



Project Title:

BE-SMARTER : Business & Electronic Sustainable
Management Research Action Training Efficiency

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

Project acronym: BE-SMARTER

Project title: Business & Electronic Sustainable Management Research Action Training Efficiency

Project number: 133906-LLP-1-2007-BE-LEONARDO-LNW

Sub-programme or KA: LEONARDO DA VINCI - Multilateral projects for Development of Innovation / Networks

Project website: www.be-smarter.eu

Reporting period: From 01/01/2008
To 31/12/2010

Report version: Version 1

Date of preparation: February 2011

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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Executive Summary

Target audience: This final report aims to inform interested stakeholders about the positive outcomes of the BE-SMARTER project. It is addressed to EU commission services, the EACEA, the evaluation committee, environmental consultants and auditors, business support organisations and other key players identified in by the project.

The Network BE-SMARTER provided innovative vocational and educational training to 100 environmental management consultants. The project concerned Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany and Hungary.

The focus of the vocational educational Training was to support the lean, innovative EMAS implementation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's).

The overall objective of this professional qualification in the EMAS-easy methodology is, *de-facto*, to lower the internal and external transaction costs for SME's in meeting the requirements of EMAS and to improve their environmental performance.

A blend of hands-on adult learning, internet based E-learning and quality control by Tutors assured a result-oriented learning process.

The unique feature is that, at the end of the process, the consultant had acquired a new skill set and the SME's can submit themselves to certification to the highest EU voluntary standard (EMAS).

The Target groups for this capacity-building initiative have been:

- Private consultants and members of staff in SME's
- Professionals in public administrations and business support organisations
- Certification bodies providing ISO 14001 certification and EMAS verification

The partners of the BE-SMARTER Network are experienced European NGO's and EMS practitioners and the network coordination has been done by Eco-Conseil Entreprise Scrl in Brussels

Project results: The Network disseminated best practice in innovative coaching for SMEs, consisting of face-to-face training, e-learning and tutorial methods.

The newly-designed training process and its results :

1. **One 3-day**, face-to-face training session on EMAS easy
2. **5-8** consultants participated in each of the **14 EU training** sessions
3. **Coaching of SMEs** in implementing an EMAS by the trainee consultants
4. **149 SMEs** were coached by 74 of the 105 trained consultants.
5. Use of the **new e-learning** platform providing information, examples of filled in EMS templates, videos and online tests
6. The E-tutoring allowed to follow-up and assessment of the consultant's progress
7. **89 on-site**, internal audits by tutors allowed to validate the consultant's work.
8. **37 consultants** were ready to be **qualified** as "SMARTER" EMS consultants.
9. The feedback from participating consultants and environmental experts in public administration was positive.
10. All partners have increased their visibility in EMAS capacity building.

Dissemination activities : Various events throughout the duration of the project and 5 national conferences have been held over the last three months of the project. A final conference, gathering nearly 300 participants, was organised in partnership with DG Environment in the European Parliament in Brussels in November 2010.

Approaches used : The activities of the BE-SMARTER project are typical EU networking activities, highlighting best practice, drafting a common vocational, educational training package, developing an e-learning package, experimenting in adapting ways to tutor and assess consultants and the cross-fertilization of methods

Future plans : Development of sector specific applications, e.g. tourism, agriculture

Website : Information about the project is available at: <http://www.be-smarter.eu/>

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1. Project Objectives, Beneficiaries and Impacts

(i) Objective : Create user-friendly approaches for the implementation of EMAS with help from smarter consultants

The traditional ways of implementing quality and environmental management systems like EMAS do not fit into the reality of a micro or small company (<10 employees). Bureaucratic and financial barriers make it too complicated for SMEs to apply such tools. Employees need smart, lean and visual working instructions in order to reduce the environmental footprint of their activities. Therefore, what is needed is a new generation of adapted and effective methods for the simpler and easier implementation of environmental and other management systems and the use of reporting tools at lower transaction costs.

SME's always use consultants to coach them in this process. Therefore, the work process of the consultant is of prior prime importance. The BE-SMARTER project aimed to enhance the quality of intervention of professionals in this context.

A specific, blended adult vocational and educational training concept was developed.

On the basis of existing best practice, the partners elaborated the main deliverable of the BE-SMARTER project - that is, a capacity-building package tested by 100 participating consultants. Consultants in remote areas participated, as the tutoring was delivered via the on-line platform.

The training had a "triple win" outcome :

- Capacity building: trained EMS consultants and related professionals
- Implementation of ISO 14001 and EMAS : SMEs are coached to implement EMS
- Quality control : Environmental Auditors validated the skill base of the consultant
- The learning process enabled the award of a diploma, based on a lean EMAS or ISO 14001 implementation.

(ii) Profile of the short term beneficiaries

The target group of the project was either private consultants or professionals from the public sector working directly with SME's.

Individual consultants / institutions : The participants in the training were either single consultants or representatives from different institutions. The partners of the consortium accepted consultants working in business support organisations (chambers of commerce, chambers of craft, federations, research centres), ISO 14001 certifiers / EMAS verifiers and representatives from public administrations (e.g., EMAS competent bodies) to follow the 3-day training sessions, in order to get more information on EMAS easy and BE-SMARTER. These participants in the training did not always have the chance to coach SMEs on their own, but they were keen to try to replicate and to embed the EMAS easy tool and the training concept in the future activities of their organisation (see future plans).

