

# GUPP: Upgrading skills for EU Greener Public Procurements in Construction Works

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## IO1. Green Handbook: An instrument on GPP Regulatory Framework and Practice on construction works Transnational Report

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- ✓ France: OEC- Office de l' Environnement de la Corse
- ✓ Greece: PEDMEDE- Panhellenic Association of Engineers Contractors of Public Works, MA YMEPERAA- Managing Authority of Operational Program “Transport, Infrastructures, environment and sustainable development”
- ✓ Ireland: TUS- Technological University of the Shannon, Midlands MidWest
- ✓ Slovenia: CCIS- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia



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## Executive summary

The current report aims to provide a “Green Handbook: An instrument on GPP Regulatory Framework and Practice” that will introduce a general understanding of the green procurement process and challenges faced upon its implementation in the participating countries (France, Greece, Ireland, Slovenia) at different levels (central and regional), with a special focus on construction works.

The overall aim of the report is to compare, map and develop a methodology for the GUPP framework, recognizing the differences in each country (France, Greece, Ireland, Slovenia) and determining a mutually recognizable approach to GPP practice, in the effort to develop learning opportunities for public authorities’ staff to stimulate resource efficiency and green growth.

The report encloses a review on the current legislative framework, actual practices, training, and skills needs for Green Public Procurement in construction building works, as well as experience and results gained through relevant previous and ongoing EU initiatives, with a view to explore the progress made as well as the drivers, barriers, and outcomes in each participating country.

Finally, the report provides key conclusions reached and recommendations for consideration upon developing the training design of the GPP program.

As regards the policy framework in GPP, partner countries have adopted (integrated in National contexts/ legal frameworks) the definition of “Green Public Procurement (GPP)” provided by the European Commission. The **State of the art of the National framework related with GPP indicates different levels of maturity and progress**. In particular, **Ireland points out the most significant progress in GPP**, with its National Action Plan for ‘Green Tenders’ having been established since 2012. **Significant progress in the appliance of GPP regulatory frameworks has been highlighted by French partners** too, through the establishment of their first national action plan for sustainable public procurement for the period 2007-2010 and its revision for the period between 2015-2020. **Slovenia shares an average progress on GPP**, compared to other EU countries in implementation of GPP, having different national framework and policies related with GPP. Finally, **the take up of GPP lags significantly behind in Greece**, compared to the rest EU. Up to March 2020, Greece was among the five (5) EU countries (along with Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg and Romania) which had not issued a Strategic National plan on GPP, while the rest 23 countries had already adopted their respective National Plan, with many of them having already made significant progress in the inclusion of GPP (such as Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Sweden). The Greek strategy for GPP has been approved by the beginning of 2021.

Within this ground, **several political/ institutional/ organisational barriers and challenges faced upon the take up of GPP** were highlighted by partner countries with the most significant to be:

- Risk of legal challenges
- Lack of resources
- Increased/ higher costs of green products and green processes
- Lack of environmental knowledge from public investors



- Lack of managerial and political support
- Lack of tools and information and lack of training
- The uptake of EU GPP criteria varies significantly across the EU
- Lack of examples for green public procurement tender (only guidelines and listed general possibilities)
- Lack of databases of environmental criteria to adapt to procurement processes
- Rapid integration of new sustainable materials
- Lack of readiness of the supply market to respond to these new needs
- Limited decision-making support
- Limited knowledge on sustainable materials that can be used in construction projects
- Limited access/ availability of financial tools that allow stakeholders to have cost analysis of construction projects

It was commonly agreed that integrating green criteria in public procurement is not an easy goal to achieve. The contributing partners report many barriers that need to be overcome for this adaptation to be possible. In general terms, partners find that in their countries, the necessary political incentive is not yet present for brave change. **The lack of information and knowledge on GPP remains a bottleneck.**

Therefore, there is a **growing need for capacity building of all parties involved in a PP, for exchange of best practices and case studies on how to effectively incorporate GPP between interested parties**, i.e. contracting authorities, contractors and their staff, managers, etc., along with the need for **financial and technical support for all stakeholders to implement GPP.**

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It has also been reported that familiarity with **GPP policy tends to be confined to high levels of local authorities, central government authorities** or high levels of PP officials. It is therefore important that **the GPP training approach incorporates a specific institutional, legal and policy context.**

