



Summary report on interregional workshop on eco- labels and non-exclusive GPP practices

Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency (SZREDA)

May 2018

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1 Introduction

This document is the final deliverable of GPP4Growth Activity A3.2, which follows the organisation of an interregional workshop on eco-labels and non-exclusive practices. The purpose of this report is to serve as the final source of knowledge for the capacity building and interregional learning processes of the interregional thematic workshop.

In particular, the report introduces the most relevant needs and challenges to be addressed through territorial policies based on the workshop topics & focal points and deliver recommendations on the most relevant issues to be discussed & addressed by participants during the internal debriefing meetings that are to be organized by each project partner. The report also gives information about the organisational details and provides guidelines on how to organize the internal debriefing meetings, so as to facilitate the promotion of the findings of the interregional workshop among project partner's organizations.

The report is structured as follows: section 2 outlines the key activities and objectives of the GPP4Growth project; and section 3 demonstrates the added value of interregional workshops, covering the main thematic areas that were covered in the presentations during the interregional workshop in Stara Zagora. Section 4 outlines the presented topics related to the use of eco-labels in public procurement, including the main highlights of each presentation. This section also sets out the main results drawn from the interregional workshop and more especially in relation to the analysis of existing policies for GPP in partnership regions as well as the factors affecting private sector's participation in green contracts and tenders. Finally, section 5 elaborates on the organisational details of the workshop, providing a copy of the agenda of the meeting; and section 6 provides guidelines on how to prepare and conduct the internal debriefing meetings.

2 The GPP4Growth project

The “Green public procurement for resource efficient regional growth - GPP4Growth” project aims to improve the implementation of policies on resource efficiency in particular the Circular Economy, by incorporating green public procurement (GPP) criteria to support public administrations and businesses to adopt lifecycle cost approaches and improve the overall management of resources and waste. The project allows the involved public authorities to share practices and experiences relevant to the benefits and methods for implementing GPP, use of common GPP criteria for key sectors and identification of opportunities to apply GPP to achieve green growth based on regional conditions and challenges.

2.1 GPP4Growth activities

GPP4Growth brings together 9 partners from 9 countries, involving the managing authorities & regional bodies influencing regional and national policy instruments, to stimulate eco-innovation, resource efficiency and green growth by promoting Green Public Procurement (GPP). The project also aims to support public administrations and businesses to adopt lifecycle cost approaches and improve the overall management of resources & waste. The project includes a wide range of activities, focusing on promoting the interregional learning process and the exchange of experience among regional authorities. Project activities include:

- Analysing the needs of GPP4Growth regions in Green Public Procurement.
- Identification of successful green public procurement cases.
- Evaluation and analysis of existing policies, plans, and criteria for GPP in the key GPP4Growth sectors.
- Analysis of the factors (barriers and enablers) that influence businesses in key GPP4Growth sectors to get involved in green tenders and contracts.
- Promoting public dialogue and the consultation process to build consensus and ensure the successful implementation of regional action plans, through the support and participation of key regional stakeholders.

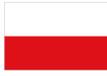
- Fostering interregional learning and capacity building through workshops, study visits, and policy learning events.
- Development of transferable tools & resources to promote benchmarking and policy learning, and transfer knowledge and lessons learned beyond the partnership.
- Joint development of action plans to promote the improvement of the policy instruments addressed by the project.
- Increasing awareness, promoting and disseminating the project results and knowledge beyond the partnership.

2.2 GPP4Growth expected results

GPP4Growth is expected to improve 9 policy instruments, relevant to the abovementioned policy areas, targeting to achieve:

- Over 7% increase in the number of businesses in partners' regions, integrating environmental factors and costs when procuring goods and/or providing supplies, services and works.
- Increased capacity of 200 staff of public administrations to effectively implement resource efficiency policies, applying GPP.
- 10 million of Euros investments unlocked to promote new green products and services development.
- Increased knowledge awareness of over 1000 stakeholders on the influence of GPP on the adoption of sustainable consumption and production patterns by businesses.

2.3 GPP4Growth partners

Country	Partner
	University of Patras (UPAT)
	Lombardy Region (LOMBARDIA)
	Lodzkie Region (LODZKIE)
	Province of Antwerp (ANTWERP)
	Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Regional Government of Andalusia (ANDALUSIA)
	Zemgale Planning Region (ZPR)
	Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency (SZREDA)
	Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA)
	Malta Regional Development and Dialogue Foundation (MRDDF)

3 Added value of GPP4Growth workshops

Exchange of experience through workshops is an interregional learning process, considered as the main catalyst for generating the expected policy change in the participating regions. The production of new knowledge at territorial level relies on multi-actor innovation networks/communities, in which key stakeholders and policy makers come together to find solutions and answers to various social, economic and environmental problems, associated with policy development.

