



BELGIAN PILOT REPORT

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Introduction

On 15 May 2022 ACR+ held a pilot testing which consisted of giving feedback on the GREENER training course and the identification of green and circular clauses in a tender. Moreover, after the pilot, GREENER partners sent an online survey to the participants with the aim to gather further comments on how to improve the training materials. The pilot testing gathered 15 participants. This report summarizes the main findings and conclusions.

Participants

Table 1 shows the list of participants, their organisations and the type of organisation involved.

Name	Organisation	Kind of company/organisation
Louisse Dessart	Service Public Wallonie	Public authority
Emma Borjesson	City of Malmö	Public authority
Julie Bastholm	City of Aalborg	Public authority
Monica Sanchez Groeneweg	Rijkswaterstaat	Public authority
Cuno Van Geet	Rijkswaterstaat	Public authority
Kris Wauters	UCL Louvain/BVBA Advocatenkantoor Wauters	University – Research centre
Lies de Meyer	Bpost	Company
Aurélie Ghysels	Province du Brabant Wallon	Public authority
Anthony Naralingom	Hub.Brussels	Business organisation
Patrick Heinrichs	Awex	Agency
Laurent Lognay	Sowalfin	Agency
Jo Versteven	Belgian Federal Institute for Sustainable Development	National government
Gert Maddens	Spadel	Company
Solene Padeletti	ACR+	Association
Virginia Amate Padilla	ACR+	Association

As we can observe in Figure 1, pilot participants are coming from different type of organizations. 40% are coming from public administrations, 13% from different agencies (development, export), 13% are companies, 13% from an association, and the other 21% is represented by a business hub (cluster of SMEs), a national government and a research center.

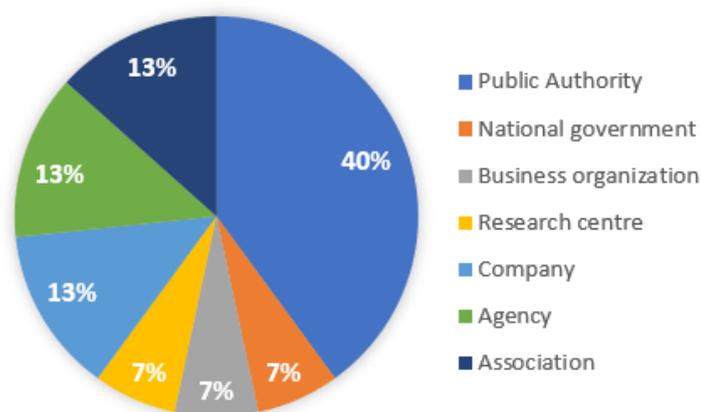


Figure 1 Type of Stakeholder

Regarding their position, we can see that 33,3% of the participants are Public Officers. The rest of the participants are equally divided in the positions of Advisors in Circular Procurement, of Project and Communication Officers, of Administrative Positions and Middle Management with 16,7%. Yet, we couldn't reach participants from quality departments and entrepreneurs (Figure 2).

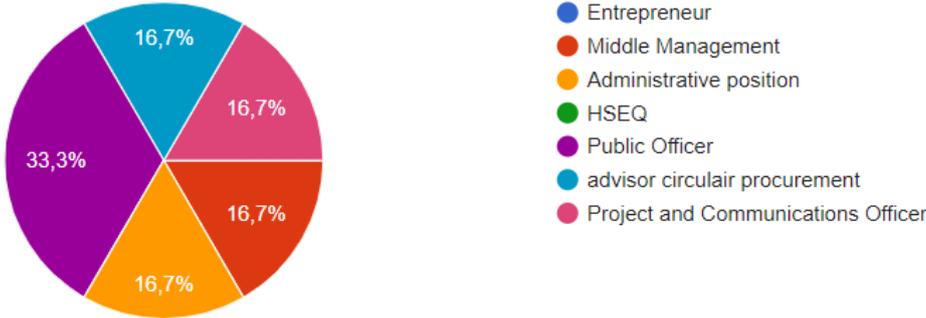


Figure 2 Position of participants in the organization

Project work

A project work was done with 12 participants. It consisted of three steps

1. Look for a green public tender in the existing databases
2. Identify the green, circular and social criteria inside the tender
3. Improve the tender sustainability, adding sustainability criteria if you think it is worthful

Following slides summarize their findings:

Public contract for the supply of workwear

Belgian public tender found in: <https://enot.publicprocurement.be>

- Agence régionales pour la Propreté <<Bruxelles- Propreté>>
- The subject matter of the contract is the supply of t-shirts for the operational staff
- Open procedure

GREENER



Sustainability criteria: where?



