



ENHANCE
Interreg Europe

 European Union
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Development Fund

How EMAS has been affected by COVID crisis

*Summary of the results from the surveys on
EMAS-registered organisations, Environmental Verifiers and
EMAS Competent Bodies*

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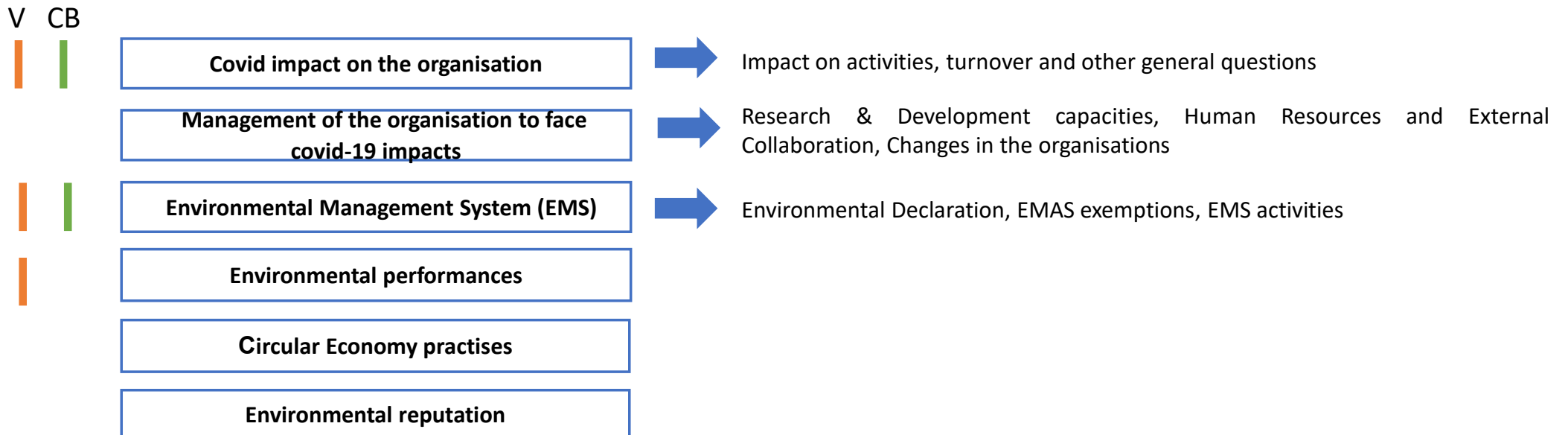
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Overview and methods

ENHANCE Consortium aimed at investigating the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the EMAS System;

- Three different surveys were designed and administered to the three EMAS actors: EMAS-registered organisations, Environmental Verifiers and EMAS Competent Bodies;
- The main survey was the one on EMAS-registered organisations;
- The questions were common in some aspects and specific in others (customised according to the actor), with the aim to cover all the topics and to understand the different perspectives on the same topics;
- The surveys were carried out from January to February 2022 through the EMAS register for all European organisations and through the help of the whole Consortium for Environmental Verifiers and EMAS Competent Bodies;
- The main sections of the surveys on EMAS-registered organisations were:



The surveys in numbers

High completion rate, about 70% for each survey

ORGANISATIONS	Austria	Estonia	Italy	Catalunya	Rest of Europe	TOTAL
Number of Respondents	80	12	136	71	84	383
Full completion	63	10	105	52	51	281