Gender profile : 57 women and 48 men followed the training

Age : between 28 and 60 years old

The key learning is that the methods promoted in EMAS easy were readable and accepted, whatever the participant's prior education or work experience

Educational background and social skills : Minimum criteria for every participant in the training were the following :

Experience required

- Knowledge on management systems and, especially, environmental management systems
- An understanding of environmental issues and environmental competence: environmental challenges, general environmental point of view, Knowledge of environmental regulation
- Knowledge of market drivers and market challenges
- Sector knowledge

Personal Skills

- Speak with conviction,
- Good personal presentation
- Ability to use concrete examples
- Clarity and simplicity in delivering explanation
- Curiosity, Intuitiveness, Personal authority, Sense of humour, Adaptability

(iii) Short-term impacts on the beneficiaries

Consultants

The training provided the consultants with the potential to acquire new skills in:

- o New, visual and lean EMS approaches for SMEs.
- o working from a distance, as the project is mainly supported by the on-line learning-by-doing platform. This will also reduce travel and meeting time and costs.
- o Use of ICT technologies to coach SMEs on-line.

SMEs have:

- o learned how to implement environmental management systems by sharing the knowledge platform.
- o improved their environmental performance using EMAS

Environmental auditors

- o ISO 14001 and EMAS certification bodies became familiarized with leaner and more cost-effective environmental audit practices

Trainers

- o had the opportunity to work with e-tutoring and to work within a multi-lingual and multi-cultural approach.

(iv) Medium and Long Term Impacts

The European Commission's DG Environment and DG Enterprise will have tested models to inform policy development on voluntary environmental approaches to EMS – particularly how best to support “light” environmental management systems and approaches for SMEs.

National Public administrations, regional development agencies and chambers of commerce will be able to elaborate **cost effective support programmes** in their regions.

The consultants will use the outcomes in their work and **develop cluster** programmes. They may extend their activities as government support and funding will go hand in hand with more demand from the SMEs.

EMAS-verified / ISO 14001-**certified SME's** will be more competitive in international supply chains.

EMAS-registered SME's get better access to **public markets**.

Larger companies can use the tools in their **internal supply-chain** management.

Environmental Auditors will align their **audit practices** with specific demands from small businesses and, perhaps, develop new services and market the concept.

Training Institutes can integrate the learning tools and adapt them to their curricula and sector-specific requirements

This may result, in the longer term, in a growing demand by European SMEs to obtain EMAS verification and/or ISO 14001 certification.

Impact on a larger scale and strategic implications for the certification industry and the SME's

- One of the objectives of BE-SMARTER was to develop a generic training package adapted and used in all scenarios – either micro, small, public or private organisation
- The second objective was to reduce transaction costs for the SME's in taking up EMAS
- One of the key barriers is still the cost of external certification and the provision of additional internal human resources.

Flexibility of the EMAS easy Tool and approach

The method of lean implementation is applicable to every sector, including, for example, electronics, hotels, metalworking, laboratories, quarries, public organizations

The external audit times for leaner systems go down

- External and internal auditing time is reduced by very lean documentation
- Ecomaps allow instant orientation
- Logical flow of information
- Preparation time for ISO audits - one hour is sufficient
- Cluster verification is the most cost effective approach when using an individual verifier

There is no linear link between the size of the company and the number of auditing days which are required in the market

- Sites employing a small number of people have similar audit profiles to medium-sized SMEs. It is the number of staff which influences the audit pattern and not the complexity of the site.
- Among the SME's, there have been organisations with low numbers of significant environmental impacts associated with the processes. However, the audit duration for these was similar to those with significant aspects.
- SME's can now be audited for certification purposes in one day, compared to classical minimum of 3 days for the external audit process

External Auditing times exceeding one day are due to:

- Integrated quality and environmental management systems. with a focus on Safety Regulations
- Quasi certification in a non-EU country – preparation
- Verifier operating in a member states having no national validation capacity
- Combined audit of an integrated system of two or more management systems;

Lean documentation reduces internal transactions costs and human resources

- Appropriate documentation available on constantly positive outputs and results of the management system.

- The Ecomapping and EMAS easy approach proved to be very effective methods in supporting implementation and lowered documentation by 80% while permitting constant communication with the workforce.
- The internal efforts of building and maintaining systems is lowered by factor 3.

2. Project Approach

The strength of the BE-SMARTER network resides in the fact that the members of the network have been active, senior service providers to small SMEs for many years. They provide innovative tools for environmental management, consultancy, regional support and labelling schemes and training for SMEs and consultants in all EU member states.

(i) Management of the project

Coordination

Eco-Conseil Entreprise (ECE) ensured the effective coordination, administration and monitoring of the project. ECE has elaborated different tools for the partners to support effective and smooth communication between the project partners. This includes clear financial and administrative guidelines, the set up of the project website, the definition of the online document-sharing system, translation guidelines for the website, regular email and phone (skype) correspondence between project meetings.