#### **Key Conclusions and recommendations concerning the training content:**

Skills needs that could be addressed through the GPP capacity building program are the following:

- Institutional, legal and policy framework relative with GPP, applied in national contexts, as well as on EU level.
- Provision of good practices and case studies with efficient GPP applications, along with their results, impact and lessons learnt.
- Raise awareness of GPP inclusion through highlighting GPP benefits, with particular focus on the environmental impact, energy savings, financials and long-term cost benefits.
- Particular recommendation for BIM correlation with GPP, and potential benefits, expected environmental impacts and costs.
- Familiarity with Level(s) methodology provided by the EU.
- Familiarity with Life Cycle Costs (LCC) analysis and Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) approach.



- Capacity building in available tools and databases, such as green clauses, e-platforms for PP, financial tools, where to find accurate green Procurement information such as Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) and specifications- toolkit, concrete tender documentation specifications for GPP etc.
- Mobilization of national building industry towards more green construction product conception and market certification.
- Estimating environmental impacts and costs of projects.
- Raise awareness in technology developments in the areas that affect GPP in relation to materials and construction methods.

Finally, it should be respected the different profiles of participants/ trainees, along with their different familiarity and involvement in GPP. Therefore, customized training according to the different profiles, along with different levels of education could be an option.

Theoretical knowledge provision as well as practical, by integrating case studies, tools, and good practices is strongly recommended.

Raising awareness on the subject matter should be horizontally addressed within the training provision.



# 1. Regulatory framework review – Stocktaking at transnational level

## 1.1. Content/ Aim

This task consisted of carrying out desktop research to review the current situation in the participating countries regarding the actual practices in GPP in construction works. It deepened the collective understanding of the current barriers, needs, opportunities, challenges, and innovations in GPP and provided a first guide that will improve knowledge and mainstream GPP into sustainable development policies, programmes and strategies.

Concretely, a comprehensive literature review and comparative study of reports on regional and national level GPP, including academic and other studies has been conducted in each participating country.

## 1.2. Transnational key findings reached through the desk research

In general terms, partner countries have adopted (integrated in National contexts/ legal frameworks) the definition of “Green Public Procurement (GPP)” provided by the European Commission. In particular: “A 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.”

Concerning the **State of the art of the National framework and policies related with GPP, partner countries indicate different levels of maturity and progress**. In particular, **Ireland points out the most significant progress in GPP**, with its National Action Plan for ‘Green Tenders’ having been established since 2012. **Significant progress in the appliance of GPP regulatory frameworks has been highlighted by French partners** too, through the establishment of their first national action plan for sustainable public procurement for the period 2007-2010 and its revision for the period between 2015-2020. **Slovenia shares an average progress on GPP**, compared to other EU countries in implementation of GPP, having different national framework and policies related with GPP. Finally, **the take up of GPP lags significantly behind in Greece**, compared to the rest EU. Up to March 2020, Greece was among the five (5) EU countries (along with Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg and Romania) which had not issued a Strategic National plan on GPP, while the rest 23 countries had already adopted their respective National Plan, with many of them having already made significant progress in the inclusion of GPP (such as Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Sweden). The Greek strategy for GPP has been approved by the beginning of 2021.

Within this ground, **several political/ institutional/ organisational barriers and challenges faced upon the take up of GPP** were highlighted by partner countries with the most significant to be:

- Risk of legal challenges
- Complexity of verification





- Lack of resources
- Increased costs of green products and green processes (more expensive)
- Lack of environmental knowledge from public investors
- Lack of managerial and political support
- Lack of tools and information and lack of training
- The uptake of EU GPP criteria varies significantly across the EU
- Lack of examples for green public procurement tender (only guidelines and listed general possibilities)

In parallel, **key environmental areas in construction/ building works that should be considered for the take up of GPP in construction/ building works** are:

- Design: Effective energy efficient design strategies should be incorporated in all public sector projects at the early design stage
- Energy performance, energy efficiency
- Refurbishment: Reusing existing buildings should be given priority over new-build construction
- Materials (Waste plus CDW): All materials used in construction should be assessed for environmental impacts over the appropriate appraisal period for the project.
- Ecology and Site Utilities: Steps should be taken to protect or enhance site utilities, from site selection stage through to developing and maintaining landscaping design for the site.
- Life-cycle costing approach

As regards the **existing training provision in relative areas/ state-of-the-art training programmes in GPP, the most significant training provided by partner countries is as follows:**

**France:**

- At national level, the Direction des Achats de l'Etat- State Purchasing Department (DAE) offers a professionalization program for training in PP for public bodies.
- There are many training courses on PP and in particular on the integration of sustainable development in calls for tender and PP.