The INTERREG programme suggests that knowledge and expertise sharing should be an indispensable component of the efforts of regional authorities to build capacity and drive sustainable policy development. This is because the co-production of knowledge and mutual understanding constitutes a co-created and sustained process, where various partners bring different knowledge, information and ideas to the table. The consultation process ends up yielding added value for all parties involved; preventing the duplication of efforts and waste of resources.

During interregional workshops, project partners are provided the opportunity to:

- Gain insights and understanding of the political priorities and initiatives in the field,
- Identify challenges and needs to be addressed at the action plans implementation phase (project phase 2)
- Ensure the participation of key stakeholders in the development and facilitation of action plans.

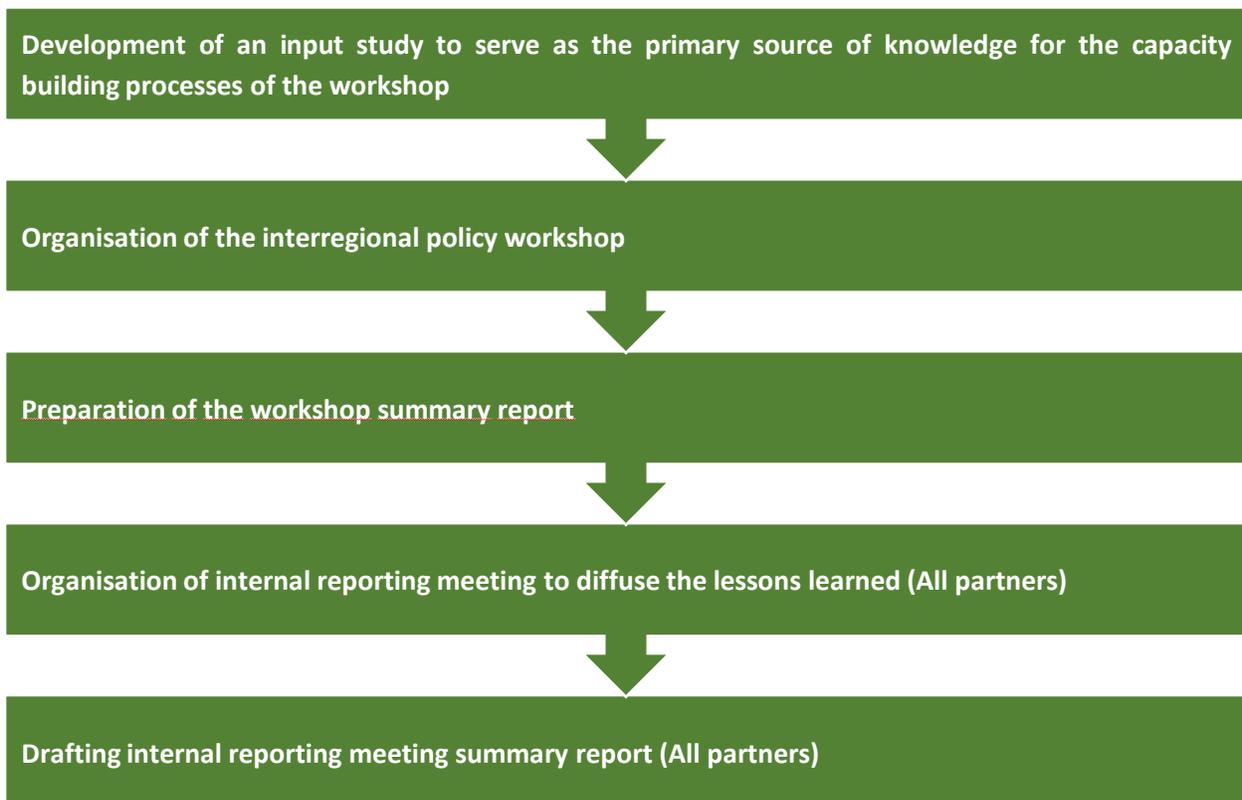
The GPP4Growth project includes the organisation of three (3) interregional workshops to promote interregional learning and capacity building, as presented in the following table:

