involved as SH

Concerning the information and knowledge gained by other stakeholders, all the Czech participants agreed that their participation has provided them with practical experience related to their professional position and competences. This has been using examples from other stakeholders and project participating country authorities, for example in involving companies in waste management or other industrial sectors. All the invited professionals have appreciated the personal contact and opportunity to discuss their opinions and share the problems with the representatives of all kind of stakeholders around one table. All this can contribute to discussions about EMAS and a circular economy in the Czech Republic, and it can better relate their daily work to the ideas that other professionals have presented.

One of the most interesting and inspirational contributions was declared at the Estonian meeting from the Czech GPP experts (from The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) point of view. However, deeper analysis on the costs and the effects of EMAS registration to the existing market in the Czech Republic is needed; he was really grateful he could get many remarks from foreign professionals about ways of encouraging tenderers to get EMAS registration in green public procurement. Also, his idea to have a simple guideline to measure EMAS and compare it to other certification schemes would be a useful tool for many procurers and might motivate tenderers to use EMAS as an environmental criterion in their procurements.

The most interesting thing for the Czech EMS manager (a big metal producing company) was the proposal of regulatory relief for EMAS registered companies concerning tax or

fees discounts. In his opinion, the small EMAS competitiveness comes up from indistinguishability within the EMS systems and from the fact that there are no clear advantages compared to ISO 14001 for industrial companies. EMAS must offer something more than ISO 14001, otherwise not many companies will have a reason to register.

5. Main lessons learnt from the cooperation with other partners

For CENIA, the main benefit was networking. It was very useful to hear opinions and problems from participants from the other EU countries. It brought practical knowledge and experiences at different levels and from different points of view. We learnt that the important thing is the consideration that a policy building process stands on direct contact and open discussion between professionals covering public authorities, big industry companies, SMEs, and other kind of stakeholders. This knowledge is universal and the most effective way to build and share good working tools and ideas across Europe.

It was also very enriching to visit partner's home environments and try to understand the society and municipal policy. It also brought a wider context into our project. The lesson what we have learnt is that every state has a different policy and systems, and that not every regulatory relief is useful for our Czech environment.

We think that we have created a reliable network and important contacts. Our capacity has been increased by this project and many experiences have been shared. We hope that we will have a chance to cooperate sometime again in the future.

6. Other lessons learnt and actions to be implemented

The other lessons we have learnt were linked to the stakeholder's presentations. The most beneficial ones came from the representatives of EMAS-registered organisations who shared their opinion and experiences about how EMAS communication could be improved. They shared nice examples of the environmental statements, which excelled in graphic design, focused on figures, pictures and statistics as a clear example of communication, transparency and a participation tool. The companies also explained development procedures of their environmental statement, involving their co-workers.

Also very beneficial was a presentation of the so-called Industrial Symbiosis. Mrs. Veronica Kuchinow from Barcelona introduced an organisation called Simbiosy, which serves as an intermediary to help enterprises to optimize the surplus resources they do not use to develop their business (such as by-products, waste, heat, logistics, and rainwater). Simbiosy is looking for other companies to exploit these resources effectively, and then encourages companies to collaborate, creating an industrial symbiosis strategy. The goal is to reduce costs or increase profits in any business sector from the purchase or

conversion of these remaining resources. It often happens that organizations that have a very different focus are creating the most interesting cooperation. Symbiosy is a public organization that falls under the municipal office, thus giving impartiality and therefore credibility for companies. The trust of the companies was also created thanks to the long-term activity of the organization (25 years) and a number of examples of successful cooperation. The organization thus makes a significant contribution to the development of the circular economy. Mrs Kuchinow also mentioned that companies with EMAS are already one step ahead in identifying opportunities.

Some experiences, answers, and examples about how EMAS-registered organisations or authorities could cooperate were shown as proof of a successful communication and dissemination process (EMAS awards, EMAS conference, guidelines, etc.). In addition, specific guidelines were presented by the Catalan region in order to help and support the implementation of EMAS in some of the priority EMAS sectors. This was very inspiring and motivating, as well as the discussion about EMAS Easy – a comprehensive methodology on EMAS implementation for SMEs including a guide on how to make an environmental statement easy in a few steps.

7. Conclusions

In the term of this project, the lessons learnt and the experiences have been increasing slowly but significantly. EMAS as a voluntary instrument is quite in the background of the government's interest and it is very hard to adopt some strong relief which could bring a big change to the Czech market. Society is still focused too much on price and profit; therefore environmental aspects are not so attractive, especially in a voluntary way.

The most useful lesson learnt was a requirement for substantial change in the existing National EMAS programme. Attention should be focused on intensive negotiation and collaboration with the other public bodies to promote the advantages of EMAS by discussing and working on an everyday basis within the competences we have.

The actual task is to discuss all the results of the learning process with experts from the Ministry of Environment, and to choose five of these ten measures that are the most suitable to implement, concerning national legal framework, economic context, sectoral policies, and strategic objectives of the Czech Republic.