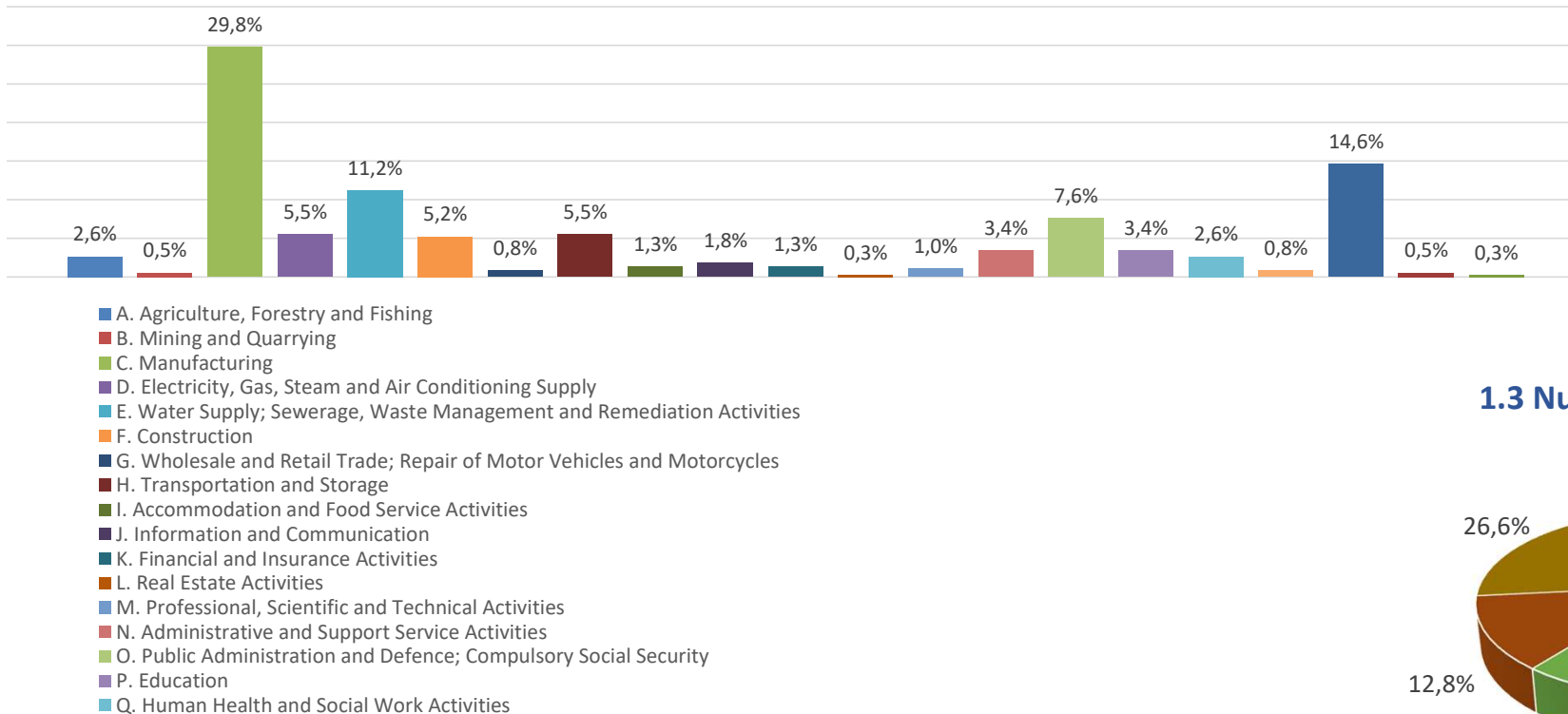
VERIFIERS	Austria	Germany	Italy	Catalunya	Rest of Europe	TOTAL
Number of Respondents	16	19	2	5	15	57
Full completion	14	16	2	5	10	37

COMPETENT BODIES	TOTAL
Number of Respondents	53
Full completion	39

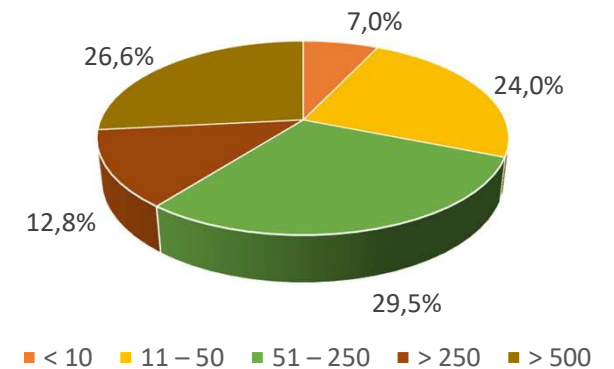
No answers from Romania, The Netherlands, Ireland, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus, Croatia, Bulgaria and Belgium.