Table 1: GPP4Growth workshops

#	Title	Host	Country	Date
A3.1	Interregional workshop on the different GPP approaches	LODZKIE	Poland	Semester 2
A3.2	Interregional workshop on eco-labels and non-exclusive GPP practices	SZREDA	Bulgaria	Semester 3

#	Title	Host	Country	Date
A3.3	Interregional workshop on monitoring green contracts performance and compliance indicators	ZPR	Latvia	Semester 5

Table 2: Structure of GPP4Growth workshops



The interactions and discussion that take place during interregional workshops are expected to enable project partners to a) discuss about how they can incorporate green criteria in public procurement to support public administrations and businesses to adopt life-cycle approaches and improve the management of resources and waste, b) evaluate the scalability and transferability of (potential or existing) policy measures and interventions into other industrial and geographical contexts, and d) contribute to policy development, taking into account regional specificities.

Interregional workshop on eco-labels and non-exclusive GPP practices

The Regional Economic Development Agency of Stara Zagora (SZREDA) organised and hosted a two-day workshop on the 16th and 17th of May 2018 in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria for regional authorities on how to use eco-labels to apply environmental criteria and verify compliance with technical specifications in public procurement, and when to require an environmental label (eco-label) without leading to any unfair advantage or disadvantage for potential bidders.

The workshop covered four thematic areas, as defined in the Application Form:

1. Environmental labelling
2. Using eco-labels to promote the application of green and sustainability criteria in public procurement.
3. Factors that influence businesses in key GPP4Growth sectors to participate in green tenders and contracts.
4. Recommendations on how to improve existing GPP policies to promote resource efficiency and waste management.

4 Thematic background and topics for discussion

4.1 Environmental labelling and using eco-labels in green public procurement

The first presentation of the interregional workshop was given by the host partner organization SZREDA and covered the subject of environmental labelling in green public procurement. In the beginning of the presentation there was a brief introduction of the GPP4Growth project, the project partnership and the main goals and objectives of the project, as well as the main project activities.

Then the subject of environmental labelling was addressed. It was presented to the participants of the meeting that environmental labelling is a voluntary information and certification scheme that helps buyers make purchasing decisions, by providing information on products' environmental quality and performance. It is an integral part of communication between all actors involved in the commercialisation process.

It was discussed that an environmental label is awarded to products or services that have been determined to meet specific environmental criteria based on life-cycle considerations (from design to disposal) or particular environmental aspects (e.g. raw materials or packaging). Labels enable consumers to identify environmentally friendly products whilst prompting the market to produce less harmful and more sustainable products in terms of environmental conservation. In particular, environmental labels can be useful for public procurement authorities to facilitate the integration of environmental considerations and green criteria in public procurement processes. Labels can be used to determine the specifications for the goods and services to be procured and check compliance with these criteria. Generally, labels can offer a guarantee of impartiality, reliability and scientific accuracy.

Following this the specifics of the three main types of eco-labels were explained. There are several different environmental performance labels and declarations being used or contemplated across the EU-28. The International Standards Organisation (ISO) has classified environmental labels into three broad types, namely i) third party certified environmental labelling, ii) self-declaration environmental claims, and iii) single-issues eco-labels. The main principles of these eco-labels were also explained in depth.

Four of the most used and common eco-labels were presented in detail (EU eco-label, EU organic label, Energy Star and Green Key) and examples were given how they can be used in green tenders.

The next part of the presentation was directed towards the usage of eco-labels in green tenders and provided detailed guidance on how to use eco-labels in the context of green public procurement, what are the conditions of including the eco-labels in green tenders and how to avoid exclusive GPP practices.

After this there was a game in which the participation of the workshop were divided into small groups and had to make a simple draft of green public procurement by using one of the presented eco-labels.

During the discussion the following issues came up:

- There is high chance that public authorities and procurers can be accused of exclusive GPP practices despite keeping high transparency and following all the rules when including eco-labels in green tenders.
- In some cases procurers avoid drafting green tenders because they can't be sure that they can identify the most sustainable products or services.

Environmental labels can overcome these two issues by providing an informed source for retrieving relevant information and guiding the technical preparation and implementation of a green tender. They can be used in different ways in the context of green public procurement:

1. Define environmental criteria (i.e. technical specifications) for the procured products or services, based on the requirements prescribed by the label.
2. Verify that products or services meet the environmental criteria set in the tender, by accepting the label as a proof of compliance with the technical specs. It may be particularly difficult and time-consuming for procurers to study technical documentation on environmental performance. Labels can help simplify this process and save time while ensuring that high environmental standards are applied in procurement.
3. Prioritise products and services with environmental labels, providing a strong incentive to manufacturers to adopt green practices and deliver sustainable goods of superior value for consumers.

