

Nordic E-COOP - Spreading strategies of the Nordic less formal EMS approaches



The municipalities and organizations working with eco-management and eco-certification systems for SME's (less formal EMS) in the Nordic countries have used different methods and strategies for reaching their target groups. Common for these approaches are the overall objective to stimulate and improve the environmental performance of the companies.

Summary

Ever since the introduction of ISO 14001, there has been a demand for a less formal EMS by small companies. Therefore municipalities, who have an interest in improved environmental performance by their local enterprises, initially had SME's as their primary target group when designing their various approaches.

During the work, the necessity to make the less formal EMS well known is increasing since the companies put higher demand on the economic benefit of their certificate. Therefore the methods and strategies used differ, depending on time since start and current target group for a specific action.

In some of the Nordic counties there has been an ambition to have a uniform national less formal EMS approach. The path to get there differs though. All approaches have ISO 14001 as model and many companies have continued to an ISO certification. Also, it has been a deliberately choice to keep it simple enough and not get to close to the ISO 14001.

In Norway the Eco Lighthouse concept was formed locally. Their EMS was later adopted on national level - "top down". This path

may enhance the marketing and communication to the companies. It also can reduce the total efforts of administration and also enhance for other municipalities to start a local certification program for their companies.

In Sweden and in Denmark local initiatives has been run in parallel for several years before synchronizing the programmes - "bottom up". The result is that all municipalities must put a lot effort in starting a program of their own. Gothenburg however, has acted as an umbrella municipality enhancing for other municipalities in the region - "top down". In Denmark the bottom up perspective is an active strategy since the companies are the owner of the network.

In Finland, the City of Helsinki recently started their less formal EMS approach and Eco Start is also an alternative. The City of Helsinki surveyed the other Nordic approaches and they use the benefits of experiences from the forerunners.

The early starters of the less formal EMS approaches has used "trial and error" when they shaped a way of working. The followers can more easily pick and choose a more flexible way of working and not

take in or organise their work with these parts of the EMS. The good parts can be copied and less successful parts can be avoided. This review is aimed to make it even easier to compose an optimal path.

In this part of the project, used strategies will be surveyed and focus will be on the two main target groups companies and other organisations using less formal EMS but also the network that offers a specific approach, municipalities and consultants. Some effort also will be on other target groups as business and funding organization etc. First the organizations will be shortly described.

Some activities are performed just once and others are repeated, some have a specific receiver or a defined group and yet some has everybody as the target group.

Common for all less formal EMS approaches is that they have some connection to a municipality, they have ceremonies for delivery of the certificates/diplomas, and they all use websites, logos, advertising and printed folders. They also educate consultants and have some kind of handbook and they use checklists.

The effect of a specific activity is not easy to measure and therefore the outcome of specific strategy is hard to assess. This may relate to that time lap must be given for most activities before an effect occur, witch complicates the evaluation.

Some successful spreading strategies are to engage the political system and also at least initially have a strong connection to a municipality. This guarantees the supply of economic resources facilitates funding and enhances the credibility to the certificate/diploma.

Companies are mostly joining the less formal EMS work from economic causes since they want to fulfil the demand from their customer. Other benefits are often discovered later in the process and to communicate these benefits therefore are of not so important initially.

This survey does not reflect how well the companies have succeeded with their environmental improvements by using the different EMS approaches.



EcoCompass - Finland

The EcoCompass EMS is a newly started program for SME´s in Helsinki Metropolitan area. The City of Helsinki Environment Centre funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

and the Uusimaa Regional Environment Centre coordinates the EcoCompass project.

