

Practical Implementation of Synergy Audit. A guidance for organisations with resource hindrances.



© Lova., *A tree is chatting with the wind* in Skåne, Sweden 2021.



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How can Synergy Audit help?

Many organisations want to work strategically and effectively to decrease environmental impact from their activities because of the positive contributions it can give to lessen negative environmental impact.

Also, many organisations want to become environmentally certified, and beyond environmental benefit thereby also increase the chance for a favourable position amongst possible stakeholders and interests, which could result in e.g., economic gain.

However, a huge quantity of organisations globally who want to become certified and thereby uphold and develop an environmental management system, consider this a too hard task to manage. Reasons for this are usually found in an organisational lack of resources. The scarcity could be of economic sort and/or a small number of staff members to conduct the work.

This Synergy Audit Booklet aims to work as an inspiration and practical guideline for help toward your organisation on how to overcome some of the resource hindrances when starting up environmental management system work and environmental audits in the organisation.

We wish you the best of luck with this important endeavour.

/The project partners of Synergy Audit.



Two important resources in the work

Time and economic budget are essential parts for any organisation to have when preparing for starting up an environmental management system (hereinafter referred to as EMS) work and internal environmental audits (hereinafter referred to as IEA) within the EMS.

However, many times a lack of such resources are viewed as the biggest obstacles for an organisation when assessing whether the organisation is ready or not to start up EMS work.¹

To start with, trying to bone out what lies hidden within time and economy with focus at establishing EMS can be of help to get an overview of the resource challenges ahead in the work. Thereby, a mapping with focus on possible solutions could be elaborated from the result.

Time

Time capacity could briefly put be necessary for e.g.,:

1. Learning and therefore attaining knowledge capacity for conducting EMS.
2. Organisational needs when decisions have been taken to start an EMS.

¹ The information has been given by a multidisciplinary set of organisations in Europe within the best practices phase of the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)



3. Upholding and development of the EMS when started.
4. Continuous improvement of the EMS which is a sort of continuous effort with no fixed end date.

Economy

Economic capacity could briefly put be necessary for covering costs for e.g.,:

1. Gathering enough information to assess the possibility to start an EMS.
2. Environmental standard certification costs.
3. Knowledge intake for external consultants and internal key staff along with possible necessary recruitment of staff with suitable knowledge.
4. Continuous planning and learning facilities.²

As seen in the lists above time and economy goes together in covering the necessary activities for starting and conducting EMS work. Therefore, the following list will involve both parts when elaborating on ways to either cut down on time spent for the activities and/or cutting possible economic resources for managing the

² The time and economic example list have been elaborated based on experiences of the partner organisations involved in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)



activities.

Overcoming economic hindrances to gain knowledge

Planning is of utmost importance when starting up EMS work. Because of the process focus on continuous improvement in the work it further means that planning is a living entity throughout the EMS work and will therefore continue to be a necessary task to conduct also after the initiation phase.

Knowledge is crucial before managing the activity of setting up a plan for the EMS work. For organisations who have the economic capacity knowledge gain is highly recommended by hiring experienced consultants in the field whose beneficial help can be of profound impact for setting up an EMS and starting IEA.

However, for organisations who at the moment cannot carry the cost to hire consultants and other expertise other less costly alternatives can be used for preparatory knowledge intake. One or more staff members could for example be appointed to the EMS and IEA tasks and helping ways for staff members in gaining necessary learnings could be several, for example:

- Participation in study courses within EMS and IEA, which usually can be found in higher education and/or by entrepreneurs within the EMS field.



