

Deliverable D7.1 – Guidelines for green procurement and EU Ecolabel products prioritisation



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Guidelines for green procurement and EU Ecolabel products prioritisation

D7.1: Guidelines for green procurement and EU Ecolabel products prioritisation

Summary

The European Union's commitment to a more resource-efficient economy is significantly bolstered by the prioritization of green procurement and EU Eco-label products. By leveraging their purchasing power, beneficiaries of EU-funded projects can opt for goods, services, and works that boast a lower environmental footprint throughout their entire lifecycle, thereby promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns. This document outlines best practices to promote the use of environmentally friendly goods and services during the project.

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| CETAQUA | Marcel Vilaplana (CETAQUA) |
| Quality assurance | |
| Alicia González | CETAQUA GALICIA |
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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EEA: European Economic Area

EU: European Union

KPIs: Key Performance Indicators

LCA: Life Cycle Assessment

LCC: Life Cycle Costing

Executive summary

The European Union's commitment to a more resource-efficient economy is significantly bolstered by green procurement and EU Eco-label products prioritization. By leveraging their purchasing power, EU-funded project beneficiaries can opt for goods, services, and works that boast a reduced environmental footprint throughout their lifecycle, thereby contributing substantially to sustainable consumption and production.

This best practice has the potential to catalyze a critical mass of demand for more environmentally friendly goods and services, which might otherwise struggle to gain traction in the market, and foster eco-innovation. Some exemplary instances of prioritizing environmentally friendly goods, activities, and services include:

Reports and billing:

- Electronic invoices and correspondence to be sent and processed electronically
- Use electronic signatures when possible,
- Draft reports to be sent electronically
- Limit hard copy documents
- Paper is sourced from sustainably managed forests or has a minimum of 30% recycled content.

Travel:

- Minimize travel through video conferencing
- Preference for environmentally friendly travel modes

Event management services:

- Use non-toxic markers
- Use public transport
- Opt for fuel-efficient vehicles
- Stay in green-certified hotels
- Use electronic invitation methods.
- Avoid the use of disposable dishes and single-serve containers,
- Select eco-friendly cleaning products
- Promote paperless events.
- Use recycled paper to print the needed dissemination materials
- Use zero waste and sustainable local food for caterings



Other initiatives:

- Favor transport services with electric, hybrid, or low-emission vehicles,
- Consider eco-labels that certify suppliers' processes, goods and equipment as environmentally preferable.

To ensure the effectiveness of green procurement, it is essential to incorporate clear criteria for products and services into the procurement process. This deliverable aims to provide a tangible application of green procurement principles and promote Eco-label products throughout the project's purchasing processes. This document outlines the procurement procedures for the project and offers guidance on integrating environmental considerations at various stages



1. LIFE MERLIN guidelines for green procurement and EU Eco-label products prioritization

As the LIFE MERLIN project progresses, various external support services and procurement of goods will be necessary. To ensure a sustainable approach, we have identified opportunities to prioritize environmentally friendly options in several areas, including:

- Travel arrangements:
 - Minimizing travel through the use of video conferencing, telephone conferencing, and local employee utilization, we can significantly reduce our carbon footprint.
- General products and services:
 - The consortium will give preference to suppliers with eco-label certifications, indicating environmentally preferable processes and products. This commitment to sustainability will guide our procurement decisions.
- Courier services:
 - The consortium will opt for transport services that utilize electric, hybrid, or low-emission vehicles, reducing our environmental impact.
- Meeting and event organization:
 - Our events will use non-toxic markers, public transportation, and paperless practices. We will also prioritize zero-waste catering with locally sourced, organic food and beverages, and use recycled paper for necessary materials.

Throughout these subcontracting processes and purchases, we will apply green procurement principles and favor products bearing the EU Eco-label, leveraging our market power to drive environmental benefits both locally and globally. In every subcontracting process, our beneficiaries will carefully consider the sustainability of each potential subcontractor's products and services. To strike a balance between technical, environmental, and financial factors, we have established guidelines for selecting products and services, which prioritize local and ISO-certified suppliers.



