



**Project GPP-STREAM “Green Public Procurement and Sustainability Tools for
Resource Efficiency Mainstreaming”**

**BUILDING CAPACITY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS FOR
DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY DOCUMENTS WHICH INCLUDE
GPP AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA**

ACTIVITY: POLICY BRIEF

Author: PP7 Centre for Sustainability and Economic Growth /CSEG/



Contents

1. Overview	3
2. Introduction	4
3. Policy Context	6
4. The way forward	7
5. Sources of Information	9



1. Overview

Based on the numerous local stakeholder meetings as well as on the conclusions drawn from the 3 different questionnaires completed by stakeholders of the project partners, it can be clearly stated that capacity building among public administration bodies is a main challenge for GPP uptake at local and European level, one that requires great effort and dedication. In this respect, Association CSEG decided to establish an Environmental helpdesk that will focus on building expertise of local administrations for development of strategy documents which include GPP and environmental criteria, as a tool for reaching a massive deployment of GPP on regional level and using green spending as a means for reaching specific sustainability targets and meeting programs goals.

In order to be successful, GPP uptake needs to be implemented and integrated into local strategies and development plans, into local programmes for energy efficiency and RES and last but not least into local climate related by-laws. A few green products and green tenders may bring some publicity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; however, it will remain a one-off sustainable public purchase without any further impact. By the means of a GPP strategy and GPP implementation in most of the local by-laws, it has the potential of becoming an important driver for achieving policy goals. Any energy efficiency or climate-related policy should include GPP as an important measure to achieve the targets of such a policy.

Here is a small extract from our [Report on interviews with stakeholders](#) /Activity B15/.

“...What comes next in the questionnaire is a topic that usually fires a discussion and is the focus of most of GPP projects, namely: Challenges in front of adopting GPP criteria. In this respect, one of the main barriers and a major obstacle, that has always been pointed out as a milestone to GPP implementation and that has been highlighted in our questionnaire as well, is the necessity of further improvement of public-authority knowledge and administration capacity on that matter. During transnational learning meetings, it has often been pointed out that constant training for public procurement officers seems to be a driver to GPP uptake in every country. Lack of knowledge about environmental issues and green criteria has to be overcome and instead there shall be instilled an interest and a focus on organization and implementation of GPP on a local level. Public authorities shall seek advice and information on the straightforward implementation of GPP.

Other main barriers that shall be overcome and that are pointed out as main obstacles facing GPP uptake are the following:

- *Higher price on the purchasing phase*
- *Lack of experience, knowledge and confidence*
- *Lack of administrative capacity + will for implementation*
- *Immature business and market*
- *Need of better understanding of GPP themselves*
- *Lack of organizational issues + targeting mass production*

OUR INSPIRATION



This action was inspired by the exchange of experience activities within the project namely by sharing the development plans in the Romanian transnational learning event organized on 11 September 2019:

- GPP key enabler for climate change adaptation process in several Romanian provinces; Sibiu, Târgu-Mureş and Braşov, as well as
- Presentation for green public procurement – key enabler for Climate change adaptation process – Ministry of Environment of Romania.

This event was organized in the frame of Activity A10 “Second Transnational Learning Event in Romania”. Several municipalities from different Romanian regions presented their environmental and climate change mitigation programmes. These were municipalities of Sibiu, Târgu-Mureş, Braşov, and Botoşani. By this, the municipal administrations demonstrated in a very efficient way how the link between local environmental bylaws and GPP can be achieved. On the other hand, the Romanian Ministry of Environment presented their climate change strategy and how the integration of GPP concept can significantly contribute to the objectives set in their environmental policy.



2. Introduction

Association CSEG is well-known at local and regional level for its work in identifying and developing new projects for sustainable development in various key sectors. The Association works with public institutions and private entities in Bulgaria, as well as with similar organizations and institutions at European level. Its services are utilized by public administrations, business communities, and citizens. The experts within CSEG are experienced in applying integrated approaches, analysis, and solutions that encourage local authorities and communities to develop and implement energy efficient strategies, programs, plans and projects. The experts’ professional expertise covers a wide range of fields: economic and financial analysis, policy advice, project management, writing and promotion, environment and clean energy expertise.