Brief focus on EMAS-registered organisations

1.2 NACE category (n=383)

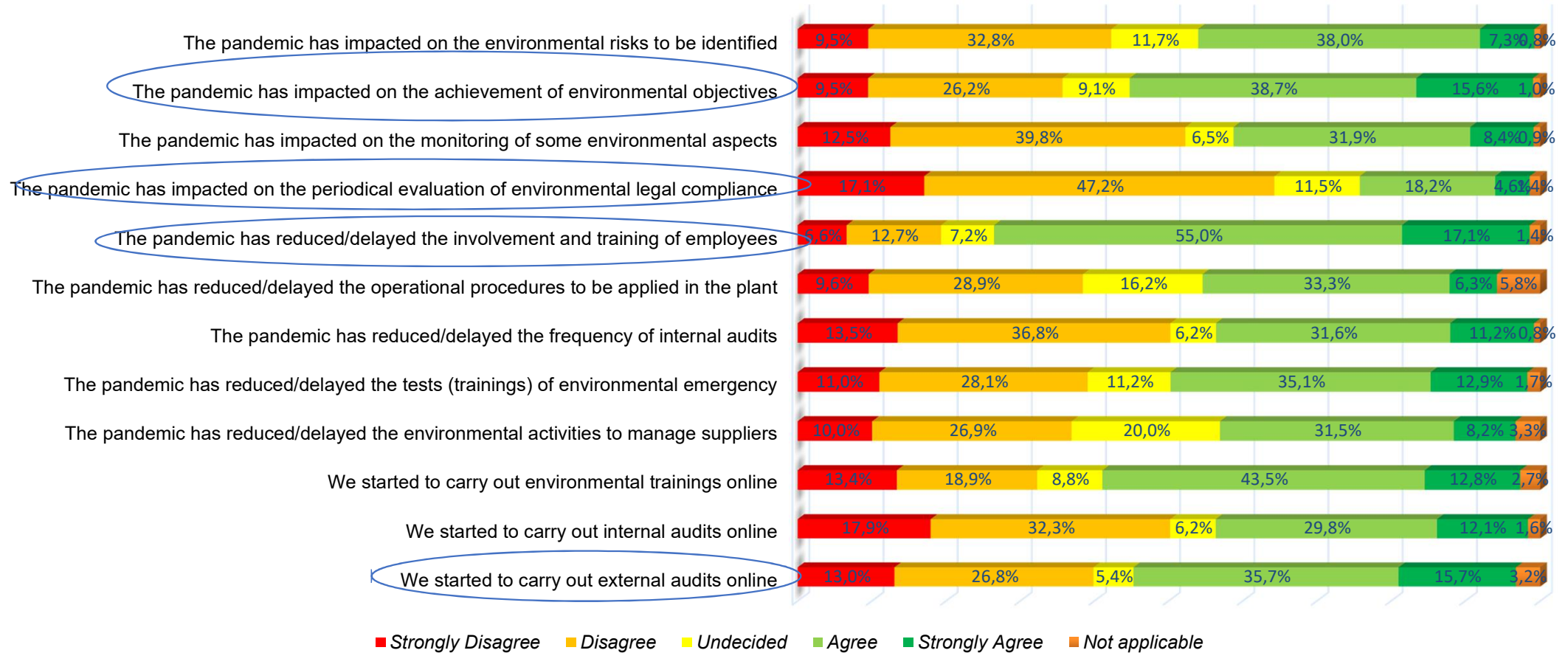


1.3 Number of employees (n=383)



An example: COVID impact on EMS

4.4 About activities linked with the EMS during the peak of pandemic periods, please state your agreement with the following sentences: (n=284)



Main specific results from EMAS organisations

Impact on the organisations

- About 50% were not affected in terms of activities and only 23% had a significant decrease in turnover (>10%);
- More than 70% continued with research and development activities, human resources and external collaborations and many of them adopted internal changes to cope with the pandemic;