Target group(s)	Objective	Activity and outcome
Other Nordic actors providing EMS	The City of Helsinki Environment Centre wanted to start a program of their own	The City contacted several Nordic cities and other actors working with EMS´s for SME´s. Outcome: Funding was applied for the Nordic E-COOP project!
Business advisors	Spread knowledge about the certificate and general environmental issues to new entrepreneurs	The Helsinki municipality applied for EU funding to educate business advisors about environmental issues. 20 advisors have been trained in basic environment issues (2,5 days) and also 2-3 hours of thematic issues - for example restaurants. Outcome: Business advisors spreading the information about the EMS to newly started companies!
Entrepreneurs from other countries	Spread knowledge about general environmental issues to entrepreneurs from other counties - immigrants	They give courses with environmental theme for those entrepreneurs Outcome: Information about the EMS to entrepreneurs from other countries!
Shops and printing business	Get started with the Helsinki EcoCompass based on environmental impact and area situation	Has started the work with focus on tourism, graphic industry and hotels in Helsinki. Outcome: 25 new businesses have started constructing the EcoCompass – less formal environmental management system.



Eco Lighthouse - Norway

Eco Lighthouse Foundation program is created by the City of Kristiansand. In 2003 the Eco Lighthouse foundation was established and given the responsibility to administrate the Eco Lighthouse certification system. The system enables a network of municipalities in Norway to offer local businesses and organisations the Eco Lighthouse Certificate. The board of the Eco Lighthouse Foundation comprises representatives from municipalities and the most important associations in private and public business world. The Eco Lighthouse Program is supported by the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment.

It is compulsory for the municipality to have an Eco Lighthouse license. The consultants have to check and contact the municipality before the certification process starts.

Each municipality selects independent consultants to head an environmental analysis and a designed plan of action for each specific business/organisation.

When the general requirements of the Eco-Lighthouse Program are met and the industry requirements are fulfilled, the municipality awards the Eco Lighthouse Certificate. Re-certification takes place every third year.

The municipal environmental office usually supervises the certification process, although regional municipalities can work together in certification and marketing.

To prevent conflicts of interest, other municipalities can certify organisations in the public sector. The new Eco Lighthouse business benefits from the publicity and media coverage when the certificate is awarded.

Target group(s)	Objective	Activity and outcome
Funding	Getting started	The funding resources from the national ministry council initially made it possible to start the work with developing the tools and criteria. Outcome: A self financed running system from 2006

Companies	A broaden scope to cover all relevant environmental issues that companies often have difficulties with.	A general criteria and a number of additional branch criteria have been developed. The criteria consist of a number of single demands covering environmental issues for the trade. The criteria also include health and security issues beside environment. In addition a web based environmental reporting and accounting system have been developed. Outcome: A profitable, simple, easy to understand, relevant eco management and certification system is available for private and public businesses.
Politicians	Secure a long-term activity and political support	The mayors, head of the municipality board (and also the prime minister) are engaged to deliver the certificate. Outcome: Official status, enhanced acknowledgement, media coverage!
Well known local entrepreneurs in the City of Kristiansand	To have some “forerunners” that other entrepreneurs would follow	While starting the Eco-Lighthouse one focus was on associations and clubs with company leaders and within these groups define the leaders that had the others trust - so called “bell cows”. When these persons made a certain decision others were following. Outcome: A group of companies ready to join the program!
Branches of local entrepreneurs	Stimulate and put a pressure to a specific group/branch of companies Interaction between municipality (business and environmental council) and local businesses	Initially the strategy was to invite a group of companies from a similar branch and offer them the possibility to be Eco-Lighthouse certified. The risk of being among the companies not participating stimulates them to join the certification. Later the companies also experienced other benefits. Outcome: Local companies from specific branches ready to join the program!
Municipalities in Norway	Enable more municipalities in Norway to certify their local companies	The City of Kristiansand manages the common tool and the way of working while the new municipality can focus on how to use the tool. In 2003 the Eco Lighthouse foundation was established. Outcome: A simpler route for municipalities to start working with their SME’s!
Municipalities in Norway	Administration of a less formal EMS can be to heavy for a small municipality	The Eco-Lighthouse foundation is responsible for the administration, developing and marketing of the system on national level. The development of industry criteria is being done in co-operation with consultants, companies and branch organisations. Outcome: A simpler local administration for the municipalities involved!
Municipalities in Norway	Create a long-term cooperation between the municipalities and the Eco Lighthouse Foundation that also is important for the local companies	The municipalities must have a political decision and also appoint a contact person. Outcome: A long-term cooperation with the connected municipalities!