Public contract for the supply of workwear

- Pag. 9/44: Presence of min 70% of cotton from organic agriculture
- Pag 18/44: limitation of packaging waste -> 100 pieces per box without individual packaging

2) CRITERES ENVIRONNEMENTAUX (25 points) :

Poste 1 : T-shirt blanc

- Présence de minimum 70% de coton issu de l'agriculture biologique (10 points) ;
- Engagement équitable du fabricant (7 points) ;

Poste 2 : T-shirt noir

- Présence de minimum 70% de coton issu de l'agriculture biologique (5 points) ;
- Engagement équitable du fabricant (3 points) ;

What we can add to this tender?

Some proposals:

- Include a minimum recycled content
- Design: easy to separate the logo of the Agency to avoid damaging the item.
- Contract service instead buying products: repair could be done by a social entity + more incentive to produce more durable/repairable/recyclable products



Experience

66,7% of the respondents declared that they had already followed at least one training on public procurement (Figure 3). However, 66,7% declared that they never participated in a specific training on GPP (Figure 4).

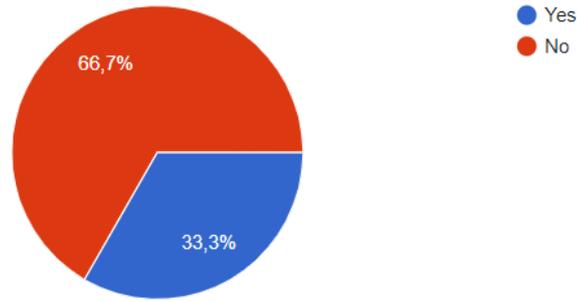


Figure 3 Respondents that declared the GREENER was their first training on public procurement

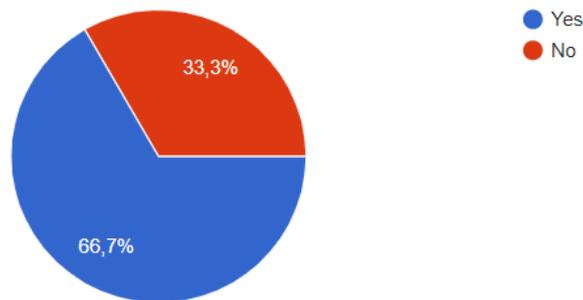


Figure 4 Respondents that declared GREENER was their first training on green public procurement

Feedback from participants: survey results

Before highlighting the detailed results of the survey, it is important to mention that all the participants did not follow all the training materials. Indeed, the modular training course is designed to target middle management and administrative profiles of SMEs and support this staff in acquiring the appropriate practical skills, knowledge, and access to the right information to successfully implement Green Public Procurement. The course consists of 5 separate modules, each providing to the participant different knowledge of GPP skills. Therefore, we asked participants to follow the modules they believe were the more interesting/useful for them.

We can observe that all modules have been followed at least once. Module 1 (discover the basis for working with GPP) and Module 2 (understand the key vocabulary to read a tender) have been followed the most (4 times), and all the others have been chosen 3 times (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Modules followed by participants

Satisfaction and usefulness

We can analyze in Figure 6 that the training materials met quite well the expectations of all participants. We can note that most of the participants found the training material useful for their future work (83.4%), while one participant was not very convinced of the usefulness of the training material chosen (Figure 7).