**Greece:**

- The recently launched National Action Plan for Green Public Procurement foresees measures and actions aiming to bridge the GPP skills gaps of the parties involved in Public Procurements.
- For the staff of public and contracting authorities, it is predicted that they will receive specific to GPP training

**Ireland:**



- The Commercial Skills Academy at the Office of Government Procurement provides the necessary commercial skills training pertaining to the planning, procurement and management of public works projects
- Greenville Academy GPP training programme, developed in association with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), provides practical guidance on implementing GPP for government and public bodies

**Slovenia:**

- Different trainings for PP and GPP are organized by different public organizers or they are provided as part of the EU projects

Within this ground, **key skills needs of the PP staff and PP occupants for Greening PP highlighted by partner countries:**

- Regulation on the relevant areas
- Monitoring GPP implementation
- Setting and evaluating GPP criteria. (Selection, Technical specifications, Award criteria (incl. LCC), Contract Management, Contract performance clauses.
- Technical specifications and environmental criteria in the preparation of tender documentation
- Setting the environmental objectives of the project, in preparing the technical specifications, criteria, conditions for participation and the reasons for exclusion
- Lack of professional criteria and a database of good practice, fragmentation of sectoral objectives
- Roles and responsibilities should be defined of procurement practitioners or delegated authorities involved in the procurement process.
- Contracting procedures
- Legal and business expertise

**First priority target group with skills needs for GPP capacity building and raise awareness include:**

- Policy makers
- Managers
- Legal, financial and procurement officers
- Contracting Authorities

Overall, it has been strongly highlighted **that there is an emerging need** in the above-mentioned target groups **for raised awareness** on the subject matter, as well as **for specific guidance**, including specifications on GPP criteria in procurement processes, along with the need for freely accessible **examples and national good practices databases for GPP inclusion**.



## 2. GUPP Training needs analysis

### 2.1. Content/ Aim

The aim of this task, which consisted of conducting field research activities, was to investigate skills gaps and training needs for ensuring efficient GPP application in construction works. This purpose was achieved through:

- Online survey addressed to the training/educational sector. In particular, training/ VET/ Adult learning providers/ professionals.
- Focus group(s)/ interview addressed to the public sector, construction sector, the industry, including contracting authorities and contractors of public and private works, on the condition that they are relevant to procurement procedures.

### 2.2. Key conclusions reached on transnational level

Integrating green criteria in public procurement is not an easy goal to achieve. The contributing partners report many challenges that arise in their countries and barriers that need to be overcome for this adaptation to be possible. In general terms, partners find that in their countries, the necessary political incentive is not yet present for brave change.

Apart from this, all partners strongly emphasize the lack of available tools for quantifying and assessing environmental qualities, as well as the lack of databases of environmental criteria to adapt to their procurement processes.

Therefore, there is **a growing need for the exchange of best practices and case studies on how to effectively incorporate GPP between interested parties**, i.e. contracting authorities, contractors and their staff, managers, etc. Of course, this is not the only obstacle. There are a number of challenges, such as **the concern**, shared by partners from France, Greece and Ireland, that the implementation of green requirements in public procurement could lead to, or be seen as, **favoring some contractors who can adapt more easily**. Of course, the issue of **higher costs is also alarming**. The French partners point to the potentially higher costs of sustainable solutions, which could be a barrier, especially for SMEs. Like the Irish partners, they stress that setting award criteria in contracts is an important challenge to be addressed. The Slovenian partners stress the need for **financial and technical support for all stakeholders to implement GPP**.