The Public Procurement Directive 2014/24/EU Directive set the framework for using the specifications prescribed by eco-labels to define performance-based or functional environmental requirements in green tenders. In certain cases, public procurers are allowed to require a label or certificate as part of technical specifications. In order to use an eco-label in public procurement, it is necessary the following conditions to be satisfied:

- (a) the label requirements only concern criteria which are linked to the subject-matter of the contract and are appropriate to define characteristics of the works, supplies or services that are the subject-matter of the contract;
- (b) the label requirements are based on objectively verifiable and non-discriminatory criteria;
- (c) the labels are established in an open and transparent procedure in which all relevant stakeholders, including government bodies, consumers, social partners, manufacturers, distributors and non-governmental organisations, may participate;
- (d) the labels are accessible to all interested parties;
- (e) the label requirements are set by a third party over which the economic operator applying for the label cannot exercise a decisive influence.

Where contracting authorities do not require the works, supplies or services to meet all of the label requirements, they shall indicate which label requirements are referred to.

Contracting authorities requiring a specific label shall accept all labels that confirm that the works, supplies or services meet equivalent label requirements.

Environmental labels that belong to the ISO type I classification (“Third-party certified environmental labelling”) share the aforementioned characteristics, and hence they can be used by public procurers as an information source to draw up the tender requirements. If procurers can’t determine (and eventually incorporate in tender) which requirements are linked to the subject matter of the contract they can turn for assistance and ask for expert help from the central governing body related to public procurement in their country. Such methodological information should also be available in the form of handbooks, manuals and draft version of similar tenders. If

such is not provided it is recommended that such types of materials should be developed to support procurers.

The principle of openness should prevail in every aspect of public procurement in EU countries and the same stands for green tenders using environmental labels as a point of reference or part of technical requirements. Openness means that anybody has equal access to procurement opportunities; all information regarding tenders is available to interested parties; and there are not certain limitations to restrict participation to a small number of companies. Public procurers should guarantee that green tenders do not include provisions that act as favourable terms or preferential treatment for some companies; instead all interested parties need to have equal access to the award of public contracts.

When it comes to eco-labels, there are concerns if they can lead to any preferential treatment or/and unfair advantage when required as a proof of compliance within tenders. To avoid non-exclusive GPP practices, procurement practitioners should not require suppliers to have their product or services registered under an eco-labelling scheme. Besides, participation in eco-labelling schemes is voluntary. Procurers should not oblige suppliers to register an eco-labelling scheme without accepting equivalent means of proof. Suppliers should be able to provide other environmental labels that have equivalent requirements or technical documentation that demonstrate compliance with environmental specifications. In all cases, these proofs should meet the conditions described above. For instance, if a tenderer show it was unable to obtain a label within the time limit foreseen by the tender for reasons that cannot be attributed to them, public procurers should accept alternative documentation (e.g. technical dossiers, audits, certifications) that prove that the label requirements are adequately met.

The only cases that procurers can require suppliers to provide a label is when the national or EU legislation dictates to do so or such a requirement does not distort the competition provided that labelling is a common practice for this product category.

4.2 Problems and issues for the business related to environmental certification

The second topic that was presented was a case study that was observed since the organization of the second stakeholder meeting in Stara Zagora by SZREDA. The case study focused on the implementation of the FSC certification standard for forestry which is an issue that poses a potential threat to the furniture manufacturing industry in the country. This was outlined by the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Stara Zagora, which is one of the local stakeholders identified by SZREDA, and concerns Sredna Gora. A company which is a member of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Brief description about the company:

Sredna Gora

A Bulgarian company, founded in 1963, producer of high quality furniture made of solid pine and beech wood. It is located on an area of 7, 65 hectares, of which 1, 66 hectares are production and administrative buildings. The company employs about 550 employees. Sredna Gora buys and processes annually over 18000 cubic meters beech and pine wood-framed materials only from Bulgarian forests and has a well-established network of suppliers. It produces an average of 2500 chairs per day. Moreover, the company is the largest supplier of pine chairs for IKEA in Europe. It is also a strategic partner of the Norwegian commercial giant STOKE. Only environmentally friendly materials of proven origin are used in production and in accordance with international standards for quality, ecology and working conditions

Case study

In 2013 Sredna Gora AD received a FSC certificate for responsible forest management and environmental impact. Most of the enterprise's suppliers are also certified. In order for FSC labels to be valid, the standard requires all organizations in the supply chain to be certified - from forestry, processing companies to furniture manufacturers and dealers.