The activities of a Regional Environmental Help Desk will have a direct impact on the development and where existing on the improvement of the following policy strategies at local and regional level in South Central Region of Bulgaria:

- **Energy efficiency programmes at local and regional level:** accordingly to Art. 12, par. 2 of the *Energy Efficiency Act* (EEA) “...the governmental and local authorities shall develop and adopt energy efficiency programs” which have to be “drawn up in consideration of strategic objectives and priorities of regional development plans of the respective regions” which for South Central Region is the Regional Development Plan for South-Central Region 2014-2020. A preliminary analysis performed by Association CSEG (Centre for Sustainability and Economic Growth) in last two years shows that most of the Local Authorities (LAs) from South Central Region do not have such energy programmes, or in some cases they have programmes which need further improvement in order to take into account the local specific features of the region, and to set ambitious but at the same time feasible objectives in the short-term (3 years) and/or long-term (10 years) periods.

- **Programs for promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and biofuels:** as according to Art. 9 of the *Energy from Renewable Sources Act* “the municipal councils shall adopt long-term and short-term programmes for promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and biofuels”. The long-term programmes include measures for larger deployment of local and sustainable RES which must be implemented within 10 years, while the short-term programmes have measures which must be accomplished within 3 years of adoption of the programme. CSEG strongly promotes the integrated approach in which a public administration can adopt one sustainable energy programme which contains both – energy efficiency and RES measures and thus achieving the synergy effect where one measure fosters the effect of the other measures, i.e. the development of one integrated SEAP (sustainable energy action plan), instead of development of several different strategies with similar objectives.

- **Strategy documents for a transnational partnership among stakeholders from educational sector:** Association CSEG participates as a stakeholder in several working groups related to the development of transnational strategies for partnership in the field of education. These partnership strategies always include a public administration and/or educational authority from South Central Region and similar institutions from other European countries, and they are being developed within different EU initiatives. They represent a very good channel for transferring the GPP and environmental expertise gained in Phase 1 of GPP-STREAM project to other stakeholders not only from South Central Region of Bulgaria, but also from other remote regions not directly involved in GPP-STREAM. Association CSEG already participated in the development of such collaborative strategy document between Peshtera municipality (Bulgaria), Ludbreg municipality (Croatia), and Kochani municipality (North Macedonia) by providing concrete measures and ideas for a larger deployment of green purchases in public administrations and a larger deployment of topics in school curricular related to protection of environment and climate change.

Any energy efficiency or climate-related policy should include GPP as an important measure to achieve the targets of such a policy. As according to the Bulgarian ‘Energy Efficiency Act’, every municipality must develop an EE Programme. On the other hand, as according to the ‘Energy from Renewable Sources Act’ every municipality must develop a RES Programme. Yet most of the Bulgarian municipalities do not have such policy programmes, because most of the municipalities (especially rural and small ones) do not have the required professional and expert staff to develop and follow tailored and



customized policy actions. By establishing a Regional Environmental Helpdesk, Association CSEG will assist the public authorities in the development, improvement and monitoring of such programmes, and integrate also the GPP concept into these programmes.

3. Policy Context

Currently, public tenders in Bulgaria are awarded in correspondence with the principle of the “most economically advantageous offer”. The Public Procurement Act (PPA) outlines the three types of contract award criteria: 1) the lowest price criterion; 2) level of expenditure, including cost-effectiveness and life-cycle costs; 3) the best value for money, which is estimated based on the value or the level of expenditure, as well as on indicators that include qualitative, environmental and/or social aspects related to the subject-matter of the public contract. There is a lack of knowledge and experience among some administrations and procurers in relation to applying the “life-cycle cost” method. Besides, the major National Action Plan for promotion of GPP has not been updated yet, which presents a further drawback and a challenge for green spending promotion and dissemination. In this respect, and in correspondence with targets set in the application stage of the project, Association CSEG focuses on integrating the concept of green procurement into local bylaws related to energy efficiency, RES, environmental and sustainable development programmes, etc., and thus it will contribute to the goals set into the Regional Development Plan of South Central Bulgaria.

Barriers for the larger deployment of GPP in Bulgaria:

Need to update the national strategy document presenting a clear vision and institutional support for promoting the development of the GPP. The National Action Plan for stimulation of GPP has a time horizon up to 2014 and has not been updated since then. Other barriers for a larger deployment of GPP are:

- Lack of motivation of public procurement experts to apply green criteria due to the advisable and not mandatory nature of the criteria.
- Lack of knowledge of the lifecycle cost principle and the perception of green public procurement as luxury procurement.
- Technology restrictions to implementing the green concept and slow development of the Green Public Procurement market.
- Lack of knowledge among contracting parties of the benefits of green public procurement.

