The Layman's report

Towards the end of an Eco-Innovation project, beneficiaries are required to produce a Layman’s report in paper and electronic versions. This is targeted at a non-specialist audience and serves to inform decision makers and non-technical parties of the project objectives and results. It should be clear and concise. It is, along with the project website, one of the main tools for disseminating information about the project. A well-written and well-designed report is a key marketing tool that will help to draw attention to the work of your project. Moreover, it is often the main source of information for journalists and other parties wishing to find out more about the project.

1. Content

There are no specific requirements for the content of the Layman's report. But ideally, the reports should include:

- The problem, introducing one or two paragraphs on the background to the project, including, where relevant, the legal context;
- Project overview, introducing the project's specific objectives, the benefits of the innovative solution (environmental, socio-economic), the partners involved;
- Results, introducing the innovative solution in a non-technical way. This should actually be the core part of the report: you are not just talking about a project, you are describing an innovation you brought to the market thanks to the project;
- The market, introducing the target countries and customers;
- The European added value, introducing the benefits at EU level;
- Contact information, including address, tel, e-mail, website.
2. Simple, user-friendly format and attractive presentation

The old adage ‘less is best’ is particularly pertinent for Layman’s reports, which ideally should be only 5 to 10 pages in length. Aim to present your project in a concise way. It is important to remember that this document is aimed at a non-technical audience. A well-designed report can present even the most difficult technical Eco-Innovation projects in an eye-catching way.

Attractive presentation
First impressions are very important. An attractive Layman’s report which looks interesting and uncomplicated will encourage people to read further. Guide your readers through the report by choosing an appropriate layout. Appropriate use of white space is the easiest and least-expensive way to make a report appear attractive and easy to read. Using photographs, illustrations and boxes can also help. If you are using a columns layout, devote one column to photographs, diagrams and short topics. Also, pay particular importance to the design of the front cover and introductory page(s). A precise summary of the project, early on in the report, will make it particularly inviting for further reading.

Photos
Don’t forget to check the quality of your photos, and remember, you need fewer pixels for an electronic version than a paper one.

Easy to read text
Use different typefaces for the headlines and the text. Headlines should be as short as possible. Choose a common typeface for all of the headlines and limit headlines to two sizes. Use one size for headlines of primary importance and another, smaller, size for headlines of lesser importance. For the headlines choose a typeface that forms a visual contrast with the body text. For example, use sans serif headlines (i.e. Arial) and a serif typeface (like Times Roman or Garamond) for the text.

Careful editing
Take care to ensure the accuracy of the report, ahead of production, and check for spelling mistakes or literals (typographical errors). It is also advisable to test the effectiveness and accuracy of your report on colleagues or friends, ahead of publication.

Professional translation
If the Layman’s report is to be presented in two or more languages, you can either opt to publish two separate documents, or you may wish to publish one document in two languages (dividing each page into two). Whatever the choice, it is essential to ensure a high-standard of translation: a poor translation can be detrimental to the international dissemination of your project’s results.

3. Specific Eco-Innovation requirements

a) Clear mention of the EU contribution.

b) The use of Eco-Innovation logo.

c) Beside the project’s language(s) you are requested to prepare the report in English.

TIPS
Examples of good layman’s reports submitted by other programmes, such as LIFE projects: