| Informations Technik Zentrum Bund

Climate neutrality by 2030: *The German federal IT center receives EMAS certification*

The central IT service provider for the German federal government, Informationstechnikzentrum Bund, has effectively implemented an environmental management system. This initiative aims to integrate sustainability into its organizational practices and continuously minimize its environmental footprint

The ITZBund pioneers sustainable IT

In 2021, the IT and software industry contributed four to five percent of global emissions. Also in public administration IT systems are significant sources of CO2 emissions. Within this context, the Informationstechnikzentrum Bund (ITZBund)

Client: Informationstechnikzentrum Bund (ITZBund)

Region: Germany

Industry: Public sector

Client Challenge:

The ITZBund supports over 200 federal authorities in advancing digitalization while also achieving the ambitious climate protection goals of the German government to become climate neutral by 2030.

Solution:

In collaboration with Capgemini, ITZBund implemented the EMAS environmental management system to systematically manage its sustainability initiatives throughout its organization, thereby enhancing public confidence in governmental environmental protection efforts.

Benefits:

- More transparency and credibility in governmental environmental protection
- Enablement of implementation of measures in areas such as green IT and sustainable procurement
- Continuous reduction of environmental impact

operates several data centers, indicating a substantial potential for energy and resource savings.

At the same time, the ITZBund has a political mandate and bears a special social responsibility to use energy and resources as efficiently as possible. The organization therefore aims to lead by example as a pioneer in sustainable IT in the federal administration. The framework for this is set by the Sustainability Program of Measures and the Energy Efficiency Act in Germany, which established the legally binding goal of achieving a climate-neutral federal administration by 2030. Of course, this is no easy undertaking given the relatively short amount of time!

The European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) helps organizations achieve carbon neutrality by continuously assessing, reporting, and improving environmental performance. EMAS covers energy use, waste management, and GHG emissions, ensuring credibility and transparency in environmental protection.

The EMAS regulation mandates a thorough evaluation of an organization's existing environmental standards, a comprehensive review of relevant environmental regulations, and necessary internal restructuring followed by an official environmental declaration. This process requires a significant investment of time and resources. For ITZBund, this involved analyzing the extent and specific contributions of all activities towards sustainability, examining organizational interactions, and conducting a detailed assessment of the completeness of departmental tasks that support sustainability objectives.

The ITZBund collaborated with Capgemini, leveraging their extensive sustainability expertise and many years of experience within the German public sector, to establish itself as a leader in sustainable digitalization within the federal administration.

From guidelines to tangible measures

The sustainability transformation of the ITZBund comprises four main pillars:

1. Concept development
2. Analysis of the status quo
3. Introduction of EMAS
4. Derivation and implementation of measures

The ITZBund created a sustainability concept to serve as a guideline for all sustainability initiatives. This concept considered the ecological, economic, and social aspects of sustainability and concentrated on implementing EMAS, data center management, sustainable procurement, real estate, fleet management, and software sustainability.

The second step was to ensure transparency on ITZBund's sustainability status and establish a database. The project team interviewed employees about ten fields of action, considering both ecological and social aspects. They created an initial energy and greenhouse gas balance by surveying properties, data centers, the vehicle fleet, and travel activities. Using emission factors, they calculated ITZBund's GHG emissions.

The third step was to adopt a structured approach to sustainability by introducing EMAS. This included evaluating land use, water consumption, waste generation, and material flows. The team also clarified responsibilities, created extensive documentation, and established an environmental reporting system.

ITZBund and Capgemini implemented measures to enhance sustainability. As part of EMAS, they developed an environmental program with climate targets and specific measures to reach them. This included green IT, environmentally friendly procurement, hardware disposal, and efficient data center operations using renewable energy. The sustainability of the software was evaluated by creating a concept and criteria catalog based on the Blue Angel ("Blauer Engel") German ecolabel.

Results and outlook for the future

In 2023, EMAS was implemented at 11 ITZBund locations in an initial rollout. The second phase is now in progress, which includes recertifying the first 11 locations and certifying three additional data center locations.

Due to the complexity of the ITZBund as a central IT service provider for the entire federal administration, the large number of stakeholders involved and the scope of EMAS, certification required a corresponding resource effort. However, the organizational structures that have since been established now provide a stable basis for all sustainability activities at the ITZBund. These are now more deeply anchored in the organization and more widely distributed following the introduction. Today, cross-departmental cooperation is much more strategic and, thanks to the comprehensive database that has been created, there is an improved level of knowledge about the status quo of sustainability.

EMAS is an important tool in the effort towards climate neutrality by 2030. Using the established structures, tailored measures can be created. Their implementation enhances environmental performance and contributes directly to sustainability. One significant step was changing the power supply for ITZBund's data centers to 100% green electricity.