In order to mitigate these barriers and improve the state-of-play related to GPP, Association CSEG has been in constant contact with regional stakeholders, as well as with project partners of GPP-STREAM, by active participation and organization of stakeholder meetings, transnational learning events which eventually brought some very good insights for the activities envisaged in the regional Action Plan.



4. The way forward

Few, but particularly important steps must be undertaken, so that the operation of the Regional Environmental Helpdesk is efficient. These include:

Activity 1: Research on the existence of local by-laws in the municipalities from the Region

- Objective: to find out if municipalities have already developed local policies/strategies for sustainable development in the area of environment, energy and climate, and if these need improvement.
- Description: Desk-based research to find out what environmental policies exist, and do they need improvement.

Activity 2: Enhance the skills of PAs in South Central Region on development of local sustainable policies

- Objective: increase knowledge and expertise of employees who work in public administrations on how to develop and improve sustainable policies. In order to do this, CSEG will try to involve stakeholders who represent municipal associations like the National Association of Municipalities of Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) which comprises all 265 Bulgarian municipalities as members.
- Description: organize bi-lateral meetings and workshops with those stakeholders, where to discuss the need to develop, improve and/or adapt sustainable programmes based on the environmental concept. CSEG experts already participated in several local bylaws development and improvement and will provide support to the PAs from South Central Region in the development, implementation, adaptation, and monitoring of their sustainable strategies and programmes. Special focus will be given to SEAPs and SECAPs, which are part of the measures envisaged in the RDP of the South-Central Region in Bulgaria. Should force majeure circumstances appear during the implementation of this activity, the face-to-face meetings and workshops could be replaced by online meetings and use the means of platforms – GoToWebinar, ZOOM, etc.



Activity 3: Organize a targeted Communication and Dissemination campaign

- Objective: to continue the dissemination of project products and GPP practices achieved and identified during Phase 1 to stakeholders from South Central Region of Bulgaria.
- Description: GPP-STREAM elaborated very useful tools (like GPP tender model toolkit – Activity A17; Toolkit for GPP compliance for EU beneficiaries – Activity A18; GPP Monitoring Guidelines – Activity A19), and identified about 50 GPP and environmental good practices with a replicability potential and resource efficiency gains. The dissemination of these represents a continuous process which will not end up in Phase 1, but it will continue in Phase 2 and even beyond project ending. During the dissemination activities, Association CSEG will offer to its stakeholders support in communication activities. For example, a Bulgarian municipality might be interested in implementation of a best practice which was already implemented in a remote EU region, outside Bulgaria – in this case, CSEG experts will assist the Bulgarian municipality in finding more sources of information by contacting the Author of the practice as well as contacting the main organization responsible for its implementation.

Main objectives of the meetings and workshops within the Helpdesk are:



- *to present to the local stakeholders the EU policies and Strategies on GPP, the circular economy and circular procurement as well as an introduction of key criteria for the GPP categories*
- *to share good practices and avoid reinventing the wheel*
- *Increase administration skills and knowledge on how to develop local energy programmes, SECAPs, SEAPs*
- *Raise awareness about the importance of GPP and why should they be supported*
- *Acquaintance with GPP-STREAM project and similar opportunities as a possible solution for further GPP implementation*
- *Continue the activities of the regional GPP-STREAM stakeholder network that can communicate and discuss GPP and environmental issues*
- *Ensuring GPP continuation/sustainability*
- *Ensuring GPP spreading through effective dissemination*
- *Linking Green Public Procurement to innovation and circular procurement – Public procurement of innovation is future-driven as it is about using public procurement as a driver for developing new approaches, products and services. Circular public procurement tries to close the public procurement circle by considering a move from linear to circular production and consumption. By linking GPP to circular economy and innovation policy makers ensure a continuous improvement and up-scaling of the green public procurement process.*
- *To support municipalities from the region to achieve national energy and climate targets where GPP is having a central part and Association CSEG will support all stakeholders in procurement to succeed in the transition to a green economy*

5. Sources of Information

Informational sources are activities from the GPP-STREAM project, and mainly:

- *Activity A10 “Second Transnational Learning Event in Romania”*
- *Stakeholder meetings in Bulgaria, activities: A5, A9, A16, and A25*
- [Report on interviews with stakeholders](#) /Activity B15/ – available on request and on the project webpage.
- [Action Plan of Association CSEG](#)



This policy brief is provided by Association
Centre for Sustainability and Economic Growth,
located in the city of Pazardzhik, Bulgaria.



For more information about GPP-STREAM project visit: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/gpp-stream/>

