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THE EMAS IMPSSE: FACTORS INFLUENCING ITALIAN ORGANIZATIONS TO WITHDRAW OR RENEW THE REGISTRATION

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HIGHLIGHTS
- Lack of EMAS registrations growth among European and Italian organizations.
- Questionnaire targeted to Italian EMAS registered organizations, with 562 respondents.
- High willingness to renew the registration, especially small-sized organizations.
- Certification benefits not always significant predictors of willingness to renew EMAS

ABSTRACT
The Environmental Management Systems (EMSs) are voluntary tools with which companies manage the environmental aspects of their operations. In Europe, the most widespread are the ISO 14001:2015 international standard and the EMS, defined by the European Regulation EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme). Recently, while the number of ISO 14001 certified organizations has constantly grown, EMAS registered organizations have been declining. This phenomenon has occurred also in Italy, which accounts for roughly one-fourth of the 4,000 European registrations. Only few scholars have explored this phenomenon and the existing relationship between EMAS outcomes and decision to renew the Registration. Focusing on the Italian context, this paper aims at reducing this gap. The study presents the results of a survey, targeted to Italian EMAS organizations, that through a questionnaire investigates how the Scheme impact on organizations’ operations. Results have been analyzed using Principal Component Analysis, Cluster Analysis and Binary Logistic Regressions, with the main goal to evaluate whether EMAS perceived benefits are significant in the decision to maintain the registration. Moreover, it explores the existence of significant linkages between organizations’ characteristics and their willingness to renew EMAS. Findings show a significant predisposition to renew the registration, especially for small-sized organizations. Conversely, there is a negative link between renewal intentions and ISO 14001 certification. Finally, perceived benefits gained with EMAS implementation are not constantly significant predictors of willingness to renew EMAS. Despite the negative growth trend, the high levels of willingness of respondents to renew EMAS, confirm the tool as a valuable resource and a solid baseline toward the implementation of more sustainable business models. Additionally, positive outcomes of EMAS such as the maximization of material productivity and energy efficiency, the creation of value from waste and the implementation of standardized environmental indicators may support organizations in the transition toward circular economy.

1. INTRODUCTION
Today there is a growing awareness by both public bodies and civil society toward environmental sustainability (Stave, 2010), as a development strategy, capable of satisfying current needs without exceeding the capacity of ecosystems to provide the necessary services to meet those needs (Morelli, 2011). Thus, to compete in the global market, companies should be able to fulfill requirements of internal and external stakeholders, going beyond the purely economic objective, embracing also social and environmental aspects (Clarkson, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Freeman and Reed, 1983). To meet stakeholders’ requirements companies have to introduce environmentally related measures (González-Benito and González-Benito, 2006; Madsen and Ulhøi, 2001). As a result of this pressure, firms are demanded to integrate environmental management into their operations (Angell and Klassen, 1999), in order to reduce their impact on the environment (Martin-Pena et al., 2014). As a consequence, companies started to integrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in their business models as a strategic approach (Dentchev, 2005). To face global issues, companies need to develop new business models for environmental sustainability, changing the way organizations create value (Bocken et al., 2014).
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