



## What is GPP?

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is the process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured.

## What is GPP4Growth?

GPP4Growth brings together the experience and practices of nine public bodies from across the EU in a bid to improve those public bodies' capacity to implement policies that promote eco-innovation and green growth through 'Green Public Procurement' (GPP). 14% of the EU's total GDP is consumed by Europe's public authorities. This public expenditure on goods, services and works has a total estimated value of €1.8 trillion annually. This substantial public authority 'purchasing power' can be utilised to stimulate eco-innovation, resource efficiency and green growth by promoting environmentally friendly, resource-efficient goods and services.

## Existing experiences visit on GPP processes & results:

- Province of Antwerp -  
27th & 28th March 2019



## Executive Summary

On the 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019, the Province of Antwerp (a GPP4Growth project partner) hosted an event where successful Green Public Procurement (GPP) processes and results were shared with visiting representatives from the GPP4Growth partner organisations. This document outlines the key learnings from each of the cases that were presented during the visit. The conclusions from a workshop which took place during the visit and focussed on the common perceived barriers to GPP are also outlined. The discussions during this workshop focussed on the experiences of organisations that already use GPP and revealed several ways to overcome the barriers in question.

## Introduction

The purpose of the visit to Antwerp by the GPP4Growth project partners was for the Province of Antwerp to share experiences of successful GPP projects with their GPP4Growth colleagues. These experiences and the main transferable learnings to be gleaned from them form much of this document. Some solutions to common barriers to GPP that were discussed during the Antwerp visit are also noted. Again, these solutions are based on the experiences of other project partners and demonstrate the success and importance of sharing experiences and information in this manner; something which is a guiding principle of any Interreg project.

The event in Antwerp aimed to complement the first GPP4Growth experience visit which was held in Wexford, Ireland on the 3rd & 4th October 2018. That visit covered projects in the fields of construction and energy. The examples shared in Antwerp were therefore from other product/service areas.

While not covered in this brief, during the Antwerp visit, informative tours of the House of the Province and of a UNESCO school with an exemplary record of continuing engagement with sustainability took place. An impressive presentation about the new carbon-neutral office building being constructed by the Province was also enjoyed by attendees.

This brief summarises certain content from the cases presented during the existing experiences visit to Antwerp. Please see the full report on the visit for information about the broader context of each case and for details of who presented each example to attendees during the visit.



## Key Learnings from Existing Experiences

**Case:** Digipolis provide IT solutions for Antwerp and Ghent. Digipolis negotiated with potential suppliers. This approach led to a contract with Essec which included repair services and advice on increasing the durability of products. Their negotiations with suppliers also informed a set of guidelines that can be used in future tenders.



**Key Learning:** Incorporating negotiation into the GPP process can lead to more informed and beneficial relationships with suppliers, delivering better GPP outcomes.

**Case:** Project CirculIT (a collaboration between the NGO, Bond Beter Leefmilieu and the Province of Antwerp) developed a model tender which is flexible enough for different organisations to adapt as needed and use in their procurement of data processing devices, servers and network infrastructure.

**Key Learning:** Involving other stakeholders within the market in their process and including the circular procurement and management of IT equipment as a consideration has been critical to Project CirculIT's success.

**Case:** Since 2011 the City of Antwerp procures electrical vehicles where possible for its fleet. In addition to this, it is aiming to switch its Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles - which make up 19% of its current fleet - to bio methane, a non-fossil fuel. The city is also currently involved in testing fuel cell technology that uses hydrogen as a range extender. The Province of Antwerp requires procurers to use a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) approach and use minimum Ecoscore ratings for certain types of vehicles when sourcing vehicles for use.

**Key Learning:** Antwerp cannot implement an entirely eco-friendly fleet of vehicles because specific suitable vehicles and the supply of certain types of green energy to support such a fleet are not available yet – sometimes, the market is just not ready yet.

**Case:** The Province of Antwerp already incorporates GPP into its purchasing strategy in many areas such as catering and cleaning . For example, in its sanitary spaces, the province chose to buy sustainable dispensers which are Cradle to Cradle (C2C) certified and toilet paper which is also C2C certified.



**Key Learning:** Over the past 10 years, the Province of Antwerp has developed GPP guides for 28 different product groups. Along with helpful information, these guides also include obligations in relation to GPP which every provincial organisation must abide by when procuring goods or services.

**Case:** The Government of Flanders' Agency of Facility Management developed an award-winning framework agreement for the supply of sustainable office supplies. It contains some extensive sustainability criteria in its technical specifications, award criteria and execution clauses.



**Key Learning:** The framework agreement utilises an inventory of required products with mandatory and sometimes optional sustainable equivalents that allows for the broadest range of suitable products to be supplied without impeding competition amongst suppliers. One of the execution clauses within the agreement ensures that awareness is raised and that behavioural change among buyers is induced.

### The Ecoscore of Vehicles

In Belgium, the 'Ecoscore' of a vehicle is a score between 0 and 100 which rates the overall environmental friendliness of that particular vehicle. The vehicle's effect on global warming, air quality and noise pollution are all considered when determining its Ecoscore.

### Cradle to Cradle (C2C) Certification

Cradle to Cradle (C2C) Certification is a science-based quality standard that assesses products across five areas of sustainability: material health, material reuse, renewable energy and carbon management, water stewardship, and social fairness. This globally recognised standard requires certification renewal every two years.

