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What Drives Environmental Effectiveness? Insights from Organisations and Academic Experts

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Introduction and research aim

Organisational practitioners and academic experts may differ in their perceptions of the key drivers of environmental effectiveness, potentially revealing a gap between managerial practice and expert assessments.

The study aims to:

1. Examine differences between organisational and expert perceptions of the key drivers of environmental effectiveness.
2. Explore the relationship between environmental management system status (ISO 14001, EMAS or no system) and organisational perceptions of environmental effectiveness drivers.

Research methods

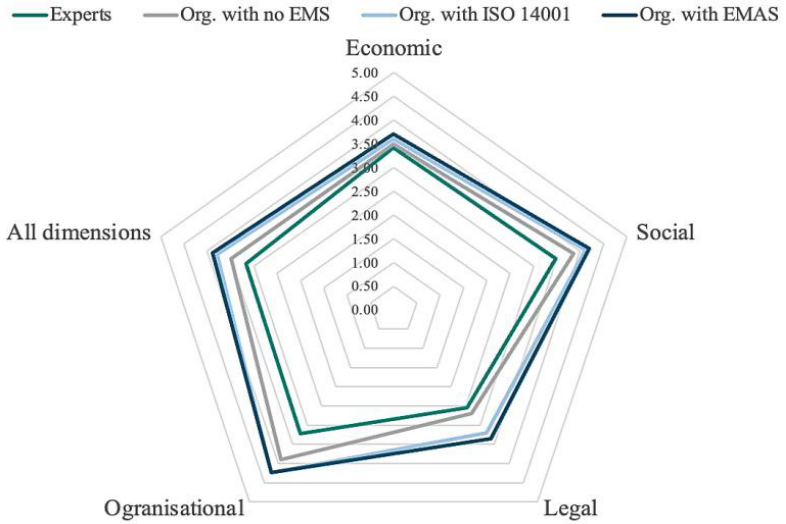
Research design and data collection

- CAWI survey.
- 847 organisations from 14 European countries and 35 academic experts in environmental management.
- Five-point Likert scale to assess the perceived influence of environmental effectiveness drivers.
- Four categories of drivers: economic, legal, social and organisational.

Data analysis

- Descriptive statistics to summarise responses and examine differences in organisational and expert perspectives.
- One-way ANOVA to examine differences in organisational ratings according to environmental management system status.

Results and discussion



1. Organisational vs. expert perspectives

- Organisations rated all four categories more positively than academic experts.
- Organisations ranked the drivers: Organisational > Social > Economic > Legal; experts ranked them: Social > Economic > Organisational > Legal.
- Both groups rated legal drivers lowest, with experts assigning them particularly low ratings.

2. The role of environmental management systems (EMS)

- Organisations with ISO 14001 and EMAS generally rated environmental drivers more positively than organisations without an EMS.
- Ratings increased progressively from organisations without an EMS to ISO 14001-certified organisations, reaching the highest levels among EMAS-registered organisations across all four categories.
- Legal drivers showed the largest gap between EMS groups, with EMAS organisations giving the highest ratings and organisations without an EMS the lowest.

Conclusions

1. **Environmental effectiveness is multidimensional.** Effective environmental management requires a coordinated approach to economic, legal, social and organisational drivers.
2. **Bridging the perception gap is essential.** Dialogue and knowledge exchange between practitioners and academic experts may help align environmental management practices with expert recommendations.
3. **Environmental management systems can be strategic enablers.** ISO 14001 and EMAS are associated with more positive assessments of environmental drivers, suggesting that structured environmental management system can support a more proactive organisational approach.

Limitations: The questionnaires differed between groups, the expert sample was relatively small and the study measured perceptions rather than objective environmental outcomes.

References

Paliwoda, B., Matuszak-Flejszman, A., & Kraśniewska, K. (2025). Drivers of environmental effectiveness: Gap between organisational and expert perspectives. Scientific Papers of Silesian University of Technology. Organization and Management Series, 239, 397–416. DOI: 10.29119/1641-3466.2025.239.21