Another concern is the **rapid integration of new sustainable materials**, also taking into account their higher cost. Reference was made to the **possible distortion of competition in the free market**, as this could favor certain suppliers. At the same time, it was pointed out that **the supply market is not ready to respond to these new needs**. For this reason, **stakeholders need to be trained** in the concepts of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and Life Cycle Cost (LCC) in order to make the right material choices. Regarding the challenges identified in the PP system and the approach to GPP, the common need defined was the development of **tools that can help quantify the environmental criteria**. In France and Greece, participants believe that this could be addressed by defining award criteria for contractors that exceed the required standards. In Slovenia it was



expressed that the development of a system of sustainable construction indicators would be helpful.

**The lack of information and knowledge on GPP remains a bottleneck.** Partner countries stress **the need for capacity building of all parties** involved in a PP process to implement GPP. French partners note that officials dealing with PP have **limited decision-making support**. In Greece, Ireland and Slovenia, partners consider that **good practices, implementation examples and case studies, as well as a database** - constantly updated - of new technologies and sustainable materials **need to be made available to companies**. Slovenia also points out that the development of model tender documents would help companies to overcome the challenges related to the inclusion of GPP. Against this background, the **qualification of staff at PP** is of great importance for the integration of green criteria into procurement processes. Therefore, a common need for qualification has been identified by the partner countries.

One of the main needs is **knowledge about sustainable materials that can be used in construction projects**. The partners from Greece stress the importance of training on modern construction methods and ISO standards. On the same topic, respondents from Ireland introduced the concept of "buying better", which means that **contractors will require suppliers to provide only sustainable products**. In general, they believe that PP staff should be trained to keep the overall bottom line in mind when selecting products and services.

In addition, it was agreed that **financial tools that allow stakeholders to analyze the costs** of different solutions for construction projects should be an important part of the training program. The French partners stress the need to train officials from PP to be able to estimate the environmental impacts and costs of projects. The partners from Ireland point out the importance of LCA and the LCC approach.

It has also been reported that familiarity with **GPP policy tends to be confined to high levels of local authorities, central government authorities** or high levels of PP officials. It is therefore important that **the GPP training approach incorporates a specific institutional, legal and policy context**. This context must be **both national and European**. In terms of national policy, it should set the respective framework of all countries involved. In this context, the Greek partners point out the importance of the staff of PP being trained not only in the legislation they have to comply with, but also having an understanding of the environmental issues and the country's obligations towards the EU. However, they believe that a training program for the different sectors should address different levels of knowledge on these issues. The Irish partners point out that the delivery of knowledge must follow the 'stages' method. It is also noted that targeted training combined with general awareness raising is a prerequisite for meeting regulatory requirements. The French partners recommend targeted regulatory monitoring of the various actors, while the Irish partners believe that a top-down approach will be more motivating. Either way, the common opinion is that it would be efficient if "everyone knows everything".

The integration of BIM technology into GPP was a particular issue. Not only because BIM is a useful tool, but also because its use is a prerequisite for participation in public tenders in many European countries. **Respondents from all four countries recognized the value of BIM** and the helpful role it can play in public procurement. It allows planners, workers, officials, etc. to monitor the



elements of the project, check the implementation of green criteria and generally help regulate GPP requirements in projects. It also helps in comparing alternative methods and reducing costs as sustainability is also about lifetime cost effectiveness. They also pointed out that it can help in the overall management of the project and its maintenance, reducing the possibility of errors, etc.



### 3. EU level conclusions and recommendations that should be linked with the training design

Respecting the opinions reflected and the input shared by all participants involved in the field research activities, as well as the feedback collected through the desk research activities, the recommendations that should be strongly considered upon the training design phase of the GPP training program are summarised as follows.

#### **Key Conclusions and recommendations concerning the training content:**

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- Institutional, legal and policy framework relative with GPP, applied in national contexts, as well as on EU level.
- Provision of good practices and case studies with efficient GPP applications, along with their results, impact and lessons learnt.
- Raise awareness of GPP inclusion through highlighting GPP benefits, with particular focus on the environmental impact, energy savings, financials and long-term cost benefits.
- Particular recommendation for BIM correlation with GPP, and potential benefits, expected environmental impacts and costs.
- Familiarity with Level(s) methodology provided by the EU.
- Familiarity with Life Cycle Costs (LCC) analysis and Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) approach.
- Capacity building in available tools and databases, such as green clauses, e-platforms for PP, financial tools, where to find accurate green Procurement information such as Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) and specifications- toolkit, concrete tender documentation specifications for GPP etc.
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