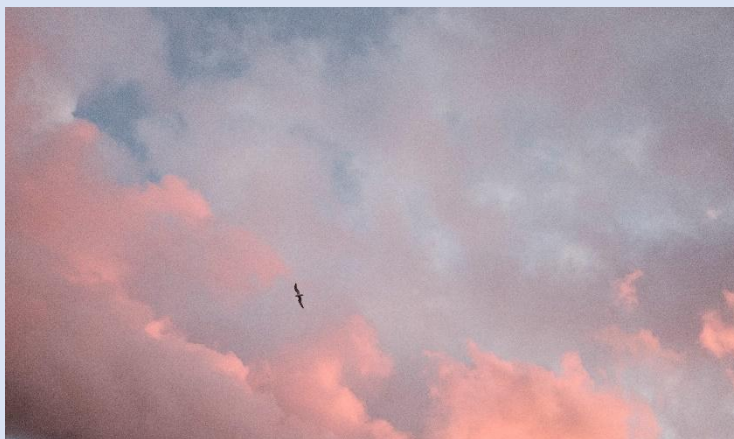
- Library visits to physical/digital library with readings/audio listening on topics like EMS, IEA, environmental standards, environmental related issues like circular economy, environmental law, EU and global directives and agreement within sustainability, environmental science, energy engineering, biodiversity, climate change and more.
- Communication with and possible study visits to geographically nearby organisations who have started up EMS and who might also be certified toward environmental standards.
- Reading and practising the methods in the Synergy Audit Guideline and the Synergy Audit Booklet for SMEs along with playing the Synergy Audit e-learning games about internal environmental audits.³
- Taking part in free online seminars about issues related to EMS and IEA.⁴

³ The material has been elaborated on by the *Synergy Audit ERASMUS+ KA2 Project* (2019-2022) [online] Available at: [Accessed 31 August 2022]

⁴ The example list has been elaborated based on experiences of the partner organisations involved in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)



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Choosing the right person for the right task

The knowledge that is generated could serve as a preparatory start for the planning of the EMS in the organisation. To decrease time that might not be possible to gain too much of for staff members when conducting the knowledge gain, the management of the organisation could use some tools for trying to increase the successful outcome of the generated knowledge, by for example:



- Asking staff members that already have an interest in and are motivated to work with climate and environmental issues to take part.
- Ask a group of staff members instead of solely one person, to conduct different parts of the knowledge generation to improve the chance for staff to have enough time for the activity.
- Contact institutions in higher education to view whether e.g., students within the subject could be interested in performing e.g., thesis work by preparing an EMS plan for the organisation.
- Contact recruiting teams for internship staff to conduct the preparatory work for a fee that is possible to pay for the organisation.
- Using a circular model in which a staff member from the organisation who wants to set up the EMS exchange workplace with a staff member who works with this task in another organisation and who have qualitative knowledge of gain from the other organisation, for a set period.⁵

Several of the above suggestions are related to taking in external help to the organisation. However, this also means that the external help will leave the organisation

⁵ The example list has been elaborated based on experiences of the partner organisations involved in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)



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at a set time. Therefore, it is of importance to try to gather the knowledge from the external help toward the staff in the organisation during the visit, so that the staff can improve their readiness to take on the work with their own capacity when the visit and/or exchange is over.

Creating an EMS organisation

When enough knowledge about EMS and its areas e.g., IEA is at place an environmental organisation will have to be elaborated within the organisation to uphold an effective and systematic EMS. If the organisation wishes to be environmentally certified in the future it can for example be an idea to already from the initiation of the EMS in the organisation plan the EMS organisation as if it was an already certified organisation. In this way the organisation is already creating the foundation for working in level with a certified organisation.

The most usual environmental standards are ISO 14001⁶ and EMAS⁷ and further study on the standard of interest for the organisation, is necessary. However, to gain the necessary information about standards can be costly and to put up an EMS organisation, independent on whether

⁶ *ISO 14000 family – Environmental management*. (2022) ISO. [online] Available at: <https://www.iso.org/iso-14001-environmental-management.html> [Accessed 14 July 2022]

⁷ *What is EMAS?* (2022) European Commission Website. [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm [Accessed 14 July 2022]



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the organisation aims at becoming certified or not, is anyhow necessary.

The EMS organisation within the organisation will need to involve staff members and the necessary work also needs to be performed in time.

It is suggested to uphold the step-by-step work with integrating the EMS organisation even if the time available for the work in the organisation is minimal and will have to be conducted during a longer phase of time. Therefore, it is of necessity to plan for the necessary work time in the calendars so that the EMS organisation does not risk being treated like a secondary task to perform if there is time available. It could thereby also be an idea to put up deadlines and milestones related to the time plan.

Here follows some suggestions on ways that could decrease the economic burden when initiating the organisation:

- Planning of the first year of the EMS establishment in relation to possible work time of usage for the task beyond the general work in the organisation. This could mean to create a step-by-step time plan where usage of e.g., 5% of the work time per week, or similar could be a minimum.