According to information from the international organization Forestry Management Board in Bulgaria, about 50% of the state forest territories are certified in line with the FSC standard. For comparison, all forests are certified with FSC standard in Germany, Poland, Croatia and the Baltic countries.

Thus, in practice, although certified, some processing companies cannot buy certified wood, as the respective forest holdings do not have a certificate. Moreover, in the Forests Act, Art. 115 and Art. 116, it is stipulated from 01.01.2018 that the participation in the tenders of local companies should be with a valid FSC certificate. Also, the certificate is required to conclude long-term contracts (up to 15 years) with forest holdings. Practically, local processing companies will be required to hold FSC certification to bid on forest holdings that are not certified in their own right. Thus, the chain of certified deliveries is interrupted by forest holdings.

The difficulty in sourcing FSC materials faces not only Sredna Gora AD, but also the entire furniture industry of Bulgaria, which is oriented towards foreign markets. According to the current "National Risk Assessment for Controlled Wood", Bulgaria has the status of "unidentified risk". There is a real danger that large European furniture retail companies may redirect their productions to countries with low risk status and 100% certified forests. This will have a significant negative effect on the production of furniture in the country and may result in the closure of individual companies or entire enterprises in the industry.

With regard to forest certification, the interests of the furniture industry are in line with the public interest for responsible forest management and the protection of the environment and natural resources.

After the case study was presented representatives of the Executive Forest Agency which is the responsible institution for forest certification in Bulgaria, spoke to the group. One of their strategic goals the objectives for 2018 has been to certify 50% from state forests under the FSC standard. The percentage of certified forests will be up to 85% in 2019. In the discussion that followed was pointed out that the relevant issue at hand is not so much the percentage of forest certification but also the requirements for the suppliers of wood. Both the local stakeholder that presented the case study and the Executive Forest Agency have agreed that they need to come together and draft a proposition for

policy change which will be a direct result from the interregional workshop and the GPP4Growth project in general.

The topic set for discussion by this panel was: *What is the state of the certification in other European countries, and how is FSC forestry certification handled in order to reach 100%? If the forests are 100% certified how long it will take to reach the full certification? If they are not 100% certified is there a time period in which the full forest certification is planned to be reached? We will be grateful to have a useful experience shared with us to guide the responsible institutions to help solve this case.*

The recommendation towards project partners will be to try to use the project activities in order to bring together and involve all sides that are involved in specific issue and to stimulate them to resolve it by exchanging experience with other regions from Europe.

4.3 Integrating the lessons learnt from the legal framework about eco-labeling and green public procurement and presentation of successful experiences and good practices of use of eco-labels that can be transferred in the partner's regions

The third thematic topic that was presented was directed to the benefits and challenges of implementing eco-labels in green tenders and showed how small procurers (for example small municipalities) can better apply and draft green tenders. Since the theoretical aspect of the usage of eco-labels has been covered in the first topic of the interregional workshop, in the summary report the focus will be on the factors for institutional GPP uptake which were presented during this panel:

Expressed political support – both at institutional level (i.e. the contractor) and at the level of the national agencies responsible for public procurement.

Legal expertise in applying environmental criteria in public procurement:

- a. what is environmentally preferable;
- b. how to include appropriate criteria to identify the environmental criteria in the tender;

c. how to assess and verify the information for the environmental criteria in the tender documents submitted.

Co-operation between authorities. - Overcoming the “act alone” institutional syndrome is a challenge. Coordinated exchange of best practices & networking needs to be encouraged.

Overcoming established procurement myths

Popular perception: “green is more expensive” - a result of addressing purchase price alone vs. life-cycle cost of a product/service.

Green products/services may have higher purchasing price, but lower operating, maintenance and disposal costs (*Life-cycle cost (LCC)* or *Total cost of ownership (TCO)*).

A PwC study in 2008 identified that GPP contribute to an average of 25% reduction of CO2 emissions in most product groups: construction, paper and textiles, gardening with highest impact. Only 13% of respondents regularly used LCC, 41% - relied exclusively on purchasing cost.

Availability of practical tools and information.