## Circular Purchasing



'Circular purchasing' is an approach to purchasing goods and services that aims to lessen or even avoid the negative environmental impacts and the waste generated across a product's entire life cycle. Circular purchasing techniques include the following: consider the amount of reusable and/or biodegradable materials used in the production of a product when comparing products; share products with other organisations; and buy the use of a product rather than buying the product outright. In Antwerp, a great example of circular purchasing was highlighted by the Public Waste Service of Flanders (OVAM): their procurement of office chairs. The chairs in question seemed more expensive to buy than other options but they came with a warranty period of 12 years which included maintenance and repair services. This reduced the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of the chairs. Further, when their use-life is over, 96% of the parts of the chairs are recyclable and can be reused to create more chairs.

## Key Learnings from Existing Experiences continued...

**Case:** The Flemish Energy Company (VEB) was created by the Flemish government in 2012 and, acting as a central purchasing body, supplies natural gas, green electricity and other energy supply solutions to public organisations in Belgium.

**Key Learning:** Collaborating geographically or across a specific sector on joint procurement projects and/or setting up a central purchasing body such as VEB can lead to large cost savings. It can also encourage the market to provide greener solutions by demonstrating the unified demand for a particularly sustainable option.



**Case:** Procurement processes within the Province of Antwerp are decentralised and this made rolling out GPP difficult. However, achieving ISO 14001 as an organisation and participating in different types of GPP-related pilot projects have greatly increased the Province's capacity to practice GPP.

**Key Learning:** GPP is a long-term and complicated goal for many public organisations so engaging with the principles of GPP in any incremental way is important. Considering circular purchasing when making buying decisions, collaborating on joint procurement or consulting the market about greener solutions are all great first steps.

**Case:** The welfare organisation Zorg Leuven wants to create a framework agreement for the supply and maintenance of work clothing and other textiles. Along with discussions with internal stakeholders, they are using a Request for Information (RFI) to gather input from potential suppliers about sustainability and circularity in this context.

**Key Learning:** Using an RFI is an ideal way to see what type of greener solutions the market can potentially supply. This information from potential suppliers can inform the technical specifications and other sustainable requirements of any tender that follows.

**Case:** Having procured LED lighting as a service for three office buildings in the past, the city of Mechelen is currently working on a project to procure more of the city's lighting requirements in the form of a service.

**Key Learning:** Procuring a solution in the form of a service means that an organisation is buying the use of the product in question and the organisation does not own and is not responsible for the product outright. This approach can improve sustainability by reducing waste and costs such as maintenance costs in the long-term.



### ISO 14001 Environmental Management System

ISO 14001 is a certification achieved through the establishment of an Environmental Management System (EMS) within an organisation which manages the short-term and long-term environmental impact of that organisation's work and outputs.

## Workshop Addressing GPP Barriers



During the Antwerp visit, a workshop took place in which previously identified common barriers to GPP were discussed. The experiences shared by different organisations that use GPP revealed the following potential solutions to these perceived barriers:

**Barrier:** Too much weight is given to price when making purchasing decisions.

**Solution:** After discussion it was concluded that the weight given to price when making purchasing decisions does not mean environmental concerns cannot be considered. The use of strict, well-defined green technical criteria in tenders that all proposals must meet can ensure that environmental concerns are considered. Also, because the overall price can include a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) approach, end-of-life and waste considerations can be considered within the context of price. This may result in the initial purchasing price being higher but the long-term costs overall will often be less when this approach is taken.

**Barrier:** The workload involved in implementing and managing a GPP process is too much. Time constraints and capacity issues may result in procurers simply reusing previous tender documents when purchasing goods or services, instead of incorporating GPP into a new approach.

**Solution:** This workload barrier can be addressed by joint procurement; essentially splitting the burden of the workload among several procurers, thus allowing more time and opportunity to use GPP processes. Suppliers in the market will put more effort into providing greener solutions if a larger-scale joint procurement opportunity is presented to them also. Finally, internal cooperation within an organisation may help spread the GPP workload e.g. the environmental department may have expertise that could speed up the overall GPP process.

**Barrier:** There is too much of an emphasis placed by inspection bodies on the cheapest option.

**Solution:** Requiring clear environmentally conscious criteria within the technical criteria of a given tender will ensure that even the cheapest option will be obliged to meet these green criteria. Furthermore, when the use of GPP criteria becomes mandatory under EU regulation, inspection bodies will also accept such criteria as fundamental components of a successful, carefully awarded tendering process.

**Barrier:** There is resistance among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to meet demanding criteria required by eco-labels and other environmental standards.

**Solution:** Market knowledge is very important in this regard. Negotiating with and listening to suppliers in the market will establish if the market in question is ready (or not) to move towards satisfying green criteria within tenders and providing greener solutions overall.

### More Information

This policy brief is provided by Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment of the Republic of Ireland / Roinn Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe ar son na hAeráide agus Comhshaoil, and is based on a report prepared by the Province of Antwerp (a GPP4Growth partner). The full report is called 'Existing Experience Visits on GPP Process and Results: Report on Existing Experience Visit in the Province of Antwerp, 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2019' and is available on request.

Visit [www.interregeurope.eu/gpp4growth](http://www.interregeurope.eu/gpp4growth) for more about GPP4Growth.

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