The customers of the companies and other interested parties of the certificate	A trustworthy auditing that meet the requirements of third party.	While the consultants act as advisors helping the companies implementing the EMS, the municipality is the part that audits the company. Outcome: Independent audit of the companies!
Consultants and auditors working with the program	Consultants and auditors must have proper skills to help the companies.	The office arranges mandatory courses for consultants and municipal representatives responsible for certification. Outcome: A high quality on persons involved!
Companies	Spreading knowledge of the Eco Lighthouse certificate.	The consultants are marketing the program in cooperation with the municipalities and their business and environmental councils. Outcome: Active marketing of the Eco Lighthouse certificate and customers to the consultants!
Companies and branches	Help branches of companies to find just their specific environmental aspects/issues	Check list with industry requirements. Outcome: Easier to find important things to work with!
Companies	Help companies to find an approved local consultant	The approved consultants are listed on the Eco Lighthouse homepage. Outcome: A mutual beneficial cooperation between the companies, the municipalities and the consultants!
Regions	Cooperation for manage to help all companies that want the certificate	Regional network of municipalities that can work together in certification and marketing
Consultants, municipalities and companies	Stimulate the active municipalities, companies and consultants in a specific municipality	Have the 15 municipalities with most certified companies on the Eco Lighthouse homepage. Both by total numbers and according to number of inhabitants. Outcome: Enhanced driving force!
		Best practice, the Eco Lighthouse bus, the reporting tool for digital data catch, make the reporting tool a common Nordic tool, attain the Sustainable Cities and Future Cities, start to certify municipalities in Norway, the local connection important when engagement is dipping.



Green Network/Key2Green - Denmark

Green Network is a voluntary network based on dialogue rather than control. The network has five member municipalities and also a part of the Danish Key2Green. The companies involved within the network own Green Network.

Their primary target group is SME's and especially those companies that have a heavy impact on the environment. All companies – big or small, can start where they are. The companies include small and large manufacturing companies, service companies, farms, fish farms, utilities etc. Today the Green Network flag flies at more than 300 companies in the region.

One driving force for the companies is a lower tax from supervision. The companies also have access to a chemical guide to enhance compliance with legislation.

The public administration develops new competencies and services and the companies reduce their expenses for energy and raw

materials etc. Key employees from the public service partners are available to assist the companies.

The board of Green Network has politicians that also put demand on what focus the network must have. When the network started in 1994, focus was on the environmental dimension and in 2002 it has been broadened to the sustainable dimension with focus also on climate, CSR and employees.

One problem is that the network only can work with SMEs within the five municipalities. For example, the companies that have units both inside and outside the area and companies outside the area that wants to join but they cannot.

Green Network has formulated several strategy areas with about 40 result targets within each. Different project groups have the responsibility for reaching the targets.

Target group(s)	Objective	Activity and outcome
Companies that are supervised	Enhance the driving force for the companies	Focus on branches having the heaviest effect on the environment in close dialogue with supervisors from the municipalities in order to find important issues. They also give the certified companies a lower tax from supervision. Outcome: An enhanced driving force and reduced environmental impact!