The ITZBund aims to enhance its sustainability and support the federal government's sustainable digitalization. Implemented internal measures will be shared with all federal administrations. With the adoption of EMAS, the ITZBund now has the organizational structure to promote sustainability within the federal government.
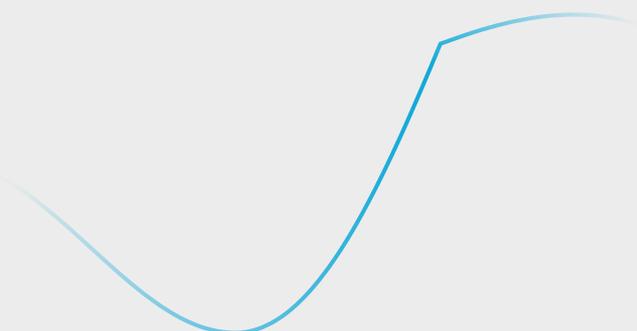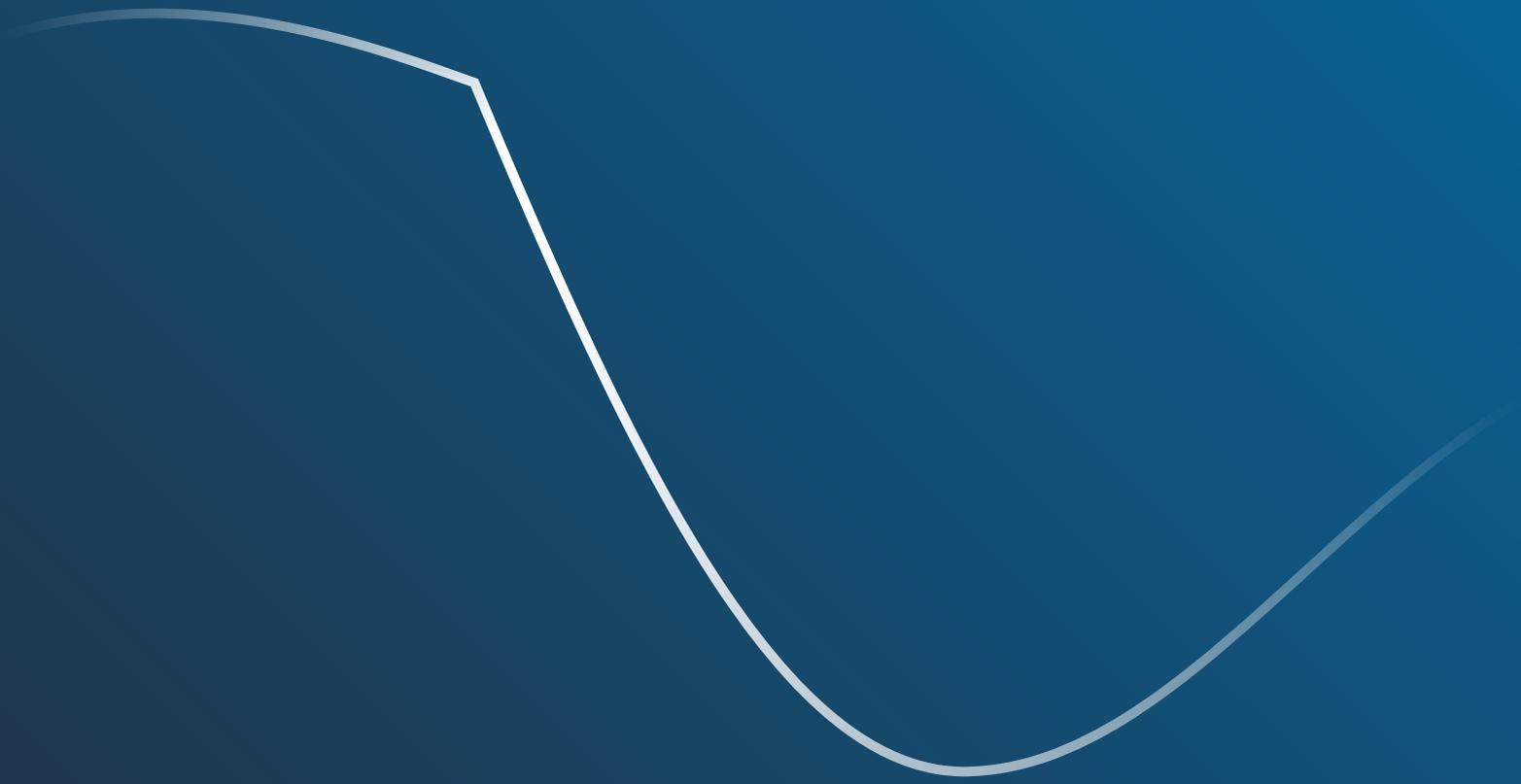
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