- Usage of a group of staff members within the EMS organisation to hinder that too much responsibility leans on solely one person.
- Involvement of the management of the organisation to caretake for the EMS organisation set up, which is furthermore a requirement in the ISO 14001 and the EMAS environmental standards.
- Involvement of staff members that might have project leadership skills, if possible.
- Take help of stakeholders and interests for commenting on most important aspects of the coming EMS organisation, from their possible perspectives.
- Learning about management methods e.g., the Plan-Do-Check-Act⁸ methodology for knowhow about how to set up an EMS organisation.
- Reading/audio listening about process management from for example literature sources e.g., academic and popular articles and books.⁹

⁸ PDCA (*plan do check act*) – *Continually improving, in a methodical way.* (2022). Mind Tools. [online] Available at:

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_89.htm [Accessed 14 July 2022]

⁹ The example list has been elaborated based on experiences of the partner organisations involved in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project.* (2019-2022)



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Conducting IEA

When the EMS organisation is in place in the organisation and activities within the EMS have started the work process will continue ongoingly in an integrated manner within the organisation. The IEA will further take place when there is time to check up on how the EMS is running in the organisation.

Within IEA there are several time-consuming activities and some parts that might need an economic budget, beyond the everyday IEA work.

If the organisation is focused at becoming environmentally certified knowledge about legal requirements linked to the environment and an updated law list needs to be assessed. Furthermore, beyond management of possible omissions that will be presented in an IEA report after a performed IEA but furthermore, solving of the omissions by usage of omission management will be necessary routines to integrate in the EMS work. Not the least for the chance to solve the possible omissions in a time sufficient manner. IEA comes with several economic and time costs. Areas like knowledge intake (see above), creation of IEA teams and work time for IEA and omission management are some of the costs. Here follows ideas on how time and economy can be saved while conducting the tasks:



- Communication with an organisation nearby for knowledge exchange within IEA works in exchange of knowledge that is present in the organisation, which further could be of interest for the other organisation to exchange knowledge about.
- Readings about IEA in the Synergy Audit Guideline and playing the Synergy Audit E-learning Games.¹⁰
- Making the IEA team involve persons in the staff that are interested in conducting IEA work.
- Letting an IEA leader of the IEA team take on the task to teach each new member of the IEA team about the work and how to carry it out.
- Inviting of IEA staff from an organisation nearby to perform an IEA on the EMS of the organisation in case the organisation does not have resources for an own IEA team.
- Supporting the IEA team in joining e.g., at location and digital seminars and lectures for knowledge increase related to the IEA tasks and sustainability issues.
- Creating of an omission management plan with the help of Excel and/or Word for the chance to

¹⁰ The material has been elaborated on by the *Synergy Audit ERASMUS+ KA2 Project* (2019-2022) [online] Available at: [Accessed 31 August 2022]



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uphold the work and thereby not having to buy an expensive computer system if budget is not available.¹¹



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Circular economy as a resource tool

Circular economy is a holistic change of thinking an economic model¹² and its five business models could, beyond being integrated as activities and objectives within an EMS, also increase economic sufficiency in the organisation when integrated and acted upon in the EMS work.

Circular economy business as resource help in EMS

Usage of circular economy business when setting up an EMS could help organisations to find ways to reduce needed resources in the initiation phase of the EMS.

Circular economy business involves five business models:

- 1) Renewability
- 2) Sharing platforms
- 3) Product as a service
- 4) Product-life extension
- 5) Resource efficiency and recycling¹³

¹² *Synergy Audit Methodology Guideline*, Synergy Audit ERASMUS+ KA2 Project (2019-2022) [online] Available at: [Accessed 31 August 2022]

¹³ *How to integrate Synergy Audit in a Small and Medium Enterprise? A guidance for SMEs*. (2022) Synergy Audit ERASMUS+ KA2 Project. [online] Available at: [Accessed 31 August 2022]



By using circular economy and the five business models when trying to create resource sufficiency while starting up EMS in organisations, several beneficial time- and economy reducing factors can come forward.

Renewability could be used to reduce economic and time resources for the organisation when starting up an EMS in for example the following ways:

- ✚ Reuse of any already present tool in the organisation as help for the work in a new shape/for a new purpose of e.g., management capacity and knowledge about sustainability, regulations and law among staff, among other capacities.
- ✚ Reuse of digital tools, if present in the organisation, in a new way as help for managing needed documents, communication links with staff, stakeholders and interests by e.g., chat room and discussion room channels together with intranet rooms for sharing of information about the EMS.