Project partner meetings

The project meetings were prepared by the project coordinator - ECE. Depending on the location of the meeting, logistic support was provided by the local partner. The project meetings were linked with the various work packages. 7 transnational partner meetings have taken place in Toulouse -France (Feb. 2008), Tallinn - Estonia (August 2008) and Würzburg – Germany (March 2009), Budapest – Hungary (September 2009), Bad Soberheim – France (February 2010), Saarbrücken – Germany (August 2010) and Brussels, Belgium (November 2010). A number of conference-calls (virtual project meetings) have been held, as well as small working group meetings in order to:

1. Identify best practice and tools for coaching SMEs towards EMAS and ISO 14001
2. Elaborate the e-learning-by-doing training package
3. Build a dissemination strategy for key stakeholders
4. Set up a business Plan and exploitation plan.

(ii) Identification of best practices and tools

The Thematic network partners have been involved, in previous years, in different studies and initiatives that highlighted best practices, case studies and tools on the implementation of ISO 14001 and EMAS in SMEs. The sharing by the partners of **tools, methodologies and best practice** developed within their own programmes contributed to the advancement of knowledge on innovative approaches for coaching SMEs all over Europe towards EMAS and ISO 14001.

The partners reviewed the best practice, case studies and tools that were presented in these initiatives. They contacted the promoters of any initiatives still ongoing in order to get up to date information and provide the information to the BE-SMARTER Library. Other tools, best practices and case studies have been gathered from the partners' networks, as well within the ECAP initiative from DG Environment and the BEST report initiative from DG Enterprise.

The information can now be found in the public library part of the BE-SMARTER website. A detailed list of **53 validated and up to date best practices**, case studies and tools on environmental management systems and cluster approaches for SMEs. Each best practice, case-study and tool is presented with the same structure to enable comparability. A 'pdf' document summarising all best practices can also be downloaded.

This library facilitated the exchange and transfer of best practices among EU Member States. It will enable new partnerships which will, in turn, widen and improve services to SMEs EU wide.

(iii) The Training and e-learning package: Value added

The BE-SMARTER training package has been elaborated on the basis of the best practices evaluated by the partners.

The aim of the training is to **deliver a triple win outcome** : (i) capacity building of consultants (ii) implementation of EMS in SMEs (iii) improving the ISO 14001 / EMAS certification market.

This training package is in line with the **EMAS easy**[®] methodology, the EMAS III regulation and the ISO 14001:2004 standard. It is innovative in that it combines **face-to-face** learning for consultants with **online tutoring and e-learning**, as well as real time implementation of EMS in SMEs.

(iv) Training trainers and tutors for the BE-SMARTER capacity building programme

Trainers are the persons delivering the 3 days face-to-face training sessions. They have to train and to lead the group of consultants during 3 days so that they understand the concept of EMAS easy and can start coaching their SMEs the next day.

Tutors are the persons who will support the consultants during their coaching of SMEs (6 to 9 months). A maximum of 2 days tutoring per consultant and 1-day internal audit per SME was planned.

The trainers and the tutors were chosen **inside the partner's network**. The criteria were the following

- ∞ Proven professional experience in EMS and EMAS for SMEs (> 5 years), especially in case of conducting internal and/or external audits (> 10 audits)
- ∞ Language skills (good English)
- ∞ Giving practical advice and examples
- ∞ Contactability (telecommunication, response time)
- ∞ Behaviour of trainer: «Fair» treatment through the project
- ∞ Strong pedagogical skills to motivate and lead a group of consultants
- ∞ Sound experience as a trainer in management systems on a regular basis
- ∞ Trainer follows refresher training related to BE-SMARTER

For the first training session, the trainers were part of Eco-Conseil Entreprise's staff, who have a long experience in delivering EMAS easy[®] and 14001 training to consultants.

The second training sessions are delivered by trainers, who are working within the partner organizations and who have already demonstrated successful EMAS and ISO 14001 registration of SMEs using the EMAS easy[®] methodology.

(v) The testing phase of the training and e-learning package in 5 countries

In each country the whole training process (from recruitment of consultants to their final qualification) lasted between 12 and 15 months :

Recruitment of Consultants

In each of the 5 partner countries, information sessions to recruit consultants were organized between January 2009 and June 2009. All partners got support from the EMAS competent bodies in their country. Several publications in newsletters and websites were made, as well as the despatch of targeted letters and emails. After the information sessions, consultants

were able to submit their on-line application for the training in their country at <http://www.be-smarter.eu/en/portal/learning-platform/index.html>. The selection of 10 to 20 national candidates per country was done by national partners, who validated the consultant's registration to the training and sent them the essential information (agenda, location, etc).

Accepted Consultants have to recruit their SMEs

Each consultant recruited through his own contacts two SMEs to work them on the path to ISO 14001/EMAS. In order to facilitate the identification of companies, regional ministries, chambers of craft, chambers of commerce disseminated the information through their networks

The training was free of charge for consultants. In Belgium, 50 % of the consultant's coaching work with SMEs was covered by public funds. In France and in Germany, public subsidies go up to 70% when consultants are coaching a cluster of SMEs. In other countries, there was no payment for coaching SMEs during this programme.

Training of consultants

September 2009	Training sessions for the consultants organised during three days.	
October 2009 to september 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beginning of the coaching of SMEs by the consultants - Exchanges between participants and tutors. - Support from the e-learning website 	
September to November 2010	Internal audits by the Tutor of the SMEs coached by the consultant.	
November 2010	Evaluation sessions of the consultants – were they ready for qualification ?	
December 2010	<p>National dissemination conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External audits of the SMEs by an accredited certifier/verifier for ISO 14001 certification / EMAS registration of the SMEs. - Final celebration organised in line with the Belgian presidency of the European Commission. BE-SMARTER diplomas were given to the consultants and EMAS certification to the companies. 	