Companies and their customers/web page visitors	Increase the awareness of the certificate.	The companies are encouraged to make statements on their homepages.
Companies and all interested parties	Increase the awareness of the network and the diploma	Via newsletters, direct mail and the homepage Green Network ensures that all members receive important information about events and activities within the network and other important information. Can be subscribed by all interested parties.
International customer of the companies	Meeting the requirements of the member companies of increased international competition	The name Green Network can be understood abroad.
Companies not ready to take the step	Include all interested organisations and catch presumptive companies	Have different types of membership depending on where the company is sited and on degree of “ambition”. So-called V-membership commits the member to undertake continuous improvements and to document them in a statement in accordance with at least one of the Green Network manuals, within two years after joining the network. Outcome: The possibility for a company to engage on a not so demanding level and also test and learn about the network and diploma!
Companies and all interested parties	Broaden the scope of the certificate.	Started with environmental dimension 1994 and changed to sustainable in 2002. Outcome: Catch the will of the board and the surrounding interested parties and also make the companies working with pressing issues!
Companies	One key word is dialogue with the companies.	The combination of the companies’ self-knowledge and the skills of the key personnel from Green Network guarantee a result-oriented solution.
The customers of the companies	Strengthen the market value for the companies.	A flag show that the company is working continuously and serious in the CSR-fields with the EMS. Outcome: Status and credibility!
All interested parties	Increase acknowledgement	The environmental minister of Denmark attended the 15-year anniversary!



Environment Diploma - Sweden

The City of Gothenburg started their environmental diploma program in 1995 and was then the first municipality in Sweden. Initially the City of Gothenburg wanted to stimulate and enable hotels and restaurants to become more environmentally adapted and started the work when the World Championship for athletics was held in Gothenburg 1995.

The City of Gothenburg model for environmental diploma was developed and key starting points were cooperation and a holistic view, practical and pedagogical manner, cost effectiveness and an attention factor.

When the Swedish Environmental Base (SMB) was formed, the City of Gothenburg was one of the active parts and their EMS has adopted the common SMB criteria.

To the City of Gothenburg environmental diploma a network of about 30 municipalities are affiliated. Together the municipalities have more than 600 companies with a valid diploma. The City of Gothenburg role for the network has many similarities with the Norwegian organisation.

Target group(s)	Objective	Activity and outcome
Suppliers to the WC event 1995, hotels and restaurants	Stimulate and enable companies of interest for the supervision office to become more environmentally adapted	Suppliers to the game were contacted. Outcome: A group of companies joining the program!
Suppliers to the WC event	The supervision office in Gothenburg wanted to use a new method for the companies to comply with environmental, food and other legislation.	Interaction between municipality and local businesses in the region.
Municipalities in the Gothenburg region	Create and offer an uniform and well known EMS that was available for organisations in the region/country	Neighbouring municipalities in the Gothenburg region was invited to adopt the model. Also other municipalities in Sweden were welcome in the network. Outcome: The City of Gothenburg environmental Diploma network!
The municipality network	Give other municipalities the possibility to offer local enterprises a diploma without starting a program of their own	A new municipality that wants to join the network and start to certify enterprises don't have to develop their own methods and material. Outcome: The possibility for smaller municipalities to join the diploma program!

The Gothenburg diploma network	Coordinate audits, checklists, working methods, experiences and motivate and inspire each other, develop the model	The network has regular meetings and develops the method and material together and representatives from the city of Gothenburg is leading the work. Sometimes they visit some companies for a common inspection/audit and afterwards they have discussions to improve the working model. They also visit each other and the host tells about their specific way of working. Outcome: A vital cooperation between municipalities and a constructive group to develop the EMS work!
Companies and organisations working with events		Develop schemes for events.
The politicians in the city	The need for a “MRS” to collect the improvements in the companies.	
Companies	Stimulate the companies by buying products and services from the businesses that have a diploma.	The City of Gothenburg is aware of that many companies have the diploma and during procurement this often is asked for.



Swedish Environmental Base (SMB) - Sweden

The non-profit association Swedish Environmental Base (SMB) is a network of municipalities and other organizations working with different less formal EMS for SME's. Before the network was formed in 2005, the members already had developed separate EMS systems for SME's.

In 1999 there were more than 60 different less formal systems running in Sweden. This led to difficulties for officials and purchaser working with procurement to recognise what the companies had

accomplished. Also the companies were uncertain of the advantages with the certification.

