

## **INTERREG EUROPE**

### **GPP4Growth**

**Green Public Procurement for resource-efficient regional growth**

# **ACTION PLAN**

concerning the

**Flemish Public Procurement Plan (FPPP) 2016-2020**

**Province of Antwerp**

**November 2019**



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## 1 General information

Project:	GPP4Growth
Partner organisation:	Provincie Antwerpen
Country:	Belgium
NUTS2 region:	Province of Antwerp
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## 2 Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	<input type="checkbox"/> Investment for Growth and Jobs programme <input type="checkbox"/> European Territorial Cooperation programme <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other regional development policy instrument
Policy instrument addressed:	Flemish Public Procurement Plan (FPPP) 2016-2020

### 2.1 Flemish Public Procurement Plan

The implementation of the policy is coordinated by the Chancellery and Public Governance Policy Area. The Flemish Agency for Facility Management coordinates the sustainable procurement segment of the plan. The policy instrument is ambitious concerning GPP –as an aspect of sustainable and innovative public procurement- for the internal organisation, and contains only little intentions concerning the activation of local authorities. The FPPP does however mention the aim to also strengthen the cooperation with other actors, confirming that the impact of a public procurement policy is largest when the purchasing power of authorities is deployed in coherence.

The Government of Flanders has been working on SPP since 2008, when it set the target of 100% sustainable public procurement by 2020 for its own public

procurement. In January 2016 the Government of Flanders adopted the FPPP for a coordinated policy for public procurement. The aim is an effective and efficient use of the instrument of public procurement to contribute to the achievement of the policy objectives of the Government of Flanders. This strategic approach is fully in agreement with the six priorities highlighted by the Commission.<sup>1</sup>

The strategic goals of this plan for 2016-2020 are: professionalisation of public procurement, increasing sustainable and innovative procurement, increasing SME participation in public procurement, achieving end-to-end e-procurement, enhancing integrity in public procurement and using procurement as a tool for strategic projects.

## 2.2 Local authorities

Besides engaging in dialogue with the private sector, the Flemish Government expresses its wish to support local authorities in organizing more sustainable and innovative public procurement using the European initiative to establish effective coordination within and outside the organization.

The Government of Flanders supports local authorities through opening up some of its sustainable framework agreements where opportune, by sharing model tenders, good practices and specifications and by co-financing the 'Focal Point for Sustainable Local Public Procurement', hosted by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG).

The development of GPP policies at local (provincial or municipal) level in Belgium, has progressed in a rather fragmented fashion. Some local authorities have drawn up internal policies for sustainable public procurement (eg Antwerp and Gent). Many municipalities have been working step by step on specific dossiers, for example by using only recycled paper, the use of ecological cleaning products, the purchase of Fairtrade products. Some mention GPP in their policy goals.

From the sharing of experiences across GPP4Growth partners, it became clear that Flanders has a lot of examples of GPP-implementation, GPP-initiatives and projects. Most of the recommendations concerning capacity building and unburdening

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<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release IP-17-3543 en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-3543_en.htm)

procurers stemming from project activities<sup>2</sup> like training, courses, information sessions, workshops, learning materials and open educational resources (also on ecolabels and LCA, TCO, functional needs and specifications ...), networking activities, joint procurement initiatives, pilot projects, helpdesk; several public authorities share guidelines, green criteria (also referring to EU platforms and tools), practical examples of green tenders with technical specifications, ... have been implemented.

However not all public authorities are involved, definitely not in other than basic GPP. GPP in Flanders has clear frontrunners and fast-learning followers, but also has its laggards. This action plan wants to put forward some additional necessary actions.

Note: The Flemish government agreement has only recently been agreed. It states that the Flemish government will use its purchasing power maximally to stimulate innovation and sustainability, to achieve efficiency gains and to reward corporate social responsibility. It mentions circular priority rules in the Flemish governments procurement, circular green deals and eliminating barriers for circular models. The agreement in general stresses the autonomy of local authorities and the focus on supporting and coaching of local authorities.

### 3 Details of the actions envisaged

#### 3.1 ACTION 1: development of a coordinated and integrated approach to support local authorities

##### 3.1.1 Background

As a lack of knowledge (and time) amongst officials is one of the main barriers to the use of GPP in public authorities across Europe, capacity building and unburdening procurers was deemed imperative throughout the project (A1.1, A1.3, A1.4, A2.1, A3.2, A3.3, A3.4). The success of the course organised by project partner Andalusia during the project confirmed this once more.

A lot of the recommendations concerning capacity building and unburdening procurers stemming from project activities (A1.1, A1.3, A1.4, A2.1, A3.2, A3.3, A3.4) -

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<sup>2</sup> A1.1 Specifying the needs of GPP4Growth regions in GPP; A1.2 Good Practice Guide on successful GPP cases, 1.3 Analysing existing policies, plans and criteria for GPP in the key GPP4Growth sectors, 1.4 Investigating the factors that influence businesses in key GPP4Growth sectors to participate in green tenders and contracts; 2.1 stakeholder meetings in different partner regions, 3.2 Interregional Workshop on Eco-Labels and Non-Exclusive GPP Practice, 3.3 Interregional Workshop on Monitoring performance & indicators, 3.4 Existing experiences visits on GPP processes and results

like training, courses, information sessions, workshops, learning materials and open educational resources (also on ecolabels and LCA, TCO, functional needs and specifications ...), knowledge building networking activities, joint procurement initiatives, pilot projects, helpdesk, market dialogues; promotion of shared guidelines, templates and green criteria (also referring to EU platforms and tools), practical examples of green tenders with technical specifications, ...- in Flanders are administered by the 'Focal Point for Sustainable Local Public Procurement' of the VVSG. Project activity 1.3, 3.1 and 3.4 revealed that nominating someone responsible for coordinating green procurement (or a centralised 'one-stop-shop' approach) is indeed a good strategy.