(vi) Evaluation of the trainings

Internal and external evaluations of the project outcomes and results have been carried out throughout the project duration. The evaluation of the project has been done in different ways: by the partners of the consortium before and during each partners' meeting, on the basis of the performance of the participants to the training, during national or international events, via an external evaluation of both the participants' perception and the effectiveness of the Elearning training package and by official certification and recognition of the training package (ISO 9001).

Internal evaluation by the partners of the consortium

A formal evaluation was made before partners' meeting 3, to list the positive and negative aspects of the partnership and the ways in which to improve it. Each outcome/result was evaluated by the partners with regard to its quality. This was achieved through communication between the partners and at partners meetings (or skype meetings) where discussions were held.

Internal evaluation of the participants to the trainings

The evaluation of each consultant participating to the training is done at three points during the training process :

- **Face to face training** : During the 3 days of the face-to-face training, the consultants interacted with each other via field trainings and exercises. There is a first oral and written evaluation on the understanding of the training on the last day of the training.
- **Tutoring of consultants** : The consultant was followed by his/her tutor during the implementation of EMAS in the SMEs. The tutor was evaluated on his/her level of understanding of the tools
- **Performing Internal audits in the SMEs** : The tutors performed internal audits within the SMEs coached by the consultants, to check if the consultant has understood the training. Besides the usual EMS audit checklist, the tutors used extra evaluation criteria for the internal audit.

External evaluation

The evaluation of the whole training and e-learning programme was delivered by a team of evaluators lead by Mrs Anne-Françoise Woitchik from Italy. The timeline for the evaluation was October – December 2010.

The evaluation team started their evaluation with a desktop study and visits at least 2 partners of the project (France – ARPE and Belgium – ICHEC). The training material outcomes were evaluated by the participants to the training sessions through online and phone feedback. A survey was prepared for the participants to the training to get feedback on the whole training process (<http://www.be-smarter.eu/consultants-evaluation.html>). The e-learning tool was carefully evaluated.

Feedback during national and European events

Part of the external evaluation was held at different national and international events, workshops and discussion forums, where the project products were presented and informally evaluated by outside persons via questions and answers and debates. Formal evaluations were undertaken during one of the National events (Germany) and during the Final closing event in the (European Parliament).

Recognition of the training

The BE-SMARTER Training package has been audited within the framework of Eco-Conseil Entreprise's ISO 9001 quality management system. The Wallonian Region has recognised the training as eligible for subsidised training for SMEs.

Evaluation of the ISO 14001 and EMAS framework conditions which supported the uptake of the project in the partner countries

	EMAS Competent body	Choice of consultants	Framework conditions	Use of incentives / funding
Belgium Brussels Region	Supported recruitment of consultants Participation in the training	Heteroclit sample private consultants, public authorities, ISO 14001 certifiers Not enough network	(-) Strong competition with local labels (Label Eco-Dynamique)	(-) Few consultants used the 50% public funding available
Belgium Wallonian Region	Supported recruitment of consultants	(+)Combination of chambers of commerce, regional development agencies (+)Good networking within the partners of the RIFEII project	(-) Within the transborder RIFE project, competition with french approach 123 Environnement (+) 3 Cluster approaches applied in Wallonia	(+) Consultants got support of ERDF/Interreg funding for the coaching of their SMEs (-) The 50% public funding is only available for "accredited" consultants
Estonia	Participation in the training good support	Good	(-) Only 1 EMAS verifier at the moment (-) Financial crisis lead to few certifications	No public funding available for consultancy / training
France	Changes in the EMAS governance structure Good support in 2010	Good, mix of consultants and auditors	(-) No driver for EMAS. (-) EMS is not trendy, Low market pressure. (-) Carbon footprint is the hot topic of the moment, (-) Competition from Chambers of Commerce (123 Env) and Chamber of Craft (Envol – first 100 companies will get certification for free) (-) Only 1 EMAS verifier at the moment	(+) ARPE as partner supported funding for Cluster coaching (at least 2 SMEs) : 70% of the consultancy costs
Germany Wurzburg	Good support from Federal Ministry of Environment	Adequate choice	(-) Competition with Eco Profit / QUB labels (-) Many EMAS consultants on the market	(+) Baden Wurttemberg region supported funding for Cluster coaching (at least 2 SMEs) : 70% of the consultancy costs
Saarbrucken	Good support from Regional Ministry of Environment	Few consultants, many multipliers (chambers of craft, chambers of commerce)	(+)Support of SMEs within the Saar Umweltpack	(+) Consultancy done mostly by chambers of craft
Bremen	Good support from Federal Ministry of Environment	Combination of consultants, SMEs, Chambers of Agriculture and public institutions	Focus on agriculture and agri-food	(+)SMEs got national support to cover the consultant's costs
Hungary	Participation in the training Good support	Adequate choice	(-) Few EMAS registrations (-) Competition with ISO 14001	(-) No funding mechanism available

3. Project Outcomes & Results

(i) Concept of the blended learning package

The main outcome of the project is the **BE-SMARTER blended adult learning training package** which combines face to face training, on site EMS implementation during 9 to 12 months, e-learning, tutoring and on-side coaching validation by the tutors. This training package is based on the proven concept of EMAS easy®. The complete training package is composed of:

1. A face to face training session of 3 days with a real case study (SME)
2. Real-time implementation by the participants to the training in 2 SMEs. Just after the face-to-face training, every consultant has to implement the outcomes of the face to face training (EMAS easy methodology) in 2 SMEs during 6 to 9 months.
3. An e-learning platform elaborated to meet the training needs of the consultants
4. An online library of 53 best practices
3. Tutoring activities, allowing the tutor to follow-up and assess the consultant's evolution in the coaching process
4. On site coaching validation
 - the tutors will perform internal audits in the SMEs to validate the consultant's achievements
 - positive validation leads to consultant's qualification (diploma) and SMEs readiness for ISO 14001 certification and/or EMAS registration

(ii) Delivering Face to Face Trainings

The face-to-face training sessions of 3 days are based on adult learning principles and on the experience of past successful trainings delivered by different partners of the network. The training session uses 1 company as the workshop setting and training ground. All "EMAS easy" implementation tools needed by the national experts are given during this 3 days workshop. Those tools allowed consultants to understand how to work and apply the approach in companies during the next 9 to 12 months.

Number of training sessions : In each of the 5 member states involved in the project, at least 2 training sessions were organized, instead of 1 training session. 14 training sessions have been delivered to 105 consultants in 5 different countries (Germany, Belgium, France, Hungary, Estonia).

Dimensions of the groups : Groups of five to eight consultants participated in each session and learned how to implement an EMS in an SME. The training sessions wouldn't have been as effective in bigger groups.

Languages used : all training material and EMAS easy tools were in national languages. Consultants worked in their language. In most countries, Heinz Werner Engel gave the first training.

BE-SMARTER Capacity building 3 days training sessions			
Country	City	Trainer / Tutor	Dates
 Belgium	Brussels	Heinz-Werner Engel (ECE) Marcel van Meesche (ECE)	28-29-30 september 2009
	Arlon	Mathilde Angéléri (ARPE) Alain Maes (ECE)	5-6-7 October 2009
	Wallonia	Heinz-Werner Engel (ECE)	23-25 November 2010

	Estonia	Tallinn	Aurélie Bois (ECE)	26-27-28 August 2009
		Tallinn	Harri Moora (SEI-T)	31 August - 2 September 2009
	Germany	Saarbrücken	Stefan Muessig (FUU) Stephan Hirsch (SAAR)	2-3-4 September 2009
		Wurzburg	Stefan Muessig (FUU)	26-27-28 October 2009
		Bremen	Stefan Muessig (FUU)	30 September 2009
	France	Toulouse	Heinz-Werner Engel (ECE)	14th - 16th April 2009
		Toulouse	Mathilde Angéleri (ARPE)	13th – 15th May 2009
		Toulouse	Mathilde Angéleri (ARPE)	8 th -9 th – 10 th December 2010
	Hungary	Budapest	Heinz-Werner Engel (ECE)	1-2-3 July 2009
			Csaba Bodroghelyi (KÖVET)	28-29-30 September 2009
			Monika Besenyei (KÖVET)	15-17 Febr. 2010

(iii) Application in field - reality check

Recruitment of SMEs : Each consultant participating to the training had to coach a minimum of 2 SMEs that he had to recruit himself or with the help of the partner organisations.

The training is free of charge for consultants, but they have to coach a minimum of 2 SMEs toward the implementation of ISO 14001 and/or EMAS. Current practice and the evaluation of the training showed that consultants need between 7 and 15 working days to implement an environmental management system in an SME.

Difficulties finding SME : The economical situation in 2009-2010 made the task of finding SME's more difficult, a great number of them were interested in principle to implement an EMS, but they couldn't afford to spend resources at that juncture. Most of the consultants needed to be financially supported for their coaching activities:

- They were either 100% supported by the SME
- Applied a reduced price because of they were following the training
- Helped the SME to get public funding to support the consultancy costs

Funding mechanisms : In Brussels, Belgium, 50% of any consultant's coaching work with SMEs can be covered by public funding, in Wallonia the consultants have to be accredited. In France and in Germany public subsidy goes up to 70% when consultants are coaching a cluster of SMEs. In other countries there is no support for coaching SMEs during this programme.

The French partner ARPE supported the consultants and their SMEs in filling in their applications for regional funding covering 70% of the consultancy costs.

The financial crisis also hit these funding mechanisms, e.g. in Baden Wurttemberg part of the 70% funding mechanism to support SME's coaching was cut in 2009-2010.

Some consultants could access regional funding covered with extra structural funds (INTERREG and FEDER). These consultants were part of business support organisations (Chambers of Commerce and Regional Development Agencies). Consultancy costs for SMEs were reduced to 10% of the usual consultancy costs.

(iv) Role of the E-learning platform

From the consultant's point of view : the online platform gives more in-depth information on ISO 14001 and EMAS, allows communication with other consultants from the attended face-to-face training session and with the tutor, report on progress (share documents, report timesheets, etc)

From the tutor's point of view : the online platform supports communication with the consultants the tutor has to follow, reports on progress and document review by the tutor.