The development of the SMB was initially funded by Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (former NUTEK), The Stockholm County Association of Local Authorities (KSL) and by the participating members.

The SMB members developed and adopted a common standard with 23 criteria and a logotype. The companies must fulfill the 23 criteria

before retaining a certificate with the SMB logotype. But still, the different member's methods and activities used within the

companies diverge.

Target group(s)	Objective	Activity and outcome
Organisations working with EMS's for SME's in Sweden	The flora of more than 60 different less formal EMS approaches in Sweden, mostly ran by municipalities, created difficulties for both purchaser and companies	The City of Stockholm and Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL) independently acts to create a network of existing less formal EMS. Initially ideas, methods and materials were exchanged and later funding was applied for in order to start a project for finding common criteria that must be fulfilled by the companies. Outcome: A project was started to find common criteria for the existing EMS programs!
Other organisations that had developed a less formal EMS	Collect experiences of similar work	The project group visited Kristiansand to inquire the organisation structure and function of the Eco Lighthouse Foundation. Outcome: The project resulted in that the SMB association was formed!
Potentially new member of the SMB network	Increasing the number of members in the SMB network - gather a selected group of few participants for a deeper discussion	The City of Stockholm Centre for SMEs gathered some key officials from regional municipalities - as the headings of business and environmental departments - to discuss the benefits for the local companies by offering the possibility to be certified by a less formal system. To this meeting a colleague from Eco Lighthouse was invited to inspire the participants. Outcome: Later some of the participants made a common procurement for an EMS diploma program in their municipalities!
Companies	The municipalities wanted to stimulate and offer local enterprises the possibility to certify their business by public consultants rather than by employees of their own.	A number of municipals gathered and performed a public procurement where private consultants were purchased. The procurement specified criteria for quality content and cost and focused on prioritise the smallest companies. The municipalities also issue a local certificate to the companies. Outcome: A group of municipalities can offer local companies an EMS diploma without any public employees!
	Offer an EMS program in areas where a municipality not is involved	The City of Stockholm was earlier one member of SMB network but decided to transfer the work to private consultants (former employees). Outcome: The EMS program can be offered to companies "outside" the connected municipal lies!

Purchaser, companies, new network members	Purchasers both in private and public organisations have a big impact in the process of choosing supplier of services and goods and the knowledge of certificate of the less formal EMS must be spread	Participating in public procurement seminars and exhibitions is necessary for marketing the SMB brand. Outcome: Is not easy to measure but has most likely spread knowledge. Also, at least one municipality has added “Swedish Environmental Base” in the question about “ISO 4001 or corresponding EMS”!
Companies receiving the diploma and all interested parties	The SMB standard has a criterion that stipulates that the SMB member must acknowledge the companies receiving an environmental diploma. This will potentially increase awareness of both the companies awarded and the diploma itself.	The City of Stockholm repeatedly and annually invited the companies with their employees to an awarding ceremony in the City Hall. Purchasers, politicians, civil servants and interested parties within Stockholm and the Stockholm county were invited. Outcome: The companies appreciated the ceremony and used pictures on their websites. Even if the invited persons didn’t participate most knew there was something about an environmental diploma and some knew the meaning of the diploma. The press was always invited even if the result often was tiny.
All interested parties in Sweden	Survey - marketing the SMB standard and spreading the knowledge	Project funded by Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth was started. Outcome: Several hundred of persons in Sweden were contacted with information of the SMB standard and what the companies must do for receiving the diploma!
Companies with supervision	Stimulate the companies economically.	Reduced tax for supervision by the member Järfälla Municipality.
Companies	Spread information about the EMS diploma	The supervisors in Järfälla inform the businesses about the diploma when they are supervised. Outcome: Some companies have contacted the municipalities after they have been informed!
Companies and their suppliers	Stimulate the supply chain.	Stimulate the companies to put environmental demand on their suppliers (Stockholm) Outcome: New participants have joined the diploma program!