

Community eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS): voluntary participation by organisations

2008/0154(COD) - 16/07/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to increase the efficiency and attractiveness of the Community Environmental Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: a large scale evaluation study has been carried out by the Commission which, together with input from the various stakeholders in the scheme, identified both the strengths and weaknesses of EMAS and proposed new options on how to improve the effectiveness of the EMAS Regulation.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal is four-fold:

- to increase the number of organisation that apply EMAS;
- to have EMAS recognised as a benchmark for environmental management systems;
- to allow organisation applying other environmental managements systems to upgrade their system to EMAS;
- to create an impact beyond the EMAS registered organisations by requiring these organisations to take environmental consideration into account when selecting their suppliers and service providers.

In order to achieve these objectives, revision of the EMAS Regulation will focus on the political profile of the scheme and hence the number of organisations that apply the scheme. Fundamental changes include focusing on the needs of SMEs and small public authorities, the institutional set up and links to other policy instruments – Green Public Procurement in particular.

In brief the main modifications include:

- maintaining EMAS in the ISO 14001 standard;
- reinforcing compliance mechanisms;
- reinforcing environmental reporting;
- offering guidance on best practice in environmental management;
- harmonising rules and procedures for accreditation and verification;
- extending the geographical scope of EMAS;
- reducing the administrative burden and creating incentives; and
- promoting EMAS activities including the EMAS award and information campaigns at both a Community and a national level.