Training of public procurement experts and administrative staff – ensure availability of specific knowledge and expertise (GPP implementation, legal and technical aspects, concept of life-cycle costing, and end-users sustainable use of products.)

Systematic implementation and integration into management systems – decentralized decision-making and implementation at operational unit level, i.e. effective management systems. Joint procurement (Directive 2014/24/EU) is a possible approach.

Availability/access to clear and verifiable criteria which can be incorporated in the tendering documentation while complying with the Procurement Directives (*Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement*, and *Directive 2014/25/EU on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors*).

One of the most common issues that were addressed was that small municipalities have small market influence when publishing a green tender. Small municipalities have **small number or no submitted bids**

in GPP tenders, due to low volumes of consumption => the main problems faced by procurers are as follows: no profit-making; important distance from bigger settlements and increased transport costs for bidders; smaller budgets of municipalities result in lower total procurement prices. In addition there is **lower/no administrative capacity** to consider and initiate joint procurement procedures (incl. cross-border).

The solution to most of this issues and a way to increase the number of GPP that have been carried out by small municipalities is to use joint procurement.

Definition: combining the procurement actions of 2 or more contracting authorities.

Key characteristic: only one tender publishes on behalf of all participating authorities.

Benefits:

- Lower prices of environmentally-friendly products;
- Administrative cost savings;
- Combining expertise and competences;
- Potential introduction of greener products to new markets (countries), e.g. in cross border JP collaboration;
- A tool to promote innovations.

The joint procurement of the city of Stockholm for buying electric vehicles was shown as successful practice. 296 organizations (260 public, 36 private) have drafted the tender procedure. The estimated purchase volume of the consortium is 1250 vehicles/year.

The main reasons for joint procurement are:

- Reducing administrative costs,
- Achieving price reduction
- Sending a strong signal to the market
- Enabling the participation of smaller municipalities.

There were two separate contracts tendered - one for the public organizations, one for the private ones.

4.4 Innovative ways of developing a procedure and tools for the verification of the environmental performance of products.

The final panel of the interregional workshop was presented by a Bulgarian startup company that is working on the integration of block chain technology into the procurement process. The company has found a way to integrate the benefits of the block chain technology with eco-labels. By doing so, they manage to address an important issue. Since most of the eco-labeling schemes are voluntary there is a need of greater market demand for products that have been awarded with the eco-label for environmental quality. One of the ways to do this is to provide consumers with an easy way to trace the origin of the product and be sure that what they are buying is perfectly safe and can follow the steps of the whole process from manufacturing to supplying the item to the store.

Since at the moment only pilot projects using this technology are being executed, it will take some time to evaluate the benefits and identify potential problems in integrating the eco-labels with digital identity in block-chain based software solutions that will be available for end users and public procurers.

During the second day of the interregional workshop representatives of Municipality Stara Zagora presented good practices in green public procurement in EU funded projects that have been carried out by the Municipality. One of the projects was related to public transportation and the other one to the renovation of sport infrastructure – the municipal indoor swimming pool.

4.5 Recommendations on how to improve GPP policies in partnership areas

The interregional workshop on eco-labels and non-exclusive GPP practices in combination with the analysis of existing GPP policies, plans, criteria, and mechanism and the barriers and factors that influence the business and the authorities to participate in green tenders (A1.3 and A1.4) enabled project partners to understand the dynamics and impact of green tenders on promoting sustainable growth and eco-innovation at regional level. The main findings that were revealed are as follows:

- Flaws in the national policy framework on GPP such as the absence of a comprehensive national GPP strategy with defined targets and guidelines for public authorities on how to prepare and implement tenders with environmental criteria.
- Delays in the development of regional GPP plans, supported by a different pace in the integration of GPP considerations/criteria in regional policies. For instance, most partner regions (Malta, Western Greece, Ireland, Lombardy, Zemgale, Stara Zagora) do not have dedicated plans for the implementation of GPP that are designed to satisfy the local institutional and economic/industrial profile of each region.
- A different pace of integration of GPP considerations/criteria in partner regions.
- A number of constraining factors hindering the advancement of GPP implementation at regional level such as the lack of practical knowledge in GPP implementation procedures and the perceived negative impact of GPP on the competitiveness of the local economy.
- A diverse set of criteria used in tenders (launched by participating regions) to prioritise the procurement of green and sustainable products/services.

These findings led to the delivery of a range of policy recommendations on areas where important efforts are necessary for improving existing GPP policies and stimulating the adoption of environmental criteria in public tenders. Relevant areas include a) GPP policy framework, b) application of green criteria into public tenders and contracts, c) GPP monitoring procedures, and d) networking with GPP stakeholders, including mechanisms to build capacity in procurement officers.