The E-learning platform part of the BE-SMARTER website combines the following tools and sections :

1. A library of 53 labels, tools, best practice and EU funding schemes - <http://www.be-smarter.eu/en/library/index.html> - and comprises:
 - sustainable management-related regulations, standards and labels focused on SMEs
 - funding schemes which can support environmental management systems for SMEs
 - a detailed list of 53 validated and up to date best practices, case studies and tools on environmental management systems and cluster approaches for SMEs
2. An ISO 14001/EMAS section elaborated to meet the training needs of the consultants with :
 - a reminder of the EMAS and ISO 14001 requirements,
 - an explanation of what and how the consultant should do with the SME to fulfill these requirements,
 - examples and videos,
 - on-line exercises and tests,
 - access to templates.
3. A tutoring tool, allowing the tutor to follow-up and assess the consultant's evolution in the coaching process :
 - registration of the SMEs coached by the consultants,
 - feedback on the results of the tests from the ISO 14001/EMAS section
 - follow-up of timesheets, summing-up time spent by the consultant (i) learning and using the platform, and (ii) coaching the SMEs.
 - an uploading tool allowing the tutor to check the work done between consultant and SME.



(v) internal and external audits of the coached SMEs

Internal audits : Out of 149 SMEs, only 89 SMEs were ready to receive a visit from the consultant's tutors to deliver internal audits by November / December 2010. Most of the results were quite positive.

External audits : During the lifetime of the project, of the 149 coached organisations, 37 organisations were able to reach the ISO 14001 certification and/or being EMAS registration. For most of the SMEs, external certification / verification costs is still a barrier. Depending on the country, the size, the complexity of the SME and the maturity of the auditor's market, prices for external audits vary from 1 000 € to 10 000 €.

Country	Nbre of consultants	Nbre of consultants which have worked with a company	Nbre of consultants which have only followed the training	Number of companies	Number of qualified consultants	Number of internal audits performed by tutors	Certified companies (EMAS/ISO)	Number of ISO 14001 certified companies	Number of EMAS registered companies
Belgium RIFE Brussels / Wallonia	7	6	1	11	3	6	0	0	0
	16	10	6	25	6	9	8	5	7
Estonia	19	11	8	21	5	7	2	1	1
Germany Saarbrucken Wurzburg	7	3	4	10	2	10	7	0	7
	19	15	4	24	5	16	16	1	15
France Midi-Pyrénées RIFE	17	14	3	27	8	12	4	3	1
	3	3	0	7	2	5	0	0	0
Hungary	17	12	5	24	4	24	0	0	0
TOTAL	105	74	31	149	35	89	37	10	31

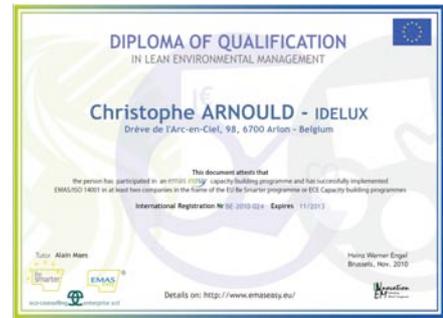
(vi) Evaluation and Certification of consultants

Consultants got 1 certificates and 1 diplomas :



- **Certificate of attendance (105 certificates distributed)** for their participation to the training (name of trainer and date of the training)

- **Diploma of qualification** (35 qualified consultants at the end of the project) for having successfully coached 2 SMEs towards the implementation of ISO 14001 and/or EMAS



(vii) Dissemination activities

A range of dissemination activities have been implemented to date:

(a) Conferences and events

The most important events and conferences where BE-SMARTER has been presented are:

With European coverage :

- **The conference “Environmental management – quo vadis?” - Tallinn – Estonia - 26th August 2008.** More than 100 participants joined the conference to listen to European experience and some of the best environmental management approaches and practices identified in the Be-Smarter Network.
- **The EMAS article 14 committee meeting - Prague - 18th of June 2009.** These meetings of EMAS competent bodies and stakeholders are looking how EMAS can be better promoted towards SMEs. EMAS easy[®] and BE-SMARTER are 2 of the main interesting tools to enable more SMEs to participate to EMAS and ISO 14001.
- **European Commission Conference on EMAS: EMAS registration and verification - barriers to access by SME's / Options, solutions and challenges – Brussels - Belgium – 15 december 2008.**
- **ECAP Best Practices exchange workshop on “ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SMES: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE NETWORKS” - Budapest – Hungary - 30st of June 2009.** This workshop is part of a series of 3 workshops organised to provide information on the programme, to share experiences and continue to build the informal ECAP network. This initiative aims to facilitate the transfer of best practices between SME support organisations in different Member States.
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/sme/training/pilot_workshops_en.htm

- **BE-SMARTER Final European Conference on 25 November 2010**, the International Conference on EMAS and BE-SMARTER: Towards a Resource Efficient Economy took place in the Paul-Henri Spaak building of the European Parliament in Brussels. The event was jointly organised by the European Commission, DG Environment, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the BE-SMARTER project partners.



Around **250 participants** were able to choose between two parallel workshops in the morning and in the afternoon. High-profile speakers, including senior government officials, environmental experts and business and civil society leaders from all over Europe as well international guests from Australia, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America informed the participants about the latest developments in environmental management and explored how EMAS supports organisations in improving their environmental and financial performance.

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/conference2010.htm>

National coverage

A wide range of dissemination activities has been delivered the last 3 years in the countries of the partners. National dissemination conferences have been held over the last three months of the project in Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany and Hungary. At these conferences 30 consultants received their qualification diploma. The consultants also presented the results of their coaching.