1.1 Starting point

Prior to starting any procurement process, it is essential to have access to current information on environmentally friendly products and services, as well as the legal framework governing the integration of environmental criteria in purchasing procedures (ICLEI EPP, 2000).

A key consideration is that the environmentally friendly product or service being acquired or subcontracted must not only be less harmful to the environment but also equivalent in functionality to its conventional counterpart. Moreover, a green purchasing strategy involves eliminating unnecessary purchases and extending the lifespan of products already in use.

Within the LIFE MERLIN project, beneficiaries will adhere to the guidance documents established by the European Commission (European Commission (a)) to ensure a robust criterion for prioritizing green products and services. In this context, the Buying Green Handbook serves as the European Commission's primary guidance document, providing valuable insights on how to procure goods and services with a reduced environmental impact (European Commission (b)).

1.2 Identification of environmentally friendly products and services

The initial step in green procurement and EU Eco-label products prioritization is to identify environmentally friendly products and services. The market is flooded with various qualifiers claiming to define eco-friendly products, but it's challenging to find a definition that suits a wide range of goods and services. Since every product or service has some environmental impact, it's essential to adopt a nuanced approach.

There are three valid methods to identify environmentally friendly products and services, which are discussed below.

1.2.1 Eco-labelled products

One direct way to identify green products is through eco-labels. Purchasing eco-labelled products ensures that the item is environmentally favorable within its category. However,



this method has limitations due to the large number of unlabelled products, confusing "green labels," and legal restrictions on requiring eco-labelled products in tendering procedures (ICLEI EPP, 2000).

To overcome these limitations, the [E-catalogue](#) (European Commission (c)) serves as a valuable tool to identify eco-labelled products. This online portal gathers information on eco-labelled products and services, allowing beneficiaries to review available goods and services and choose those that best fit their needs. Additionally, the [List of eco-labels in Spain](#) (European Commission (d)) will be used to detect green products and services in this country for prioritization.

The EU eco-label was created to simplify green procurement (European Commission (e)). Its key features include:

- No expert knowledge required: The EU Ecolabel criteria considers the main environmental impacts of a product and technically possible improvements, established through a transparent, multi-stakeholder process.
- Easy identification: The E-catalogue provides information on products and services awarded with the EU Ecolabel, making it easy to identify suitable options.
- Fully compatible with the principles of the internal market: The EU Ecolabel scheme is public, transparent, and non-discriminatory, valid throughout the European Union and European Economic Area (EEA) countries.

1.2.2 Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is a methodology that assesses the environmental impact of a product, good, or service throughout its entire life cycle, from design to disposal, considering all stages, including raw material extraction, manufacturing, packaging, transport, storage, use, and disposal (ICLEI EPP, 2000). Figure 1 shows an example of a LCA.

In this context, environmentally friendly products are those with a minimum environmental impact compared to other products or services serving the same purpose and having the same functional qualities. Within LIFE MERLIN, efforts will be made to prioritize environmentally friendly products whenever possible.



However, this method has limitations due to the lack of availability of LCAs for each product group and in each particular situation (ICLEI EPP, 2000).

1.2.3 Simplified study of the product's life cycle

When unable to refer to a Life Cycle Analysis or an eco-label, purchasers can identify greener products by conducting a simplified study of the product's life cycle (ICLEI EPP, 2000). This process helps beneficiaries find alternatives to most products and services.

The steps to undertake a simplified study of the product's life cycle and find environmentally friendly alternatives are:

- I. List the characteristics of the product or service to be purchased or subcontracted.
- II. Find ecological alternatives for each characteristic to make the product or service more environmentally friendly.
- III. Identify the environmental area (material, energy, emission, and waste) on which the ecological alternative for each characteristic has a positive impact (environmental consequence).
- IV. Define the subsequent actions to guide the purchase or subcontracting of more environmentally friendly products and services.