- The most important impacts on EMS were on: environmental risks to be identified; the environmental objectives to be achieved; monitoring of environmental aspects; and especially the training of employees;
- **Waste management** was the most affected among the environmental aspects;

Impacts

- About 56% started to carry out **environmental trainings online**, 42% **online internal audits** and 52% **online external audits**;
- More than 50% increased the **digitalisation** of their EMSs; about 40% **changed operational procedures** and **kept some practices** also after the end of the pandemic peaks;

Reactions

EMS

- In terms of **circular economy**, about 50% declare that they are trying to close loops, increase energy efficiency and end-of life practices (recycling, by-products etc.), although other circular economy practices are less implemented (for example, only 30% have been adopting a life-cycle management approach);
- In terms of **environmental reputations**, during the pandemic about 50,08% perceived that EMAS improved public reputation, 42,3% trust towards customers and suppliers, and 55,4% image towards public authorities (compared to not-EMAS organisations).

Main specific results from Verifiers and CBs

- **Third-party audits** were deeply affected;
- Only **9 %** of Environmental Verifiers declared that audits were carried out online **before the pandemic**; **33%** declared that they carried out complete audits online **during the pandemic**, about **60%** declared that online audits have been **kept after the pandemic peaks** and about **40%** is willing to **continue** auditing remotely;
- However, **52,5%** of Environmental Verifiers agree that audits from remote are **less effective** than standard ones;

- **66,4%** of EMAS Competent Bodies granted exemptions for renewal of registrations, **74%** for prolongation of verification cycles; **59,2%** for Environmental Declaration submission and **50,6%** granted exemption for remote audits.

Comparing the 3 surveys some common aspects...

DURING THE PANDEMIC PEAK(S)...	AGREEMENT ON THE ITEMS (Agree+Strongly Agree)		
	EMAS-registered organisations	Environmental Verifiers	EMAS Competent Bodies
EMAS allowed organisations to better manage the environmental aspects in an anomalous / emergency situation.	39%	37%	54%
EMAS was properly maintained.	88,5%	76%	/
Organisations' attention to the EMAS system decreased due to other priorities.	30,5%	43,3%	54%
The EMAS institutions (EMAS CB, Verifiers) have proven to be willing to support organisations in overcoming the impact of covid on the EMAS system.	50,2%	60,02%	82,1%
The Control Authorities bodies have supported organisations in overcoming the impact of covid on regulatory compliance.	43,3%	39,5%	67,5%
After covid-19 pandemic, organisations consider EMS a more valuable tool than before.	30,8%	4%	/
Organisations needed extension/derogations from CBs to maintain the EMAS registration	29,4%	60,8%	82,6%
Extensions/derogations were granted	<27% on all the listed items, but even <15% on Environmental indicators calculation (10,03%), environmental declaration content (12%) and registration fees payment (4,6%)	/	> 50% on all the listed items, but <25% on Environmental indicators calculation (23,3%) and registration fees payment (10,6%)
The pandemic has made organisations understand how the commitment to environmental protection and environmental certification tools are important.	43,4%	6%	5%
The pandemic has increased organisations general interest in sustainability matters.	40,8%	16,7%	14,7%
AFTER THE PANDEMIC, the EMAS system is strengthen	/	5%	10%
AFTER THE PANDEMIC, more organisations will join the EMAS scheme	/	7%	18,2%

Final considerations

- ENHANCE Consortium carried out the first empirical analysis on the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the whole EMAS system;
- The study represents a significant sample of EMAS-registered organisations, Environmental Verifiers and EMAS Competent Bodies;
- The EMAS system was not deeply affected by the Covid pandemic, showing a certain degree of resilience;
- Digitalisation of EMAS activities is becoming more and more important for EMAS-registered organisations and Environmental Verifiers (online audits, digitalisation of EMS, online trainings etc.) and it is the main tool through which these two actors reacted to the pandemic;
- There seems to be different perceptions on the same topics between EMAS Competent Bodies and EMAS-registered organisations, in relation to the support received by the organisations during the pandemic. The misalignment revealed by this study can be an input to further investigate different perceptions on certain topics among EMAS actors in order to strengthen the whole system.

THANK YOU!

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