EMAS Competent Bodies and representatives of business support organisations spoke at the national conferences. Discussions focussed on fostering the uptake of EMAS by SMEs through the development of accessible and attractive incentives, delivering effective capacity building, supporting the harmonisation of environmental reporting and developing linkages with national and regional labels.

- Belgian final conference : 45 participants
- Hungarian final conference : 12 participants
- French final conference : 25 participants
- German final conference : 70 participants
- Estonian final conference : 49 participants

(b) Publications and newsletters

The first BE-SMARTER Newsletter has been translated in Hungarian and Estonian.

The new BE-SMARTER newsletter system enables partners to draft articles for the newsletter. 7 electronic newsletters have been send out between June 2009 and December 2010.



Besides publishing information on the partners own websites, various organisations have included articles on BE-SMARTER in their newsletters and websites (European Commission – DG ENV, National Ministries of the Environment, Business Support Organisations, etc)

4. Partnerships

(i) Added Value

The BE-SMARTER Thematic network comprises senior environmental management system practitioners. All partners have strong credibility and are linked to various networks in their own country as well as at European Level. The partners are active in different fields. The partner organisations include:

Training professionals

- ∞ Eco-Conseil Entreprise – has trained more than 450 consultants in Europe on EMAS easy and coached 150 SMEs for ISO 14001/EMAS implementation,
- ∞ ICHEC – regional training institution for environmental professionals and businesses,
- ∞ FUU – training of environmental professionals and coaching of SMEs.

Policy makers

- ∞ IBGE - the Ministry of Environment of Brussels Region, in charge of the Brussels Eco-Dynamic regional label Brussels,
- ∞ ARPE – the environmental agency of Midi-Pyrénées is coaching small enterprises to ISO 14001 and organizes trainings of consultants;

SME representative associations

- ∞ Modell Hohenlohe – the association of 180 enterprises and SMEs, active in cluster approaches for EMAS implementation and in the Energy roundtables initiative,
- ∞ Saar Lor Lux Umweltzentrum – chamber of crafts active in coaching very small enterprises and craftman to EMAS;

IT professionals

- ∞ Aleaur – provides online web solutions for project management, marketing and e-learning

The activities of the BE-SMARTER project are mainly networking activities which encourage collaboration between partners: highlighting best practises, working together on a common vocational training package, collaborating to develop an e-learning package, and finding best ways to tutor and assess consultants in 5 different countries. The network partners themselves disseminate the results and outcomes of the project at national and regional level, to public institutions, training institutions, chambers of commerce, trade unions, etc. thus encouraging wider buy in and enhancing the multiplier effect.

(ii) The Benefits of Partnerships Established with Outside Groups

Other key stakeholders have been identified in a number of the countries to assist with the dissemination of the project, and in the implementation of findings. On the basis of the key stakeholder list, “multiplier institutions” (professional environmental bodies, business associations, etc;) and training institutions have been contacted by the project partners to support the e-learning tool and evaluate integration of e-learning in their programmes.

Partners have already convinced chambers of commerce and crafts as well as regional development agencies that lean management systems like EMAS easy[®] are proficient. During the lifetime of the project, the BE-SMARTER tools have already been included in training and SMEs coaching programmes of Belgian Chambers of Commerce (CCI Liège-Verviers, CCI Libramont) and regional development agencies (BEP – Namur), Northern Germany Chambers of Agriculture, as well as in a transborder coaching and training programme called RIFE II <http://www.rife-wll.net/> runned by business support organisations.

The European Commission – DG Environment, supported the thematic network by jointly organising the final BE-SMARTER conference with their EMAS conference which was planned to be held during the Belgian Presidency of the European Council.

5. Plans for the Future

(i) BE-SMARTER Inside – the networks business plan

The Partners decided to run the BE-SMARTER products and tools as a business model. For the long term sustainability of the project, a business model has been set up before the end of the project. This business plan includes

- the costs and the price of “selling” the training to consultants after the project
- the costs and the price of “tranfering” the training to new sectors, new countries
- the perspective of setting up an organization which will run the future training

To run this business plan in the future it was decided to define a centralised and neutral management organisation to coordinate BE-SMARTER applications on a longer term basis. This structure will also develop other online trainings for consultants in terms of quality, health and safety management. This organisation, named “BE-SMARTER Inside” is currently under development.

(ii) Update of E-learning platform and Training package

The external evaluation of the project showed some areas for improvement especially for the E-learning part of the training package. The partners involved in future capacity building activities have listed the items to be updated. This update will be done for June 2011.

The translations of the website and the E-learning tool in Dutch (new language requested by the Brussels Region) will be done after the update of the E-learning part of the website.

(iii) Recognition of the training

The BE-SMARTER Training package has been audited in the frame of Eco-Conseil Entreprise’s ISO 9001 quality management system. The Wallonian Region has recognised the BE-SMARTER training as eligible for subsidised trainings for SMEs (Chèques-Formation). It can now be sold on the Wallonian market as participants to the training will get 50% of the training costs reimbursed by the State.

(iv) Accreditation of consultants for market opportunities

For the first time in 2010, we noticed that call for tenders and job opportunities opened only to EMAS easy accredited consultants were published in and outside Europe. This raised the issue of long term quality control of the consultants that followed the EMAS easy and BE-SMARTER capacity building sessions.