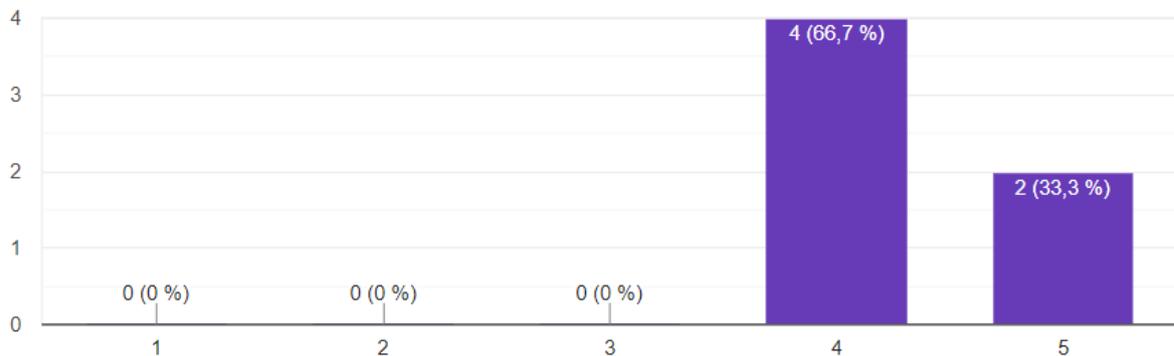


Figure 6 Participants' expectations rate from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest)

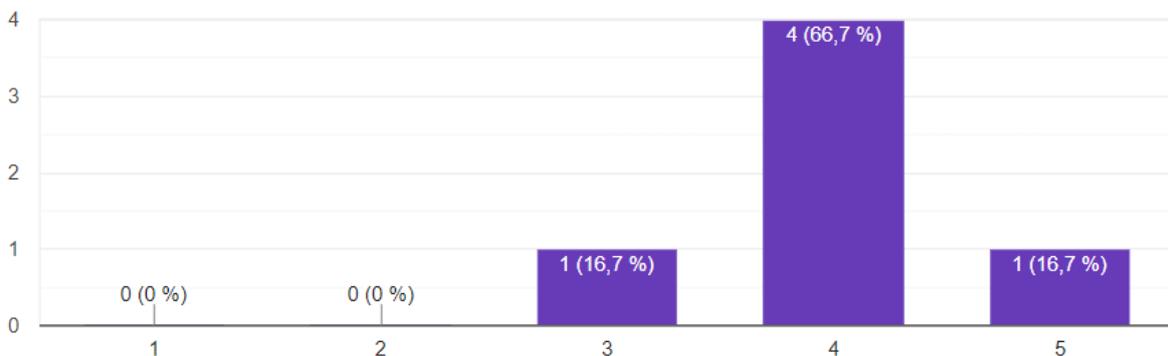


Figure 7 Usefulness of the training for participants' work from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest)

Improved abilities

The next question on the survey was dedicated to improved abilities. Participants were asked to rank from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest) whether they had improved their abilities, in line with the different training modules. We can observe in Figure 8 that there were different opinions among participants, some of them found it very useful, others less relevant. This might also depend on the previous knowledge of the respondents.

I have improved my ability in...

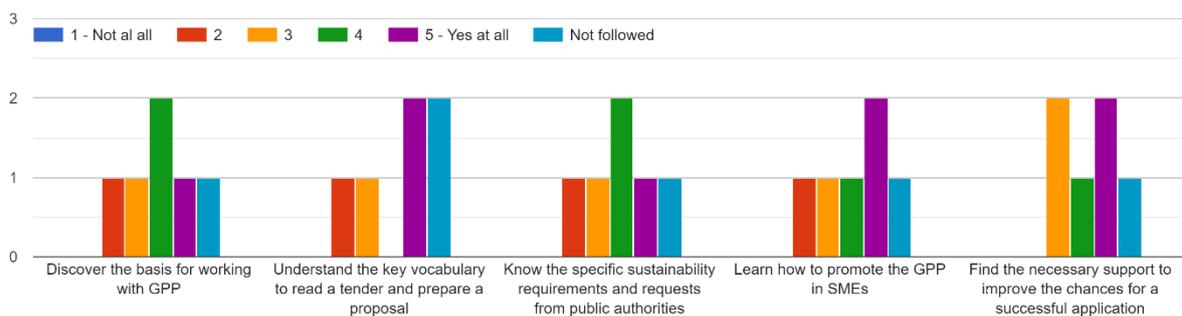


Figure 8 Abilities improved by participants

Quality of the training course

We asked participants to evaluate several features related to the contents of the training material. We can notice that for all features evaluated (easiness of the module, quality of references, comprehensiveness of the content and graphic shape) participants were satisfied with the training modules contents. However, based on the responses, we can deduce that graphic shapes may be improved (Figure 9).