This outsourcing of the support to local authorities in organizing more sustainable public procurement is not anchored in the FPPP, but arranged through a multi-year agreement between the government of Flanders and the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) that will end 31/01/2020.

### 3.1.2 Action

The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) develops a coordinated and integrated approach to support local authorities in organising more professional, sustainable and innovative public procurement, with GPP and circular procurement as an essential part of professional procurement.

Step 1: context analysis: clarify the needs of local authorities, the possible role of the different entities within the Flemish Government in supporting local authorities concerning public procurement (including GPP) and the role of VVSG.

Step 2: development by VVSG of a note for a Knowledge Center on Public Procurement for Local Authorities focusing on an integrated approach of public procurement treating GPP as an indispensable element of professional procurement (like sustainability, innovativity, integrity); based on and complementing the identified division of roles; making sure local procurers can count on a helpdesk, info sessions, seminars, training, courses, individual coaching, participation in learning networks, website, policy-oriented recommendations, networking, documentation, joint procurement support, resource efficient, innovative project sharing ... and local procurers that are not involved yet are reached; including financing plan.

Step 3: submission of subsidy application by VVSG to the Government of Flanders

Step 4: (when subsidy granted) implementation of actions listed in the application

### **3.1.3 Stakeholders involved**

Government of Flanders

Umbrella Association for Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)

Users: local governments

### **3.1.4 Timeframe**

Step 1-3 before 31/08/2020. Step 4: x years

### **3.1.5 Costs**

3 FTE, external expertise

### **3.1.6 Funding sources**

VVSG, Government of Flanders (*In the past, a subsidy has already been granted to VVSG within the framework of the Flemish sustainable development policy (Department Public Governance and Chancellery). Due to the internal reorganization within the Flemish government the entity from the Government of Flanders that may provide the subsidy is changing. As a result the specific funding will only be known at the beginning of 2020.*)

## **3.2 ACTION 2: Setting up an online system for sharing green tender documents**

### **3.2.1 Background**

One way to unburden procurers is helping them not to reinvent the wheel in every tender procedure. That the centralised development of supportive tools and inventories for GPP procedures, could also be a valuable tool to share the burden and educate and therefore get more procurers on board, was discussed at various stages of the project (A1.3, A1.4, 2.1, A3.2, A3.3, A3.4) eg at the workshops and experiences visits.

Setting up a user friendly online system for sharing green tender documents in a transparent and accessible manner allows each procurer to learn from existing GPP tenders and from their colleagues in other organisations, serving as good examples and templates they can use easily in their procurements. Through the portal for green tenders best practices can be easily transferred. This 'green tender' database, allows dissemination of information and continuous assessment and revision of the

procurement process, and might be used to monitor progress on GPP roll-out or the performance of GPP mechanisms;

As stated in the Policy recommendation report on the improvement of existing resource efficiency policies and GPP plans (1.3) 'This public platform can also: - act as a publicly accessible knowledge and information exchange which can strengthen public dialogue and encourage education around GPP best practices, - enable and promote the use of the lifecycle costing of products; - provide information to those whose role it is to draft green tenders about ready-to-use environmental criteria which may be used within the product/service description in a tender and/or form part of the award criteria for a tender; - be a source of information for entrepreneurs about tenders; - be used to monitor - provide a clear indication of the public authority's policy in relation to promoting environmentally sustainable products/services of all kinds.'

### **3.2.2 Action**

Setting up an online system for sharing green tender documents.

### **3.2.3 Stakeholders involved**

Umbrella Association for Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)

Input: Local, Flemish and Federal governments,

### **3.2.4 Timeframe**

By 31/12/2020

### **3.2.5 Costs**

Included in action 1.

### **3.2.6 Funding sources**

Included in action 1.

## **3.3 ACTION 3: Updating Guides for Sustainable Procurement, using circular criteria, making them easily available for local authorities**

### **3.3.1 Background**

As a lack of knowledge, a lack of common green criteria lead to increased administrative burden, this is a essential barrier to the use of GPP in public

authorities across Europe. (A1.1, A1.3, A1.4, A2.1, A3.2, A3.3, A3.4). Templates for the tendering process for a particular product category, would help improve the administrative capacity of each organisation to implement GPP, (A3.3, A3.4) There is a need to support procurers with ready to use procurement documents with realistic and ambitious requirements. A classic tool like guidelines to help them insert green criteria into the tender process, guides with cut and paste mandatory/optional criteria would instantly build capacity and particularly unburden procurers. (1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2)

Province of Antwerp has developed such guidelines. Not every organization should invest in making guides, but since the guide at federal level will be restricted to referring to various sources and there are no other guides in our region, the guides of the Province are considered a useful instrument. The Province should therefore make sure they are updated (and maybe look for a solution where the workload could be shared among public authorities).

### **3.3.2 Action**

Update the Guides for Sustainable Procurement, using circular criteria where possible and useful.

Make them easily available for the local authorities on the new provincial website and promote them.

### **3.3.3 Stakeholders involved**

Province of Antwerp

### **3.3.4 Timeframe**

Updating all guides by 31/08/2020. Promotion: 2020-2021.

### **3.3.5 Costs**

To be included in existing FTE in different departments

### **3.3.6 Funding sources**

Province of Antwerp

## Signatures

*The organisations below agree to support and promote the implementation of the actions listed above. The signatory confirms that he has the authority required to do so and that the approval process required by the organization has been successfully completed.*

Province of Antwerp

Vlaamse Vereniging voor Steden en Gemeenten (VVSG)