(v) Embed BE-SMARTER in capacity building initiatives in and outside Europe

A number of Capacity building programmes using BE-SMARTER and EMAS easy are currently under negotiation within new sectors and/or new countries. Signed contracts for 2011 :

- Follow-up of the **RIFE II Interreg** project which will be finalised end of 2011. Internal audits in the SMEs based in Luxemburg and participation to the final conference in September 2011.
- **EMAS easy Move it** : CIP Eco-Innovation project 2009-2012 – one of the activities in 2011 -2012 focuses on the adaptation of the BE-SMARTER training package for the tourism sector, targeting multipliers and consultants working with touristic destinations and clusters.
- **Intour / Travelife** : CIP Eco-Innovation project 2010-2013 – one of the activities of the INTOUR/TRAVELIFE project is to train European Tour Operators to implement an environmental management system base on the EMAS easy methodology.
- **Trinidad & Tobago EMAS easy capacity building** : A first training for consultants on EMAS easy has been delivered in October 2010. The main project objectives would be to introduce the EMAS ‘easy’ system to 10 to 12 SME’s in Trinidad and Tobago. Extra trainings and tutoring will take place in 2011.

- **Bangladesh EMAS easy capacity building** in the textile sector : Eco-Conseil Entreprise is currently training 15 Bengalese environmental professionals on EMAS easy under a contract for the German Cooperation Agency GTZ.

6. Contribution to EU policies

Contribution to the European Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan, including EMAS and ECAP

By training environmental consultants to better promote and coach SMEs in the implementation of EMAS, the BE-SMARTER project contributes to the **European Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan**, which reiterates the importance of EMAS and ECAP in helping SMEs to improve their environmental performance.

Environmental impact from SMEs

- SMEs contribute roughly 64% to the industrial pollution in Europe
- Up to 24% of SMEs actively engage in actions to reduce their environmental impact (mainly reduction of energy consumption); 0.4% of SMEs use a certified Environmental Management System (EMAS, ISO 14001 or other systems)
- Actions targeting SMEs need to take into account the industrial sector in which they are active

The impact of EU environmental measures on SMEs

- SMEs find it more difficult to comply with environmental legislation than large companies
- "A simpler administration is better for the environment": SMEs need easier environmental permitting procedures and authorizations, simple environmental reporting, one-stop-shops to save time and avoid the duplication of work and free or subsidised advisory services to help SMEs comply with the legislation in force such as the Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme (ECAP)
- Financial support can alleviate the costs of complying with environmental legislation

Our BE-SMARTER project conforms completely with EMAS and ECAP's objectives. EMAS III places particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and introduces a number of new articles relating specifically to their needs (see box below).

The BE-SMARTER project also contributed to the following Lisbon strategy objectives:

Increase the competitiveness of enterprises in the world market

The project will improve the competitiveness of individual consultants; consultancy firms and SMEs:

- Consultants will be able to provide light, low cost and adapted solutions on environmental management for SMEs. They will be able to reach out to a new market of millions of SMEs in Europe.
- SMEs will be able to improve their internal management and their environmental performance at a lower cost. They will be better able to face supply-chain pressure.

Promotes the diversity of languages.

The planned project contributes concretely to enhance the diversity of languages in its different activities by adapting light environmental management tools to the national and regional needs of consultants and SMEs. The tools are available in French, German, English, Hungarian, Estonian.

Communication in the mother tongue

Consultants were be trained in their national language which will improve the quality of their coaching of SMEs. The project provided tools to enable consultants to work orally within

SMEs and to provide them with precise on-site counselling. All training materials were provided both in English and in the mother tongue (FR-DE-EE-HU) for ease of communication. SMEs were coached in their national language (FR-DE-EE-HU).

Open Learning Environment: participation of population aged 25-64 in education and training programmes

The BE-SMARTER training package and tutoring activities targeted consultants between 25 to and 55 years old. They participate in the trainings while testing the tools in real time in the field by coaching SMEs in implementing environmental management systems.

Improving Digital competences

BE-SMARTER delivered training tools that combine face-to-face trainings with internet technologies and field consulting. Consultants were trained to use computers, to learn new ways of working, to communicate with their tutors and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet. While coaching SMEs, consultants use internet servers to store data from the companies they are coaching, and to present themselves to others.

Learning to learn

This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. Consultants gained additional knowledge and skills in the implementation of EMS in the field and improved their ability to transfer skills within their SME community. Consultants had the opportunity to network with a heterogeneous group of environmental experts. They were encouraged to collaborate in sector specific debates and share knowledge and experiences of environmental concerns.

Interpersonal and social competences

Consultants were trained to coach SMEs and very small enterprises in EMS implementation, so they will develop or improve the ability to communicate constructively in different environments, to show tolerance, express and understand different viewpoints, to negotiate with the ability to create confidence, and to feel empathy. Individuals should be capable of coping with stress and frustration and expressing them in a constructive way and should also distinguish between the personal and professional spheres.

Entrepreneurship

The project helped to improve the consultants' and SME's ability to turn ideas into action. Coaching SMEs on environmental management includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. Consultants also have the opportunity to develop skills that relate to proactive project management (involving, for example the ability to plan, organise, manage, lead and delegate, analyse, communicate, de-brief, evaluate and record), effective representation and negotiation, and the ability to work both as an individual and collaboratively in teams. After the training, consultants will be able to plan new projects and provide cluster coaching in EMS implementation in SMEs.