



## Monitoring SPP in Flanders, Belgium

*The Department for Environment, Energy and Nature (DENE) from the Flemish Government (Belgium) provides support to the Government's entities in their actions for reducing their environmental impact. Support on sustainable public procurement (SPP) is one of the fields where the team is very active. Els Verwimp is a Policy Advisor on internal environmental management, and is the central point of contact for SPP in the team.*

**The Flemish Government has set itself a target of 100% SPP by 2020. You have set up an SPP monitoring system in your department which should serve as a testing ground. Could you describe how it works?**

We started our exercise as part of the [ISO 14001](#) environmental management system from our department. Not only do we need to buy 100% sustainable goods and services by 2020, we also need to be able to prove this within our system.

The Flemish Government decided on minimum sustainability criteria for certain product groups. The products purchased must meet these criteria, in order to be able to call their procurement sustainable. Therefore, DENE's procurers need to report on the use of the criteria. They're required to answer three questions before they can allocate the amount necessary to close a contract (the standstill period). These questions are:

- Procurement? (other options are, for instance, leasing)
- What product group?
- Use of DENE's sustainability criteria?

The information provided is stored in DENE's accounting system. Some of the important features of the system are its mandatory reporting requirements and that it also serves to provide information

on the criteria and contact information of the helpdesk. In that way, it's not only a reporting tool, but also provides a means to communicate through the channels which procurers are most accustomed to using.

We analyse the data but also check a selection of dossiers to see whether procurers have filled out the information correctly. After analysing the data, we can also assess whether further action or support is needed. Even more important than having the numbers is the contact that we then have with procurers. Through these contacts, we can aim for higher minimum criteria to be included or to introduce SPP for other product groups in cooperation with the procurers involved. We've noticed that face-to-face contact and support is still a very effective way for increasing action on SPP.

**Will the system also be used by other government departments and/or other public bodies? Will this also impact on the public procurement of innovation (PPI)?**

This year we'll try to implement the monitoring approach in other entities (within the Flemish government) - we already have three candidates. Obtaining senior management support is essential for implementing SPP to fit into an organisation's existing structures. We won't copy our system into theirs, but

together we'll map their processes and tools and see how the monitoring system can be best implemented into their existing processes and structures. For now, the system is limited to the product groups for which we have minimum SPP criteria.

In June 2015, the Flemish government also set a goal for PPI - that 3% of public procurement should be spent on innovation-oriented procurement. Incorporating the monitoring criteria of PPI contracts into our monitoring system will thus be a very important challenge for the coming year. Criteria used to monitor PPI projects will be broader and this will give us the chance to see where we stand for those product groups for which we don't yet have any sustainability criteria.

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The pilots within DENE and the other entities provide us with a "testing ground". The Flemish government has decided to introduce a contract management system for the entire Flemish government, which will allow us to better follow up procurement dossiers. The registration of procurement

dossiers is crucial to enable a means for overall reporting on SPP and PPI, but also on the use of e-procurement and the participation of SMEs. DENE's pilot projects (and those from other entities) should be seen as stepping stones for broader implementation in the near future. By learning and adapting, we want to provide input on the monitoring of SPP and PPI for the contract management system of the Government of Flanders.

### **How close is Flanders in reaching its goals for SPP?**

I can only provide DENE's perspective on this. We've made an analysis for January to August 2015. The results were 83% of SPP measured in terms of financial worth and 63% of SPP measured in terms of number of contracts. However, we also saw that the product groups for which we have criteria are only a part of our procurement (29% of our procurement budget). Important product groups to look at, either to introduce minimum criteria, or for PPI, are ICT services and travel, for example.

DENE procures products and services for themselves, but even more so they make use of the framework contracts that 'Het Facilitair Bedrijf' (the facility company of the Flemish government) offers. This is the case for many entities within the Flemish government. In this way, the facility company represents a large part of the buying power of the Flemish government. They will play a very important role to help achieve 100% sustainable procurement. Mapping their efforts will give us a more representative view of SPP and PPI from within the Flemish government. In terms of the contract management system, they'll focus on monitoring the largest contracts.