Based on your experience, evaluate the following features related to the contents

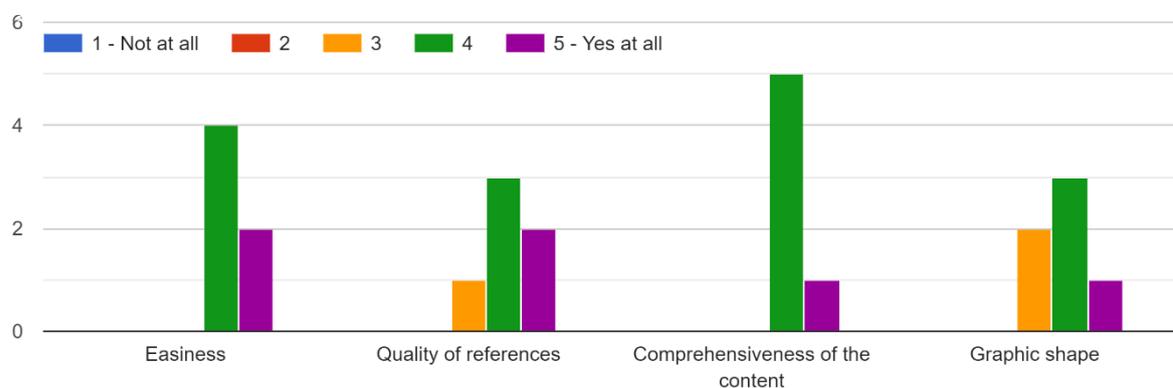


Figure 9 Participant's evaluation of the training course contents

Suggestion for improvement

To end the survey, we asked participants two open questions. In the first question, participants were asked to provide suggestions to improve the training materials according to their own experience. The first suggestion was to integrate in the training materials a list of interesting websites, with first a general reference list and then a list per major category. Participants also suggested to create a 2-minute video teaser to attract more SMEs in the loop.

A response from one of the participants:

“The GREENER initiative is very good, because practice has shown that both governments and companies are still wrestling with this issue. Also, the search for sustainable public procurement will increase even more given the recent evolutions and crises in our society.

- **On procedures:** it might be good to point out that in this context, the modules focus on classic sectors (directive 2014/24) and not about the special sectors (directive 2014/25). It also seems necessary to emphasise even more for the classic sectors that the competitive procedure with negotiation and the competitive dialogue are special procedures, in the sense that they cannot always be chosen by the contracting authority.
- **On the subject matter of the contract:** it could be highlighted that the biggest obstacle for a contracting authority to implement a sustainable policy through a public contract is the condition that a selection criterion or an award criterion must always be linked to the subject matter of the contract. This means that an authority is not free to choose such a ‘criterion’.
- **On 'pre-commercial' procurement:** it must be clear that every effective purchase by a public authority is subject to public procurement law. Therefore, one should not create the impression that one can escape the legislation by using certain concepts. Prior consultation of the market is also subject to the general principles of procurement law. This means that such consultation must not lead to distortion of competition.
- **On 'Principle of equivalence':** in itself, the explanation is correct if one looks at it from a European perspective. It is indeed the case that if one imposes certain techniques, one must also accept equivalent techniques from other countries. In Belgium, however, this rule does not apply absolutely when it comes to a contract in which only domestic companies participate. The latter companies cannot invoke equivalent techniques. In other words, the principle of equivalence only applies to foreign companies.
- **On assessing the tender:** what is also important for an enterprise when it wishes to tender for a public contract, is to thoroughly examine the tender documents as soon as possible and that if there are any doubts or criticisms of the tender documents, to immediately report this to the contracting authority. Practice shows that too many companies do not do this and sometimes misinterpret the specifications and lose the contract as a result.
- **On trainers:** it is important that training be given by people who are familiar with public procurement law, but who also have practical experience of applying this law. Only in this way is it certain that a certain message is conveyed correctly.”

In the last question, we asked participants whether they would suggest the training to their colleagues. We received different point of views. Some participants said that they would disseminate the training course among their networks. Another said that the trainings should maybe be more specialized. A last comment stated that the training seemed helpful for 'Training the trainer'. Lastly, one comments was highly positive, claiming that such material is very interesting and useful to boost SMEs knowledge on Green and Circular Public Procurement.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can say that participants evaluated positively the training modules and its content, as it can be a useful resource to engage SMEs in GPP. We took note of recommendations to improve the modules, and we will need to further explore how this type of training could be replicated or embedded in existing trainings targeting SMEs.