GPP policy framework

This includes the development of a national action plan that will outline key actions and measures to promote green public procurement. A basic prerequisite for successful GPP implementation is to secure political support from the government. This can be realised by adopting a GPP policy with clear definitions and targets that will also prescribe quantitative targets to be achieved either in terms of overall procurement or for individual product and service groups, set priorities for the product and service groups, elaborate on specific GPP criteria, and put in place information, training and networking activities. The elaboration of the action plan should comprise the following stages:

1. Evaluate the current state of GPP implementation as well as the extent of using environmental criteria in public contracts.
2. Establish quantitative targets/indicators to monitor GPP implementation.
3. Carry out a market research to identify categories of products and services where green criteria can be applied.
4. Create a guidebook for GPP implementation.
5. Raise public awareness on GPP through communication activities and campaigns.
6. Integrate green criteria into national regulation. This may include the introduction of new materials and green technologies to the National Technical Specifications.
7. Enhance coordination and networking between public authorities and different departments. This may include enriching the unified invoices of authorities regulating the environment, energy, construction and mines with green articles.

Application of green criteria in public tenders

- Apply monitoring methods for public tenders that allow data collection, dissemination of information and continuous assessment and revision of the procurement process.
- Expand the application of green criteria by overcoming the misconception that often cause distortion in the markets.
- Render mandatory the implementation of green criteria in public procurement.
- Foster capacity building for public sector employees.
- Expand the categories of products, works, and services in which green criteria can be applied following the latest scientific and commercial developments.
- Develop tools and inventories to facilitate the application of green criteria, such as a green products database.
- Develop support systems for public buyers and suppliers to facilitate the networking and production of goods and services.

GPP monitoring procedures

- Create a unified catalogue of contracting authorities and the extent they use green criteria in public tenders.
- Develop a database tracking businesses' participation in public procurement and especially green tenders.
- Develop a user-friendly and accurate region-wide monitoring system to measure the number and value of green contracts
- Carry out periodically qualitative reviews on GPP data to identify and monitor environmental and economic achievements, best practices, obstacles, shortcomings and necessary adjustments and opportunities.
- Set up a centralised portal for green tenders where all calls for public tenders will be published and interested parties will have access to procurement information.

Networking with GPP stakeholders

- Organise training workshops that would familiarise even further public sector employees and SMEs with GPP processes and requirements.
- Develop learning materials (e.g. handbooks, presentations, videos) to raise the capacity of public administration staff (i.e. procurers) to a) integrate environmental considerations into tender procedures, b) administer the entire tendering process by ensuring tender's visibility and timely implementation, c) respond to tenderers' inquiries and verify environmental claims, d) evaluate life-cycle costs in tendering and select the most advantageous tender based on technical specifications and award criteria.
- Organise events that will facilitate the exchange of information between suppliers of green products and services and public administrations.
- Organise specialised networking events with suppliers of specific types of green products and services. Such events have the potential of further specialising and optimising GPP processes, by a) providing more information on "green alternatives" for products usually provided to local authorities, b) bundling and diffusing more effectively information on GPP, and c) reaching and approaching more suppliers.

5 Organisational details

5.1 Date and venue

Stara Zagora Economic Development Agency (SZREDA) hosted the interregional thematic workshop on eco-labels and non-exclusive GPP practices in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. The workshop lasted two days (16-17 May 2018) and all GPP4Growth partners participated, with members of their stakeholder groups and external experts. The working language of the workshop was English. On the 16th of May in addition to partners and their stakeholders, SZREDA invited local stakeholders from the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport, The Executive Environment Agency, The National Forest Agency and the managing authority of one of the Operational Programmes in Bulgaria which is part of the Ministry of Economy. This created an opportunity to exchange experience on very high level, involving decision makers on national level with external experts and stakeholders from partner countries. On the 16th of May total of 43 people took part and on the 17th of May for the on the site visit - a total of 25 partners and their stakeholders participated.

5.2 Format

The interregional workshop included three different types of activities to facilitate the transfer/exchange of knowledge and capacity building among regional authorities' representatives; namely: a) presentations, b) roundtable discussions and c) site visits.