Ultimately, regardless of the source of environmental criteria, a green product or service must fulfill its functions as well as its conventional equivalent.



| Product characteristics | Ecological alternative | Environmental consequence ² | | | | ACTION - Examples - |
|-------------------------|---|--|--------|-----------|-------|---|
| | | MATERIAL | ENERGY | EMISSIONS | WASTE | |
| Material composition | Recycled material | X | X | | X | Use recycled toilet and towel papers. Procure refuse sacks made of recycled plastic. |
| | Renewable material | X | | | | Choose recycled concrete or crushed rock rather than gravel as a construction material. |
| | No toxic substance | | | X | X | Use chlorine-free paper, PCB-free electronics or PVC-free floor coverings. |
| Transport | Short distance | | X | X | | Buy your fruits and vegetables from local producers. |
| | Transport means | | X | X | | Make use of rail and boat versus road and plane transport. |
| Manu- factur- ing | Taking into account the environment | X | X | X | X | Choose a producer which has an environmental management system. |
| Packa- ging | Reduction | X | | | X | Prefer recyclable, easily returnable or, if possible, no packaging at all. |
| Product use | Durability | X | | | X | Buy long-term guaranteed carpets. |
| | Repairability / Upgradability | X | | | X | Choose computers which can be upgraded and do not need to be replaced completely when becoming outdated. |
| | Compatibility with equipment /user habits | X | X | X | X | When changing for a recycled paper, test its compatibility with copiers and printers before distributing it throughout your organisation. |
| | Energy requirements | | X | | | Choose low energy light bulbs to save energy (and reduce your annual cost by up to 70%). |
| | Safety for users | X | X | X | X | Use alternative pesticides or alternative methods of pest control. |
| End of life | Re-use potential | X | | | X | Buy refillable toner cartridges for laser and ink jet printers. |
| | Recyclability | X | X | | X | When buying white goods, make sure that they can easily be dismantled and their material recycled. |
| | Disposal | | | X | X | Use biodegradable synthetic vegetable-based hydraulic oil for fleet maintenance. |

Figure 1. Example of a LCA study obtained from Green Purchasing Good Practice Guide, ICLEI "Policy & Practice Publication

1.3 Selection criteria for green products and services

Once a range of suitable environmentally friendly products and services have been identified, the project beneficiaries must then select the most suitable options. As previously mentioned, this selection process will consider not only environmental factors but also technical, economic, and social criteria.

- **Technical Considerations:** As emphasized earlier, the chosen green product or service must not only be environmentally less harmful but also equivalent in functionality to its conventional counterpart.
- **Economic Evaluation:** To assess the economic benefits of environmentally friendly products, the Life Cycle Costing (LCC) tools established by the European Commission (European Commission (f)) can be utilized. This approach helps to evaluate the total cost of ownership, including purchase, use, and disposal costs.
- **Social Responsibility:** Whenever possible, organizations demonstrating strong social responsiveness, such as those promoting social inclusion or participating in social initiatives, will be given priority. This involves assessing the needs that the product or service will fulfill and evaluating its overall cost, encompassing purchase, use, and disposal expenses.

By considering these multifaceted criteria, the project beneficiaries can make informed decisions that balance environmental, technical, economic, and social factors.



1.4 Monitoring of purchases and subcontracting

The final stage in the green procurement process is to track and monitor each entity's environmentally friendly purchases and subcontracting activities. This crucial step enables the detection of unnecessary purchases, identifies opportunities to reduce purchase frequencies or quantities, and assesses the functional qualities of new eco-friendly products and services. Moreover, it is essential to promote these assessments, highlighting their benefits and communicating them to other beneficiaries and stakeholders to encourage their adoption.

To ensure the effective monitoring of green purchases and subcontracting within the LIFE MERLIN project, the following key performance indicators (KPIs) have been established:

- Eco-labelled products and services purchased/subcontracted: A minimum of 2 eco-labelled products or services will be procured or subcontracted throughout the project's lifetime.
- Simplified LCA studies conducted: At least 5 simplified LCA studies will be carried out, encompassing the assessment of 4 environmental consequences: material, energy, emission, and waste, to prioritize environmentally friendly alternatives.
- Green measures applied: A minimum of 5 measures listed in the *Executive Summary* will be implemented within the LIFE MERLIN project.

By tracking these KPIs, the project can ensure a successful green procurement strategy that promotes environmentally friendly practices and reduces its ecological footprint.



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