

Every year, the European Commission rewards special achievements for EMAS organisations. In 2006, it was innovative communication about EMAS. This year, waste has moved into the focus.

The EMAS Awards 2007 were organised on Monday, 19th November 2007 in the marvellous Oceanario de Lisboa. As European society has grown wealthier, it has created more and more rubbish. Each year in the European Union alone, we throw away 1.3 billion tonnes of waste - some 40 million tonnes of it hazardous. This amounts to about 3.5 tonnes of solid waste for every man, woman and child, according to European Environment Agency statistics. Add to this total a further 700 million tonnes of agricultural waste and it is clear that treating and disposing of all this material - without harming the environment - becomes a major headache.

The European Union's approach to waste management is based on three principles:

1. Waste prevention

2. Recycling and reuse, and

3. Improving final disposal and monitoring.

For the EMAS Awards 2007, all 32 nominated companies and public authorities have all demonstrated a great achievement in this field. The organisations have been nominated in the following categories:

- Micro-organisations: < 10 employees and annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total not exceeding €2 million
- Small organisations: >= 10 to < 50 employees and annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total not exceeding €10 million
- Medium organisations: >= 50 to 250 employees and annual turnover not exceeding €50 million and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million
- Large organisations: > 250 employees and annual turnover of more than €50 million and/or an annual balance sheet total of more than €43 million

The 4 winners of the EMAS Awards were presented by Portuguese State Secretary for the Environment, Humberto Rosa, by Pavel Misiga, Head of the Environment & Industry Unit, DG Environment, European Commission and Miguel Tiago Lopes de Oliveira, Head of the Jury and director of the Oceanario de Lisboa.

The Austrian environmental bureau of the municipality of Telfs won the EMAS Award 2007 for the category Micro organisations.

The environmental bureau and the drop-off recycling centre of the municipality of Telfs are public institutions responsible for waste management in the community of Telfs, Tirol, Austria (15.000 inhabitants). It is not really their task to reduce self-generated waste, although the municipality is equipped with a very efficient waste separation system and they see themselves as responsible for providing incentives for residents and companies to reduce waste and to inform the community about these possibilities.

Mr Schaffenrath showed some of the inspiring achievements of the environmental bureau:

- Introduced the yellow bag in 2005 for plastic collection (+10% compared 2004 to 2006)
- Household cooking oils: 85% of the oil is converted into "Biodiesel", 15% are added to the sewage sludge of a local waste water treatment plant and is converted to biogas in the digester tower
- Collection of hazardous waste (medicines, bulbs, etc) increased by +25% in 2006

Austrian Multiprint Elektronik GmbH & SKE wins EMAS Award for small organisations

Multiprint produces printed circuit boards on demand on the southern outskirts of the Austrian capital Vienna. Multiprint Elektronik Ltd performs a very comprehensive EMAS, including the development of new techniques and involves customers, who are encouraged to wait a little longer for the delivery of the closed circuit boards, but receive a more eco-efficient product at a smaller price. Environment Manager Tatjana Koberger from Multiprint Elektronik Ltd presented some examples of the most recent improvements:

1. Surface treatment from nickel/gold to lead-free tin plating (saves cyanide baths, which were highly toxic)
2. Technicians often take the standard of 1,55 mm as the granted standard, even if 1,00 mm thickness of the imprint would suffice for the quality targets. Potential savings worldwide are 250.000 tons of metal, tiny fraction of this potential already harvested in Multiprint.
3. Customers receive a cut in prices if they accept longer production time, which offers more efficiency in the use of machinery and less energy, waste energy and lighting.
4. Savings from these processes are fully re-invested into more efficient technology.

AB Gustavsberg – an EMAS award winner from Scandinavia

Pure, simple design, the industry's toughest environmental standards, energy and water-saving technology for the production of sanitary equipment- that's Gustavsberg ! Helena Källström from the Quality - Environment - Occupational Health & Safety Department takes home the award to Sweden. Gustafsberg AB shows excellence in decoupling production and environmental impact as well as in ecodesign of their products :

1. Product development at Gustavsberg has led to an aluminium recycling rate at 100%. The manufacturing process has also lead to a dramatic reduction in the use of chrome.
2. A strong reduction in the need for machining such as grinding and polishing saves large amount waste in the form of environmentally hazardous dust.
3. Eco-design approaches have led to a unique water-saving solution, thereby reducing energy loss through the unnecessary heating of warm water. .

In the category Large organisations, Grundfos A/S from Denmark wins the Award

Founded in 1945, Grundfos is one of the world's leading pump manufacturers. Its mission is to successfully develop, produce and sell high-quality pumps and pumping systems world-wide, contributing to a better quality of life and a healthy environment. Grundfos has clear and consistent guidelines for handling waste and continuously focuses on the issue of waste. Each factory has objectives and targets for reduction of waste, which are evaluated every month through a balanced scorecard. Thanks to this system, the company has reduced the total indexed volume of waste since 1997, with 33 % proportional to the production activity and with a recycling percent at 84 %.

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