Presentations provided an opportunity for participants to get a better understanding on how to apply environmental criteria in public procurement, using eco-labels as sources of information to draw up technical specifications and check compliance with these requirements. The presentations were delivered by field experts with both theoretical and empirical knowledge on the topics under examination, in order to cover all the aspects affecting policy making for green public procurement. Round table discussions followed the completion of each presentation. This allowed participants to discuss in-depth the issues under examination and to interact with each other, promoting networking and equal participation/contribution, triggering spontaneous conversations and allowing faster decisions.

The workshop included a structured set of facilitated activities related to the site visit experience in order to stimulate participants' creativity and knowledge sharing through collaborative working. This enabled regional authorities' participants to be presented with ideas for measures and ways to promote resource efficiency through GPP, deciding on priorities, strategy and vision.

5.3 Agenda of the interregional workshop

  	
<p>Action 3.2: Interregional workshop on eco-labels and non exclusive GPP practices</p> <p>ZaraLab, 28 Kniaz Aleksandar Batenberg str.</p> <p>16th – 17th May 2018</p>	
<p>Wednesday 16th May</p>	
9:30 – 10:00	Registration and opening of the meeting
10.00 – 10.45	Environmental labeling and using eco-labels in green public procurement
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 12:00	Problems and issues for the business related to environmental certification
12.00 – 13.30	Lunch break
13:30 – 14.15	Integrating the lessons learnt from the legal framework about eco-labeling and green public procurement and presentation of successful experiences and good practices of use of eco-labels that can be transferred in the partner's regions
14:15 – 14:45	Coffee-break
14:45 – 15:30	Innovative ways of developing a procedure and tools for the verification of the environmental performance of products.
15:30 – 16:00	Final discussion
20:00	Partner diner

Thursday 17 th May	
09.00 – 11.30	Presenting successful green public procurement cases infield visit in Stara Zagora Region
11:30-12:00	End of the Interregional workshop.

6 Guidelines for the internal debriefing meetings

The final stage of the conduction of the 2nd interregional thematic workshop includes the organization of internal debriefing meetings for each project partner. They are considered as a key output of activity A3.2. During those meetings partners have to present the final outcomes of the workshop and to diffuse the lessons learned within their organisations.

The internal debriefing meetings are short communication meetings which aim to convey information related to the discussions and activities carried out during workshop activities. They should include the following aspects:

- The interventions of participants and the overall discussion within each session of the interregional thematic workshop.
- Briefly present policy recommendations for the development of action plans based on the interventions of the participants and the conclusions drawn from the discussion.
- Present an evaluation of the workshop based on the comments and feedback from participants of the project partners.

The following guidelines have been developed to provide assistance and guidance to project partners on how to summarise and present the main conclusions drawn from the workshop (in the format of an internal debriefing meetings), in order to facilitate the integration of key policy recommendations into regional action plans. Here are some steps that can be followed by partner organizations:

Step 1: Develop short summaries for each session of the workshop. The summaries should include a) the context and objectives of the session, b) the main points from oral presentations/keynote speeches, c)

key argumentation from the interventions of participants, and d) conclusions and findings extracted from the overall discussion and interactive exercises.

Step 2: The project partner should summarise the key pitches and ideas with regards to the themes / topics of the workshop. It is highly recommended that any idea (i.e. policy advice) that could contribute to the improvement of regional policies in the field should be integrated into regional action plans and shared with other project partners and their stakeholders.

Step 3: Present the main conclusions with regards to the following themes:

- Conditions for using eco-labels in green criteria.
- How to apply environmental criteria, ensuring equal access to procurement opportunities.
- Barriers and constraints for adopting green practices and applying in green tenders.
- Perceived enablers for engaging in GPP.
- Improving existing GPP policies to stimulate the application of green criteria in public tenders.
 - o GPP policy framework
 - o GPP monitoring procedures
 - o Networking with GPP stakeholders

Step 4: Define the key arguments / conclusions drawn from the workshop with any relevant results and findings from GPP4Growth thematic studies and guides on similar policy aspects.

Step 5: Provide guidelines (in the form of recommendations) on how to utilise the key conclusions drawn to promote the adoption of green criteria in public procurement. The guidelines on how to integrate the lessons learnt in the GPP4Growth action plans, as well as any policy advice that may be derived from the analysis of evaluation forms, should be presented in a way that is simple, brief, and easy to follow.

Step 6: Draft summary report for the internal meeting. The summary report should be drafted in a clear and concise way, focusing on the conclusions drawn from knowledge sharing and consultation processes that took place during the workshop sessions and the summary report that followed the workshop.