Sharing platforms could be used to reduce economic and time resources for the organisation when starting up an EMS in for example the following way:

- ✚ Getting together with organisations in the physical near area or related activity area of the



organisation, who might want to start up EMS and share and exchange needed tools found in each organisation between and for the benefit of all organisations. Invitation to knowledge sharing about areas in the EMS that are present in an organisation and a setup of an economic fund between the organisations that could reduce the economic burden could be an example. Also, time management could be shared between the organisations where e.g., each organisation could have a specific expertise task to solve within the EMS set-up that could be shared between and of gain for each organisation involved.

Product as a service could be used to reduce economic and time resources for the organisation when starting up an EMS in for example the following way:

- ✚ Usage of products in the organisation as services by e.g., using knowledge within areas of EMS, e.g., IEA to develop as services toward organisations in need of performance of IEA which could bring about economic benefit for the organisation with the service and thereby support budget for e.g., payment of environmental standard certification.



Product-life extension could be used to reduce economic and time resources for the organisation when starting up an EMS in for example the following way:

- ✚ Involvement of customers, stakeholders and interest targets by e.g., survey tools and other communication means for a chance to gather information about how the product/service of the organisation could improve its benefit toward the target in a sustainable manner. Could there for example be an interest in usage of the product/service in another and/or more ways with increased climatic and environmental sustainability than at present?

Resource efficiency and recycling could be used to reduce economic and time resources for the organisation when starting up an EMS in for example the following ways:

- ✚ Involvement of other possible management systems in the organisation, e.g., risk & safety, human relations and economic management where they all could be integrated in certain beneficial areas, e.g., where risk, human relations and environment meets and where human



relations, economy and environment meets in the overall sustainability work.

- ✚ Usage of the EMS management structure as help for improving efficiency and synergy ability¹⁴ in other areas of the organisation, e.g., in economy, human relations and risk & safety.¹⁵

¹⁴ The example has been elaborated based on the best practices phase in the partner organisations involved in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)

¹⁵ The examples of how circular economy business can be used in EMS has been elaborated by One Planet NGO in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)



Welcome to join the Synergy Audit Global Network

We hope that this brief information about EMS and IEA in have generated more readiness to take on the work in organisations.

Whether the environmental management and audits field is new or not for the organisation it can always be a gain to collaborate with other persons and exchange valuable ideas on a global level. Therefore, the Synergy Audit Network is created, and it is open access and free of charge available for anyone who are working with environmental management and/or environmental audits or have interests in learning more about it and sharing ideas.

Also, the network serves as a meeting point for the possibility to contact and uptake collaboration within the sustainability field, with organisations of similar interest anywhere on Earth.

How do I join the Synergy Audit Network?

Feel free to send an email (see contact information in the end of this booklet) with information about your first name, surname, activity/study/work position and name of your home organisation, if relevant, in the message.

By providing One Planet with the above information, **you have approved** to share the above information on the Synergy Audit Network Webpage in line with the **GDPR** directive. Your contact information will be



available and shared on the webpage toward network members and toward anyone who visits the network webpage.



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1. The information has been given by a multidisciplinary set of organisations in Europe within the best practices phase of the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)
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13. *How to integrate Synergy Audit in a Small and Medium Enterprise? A guidance for SMEs*. (2022) Synergy Audit ERASMUS+ KA2 Project [online] Available at: [Accessed 31 August 2022]

14. The example has been elaborated based on the best practices phase in the partner organisations involved in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)

15. The examples of how circular economy business can be used in EMS has been elaborated by One Planet NGO in the *Synergy Audit Professional Partnership ERASMUS+ KA2 Project*. (2019-2022)



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More information

The Synergy Audit Project (2019-2022) is an ERASMUS+ KA2 transnational project funded collaboration between One Planet together with CARDET, Comune di Ravenna, CRES, EcoFellows, Provincia di Parma and SERN.

A multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary audit methodology tool for the help for organisations in the environmental management system work have been developed and piloted in the project.

For more information about the project and its open



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access and free of charge tools, please see the contact information below.

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