Greening public procurement in the Basque Country
Basque Government (Spain)

Background

The Basque Country is an autonomous community in northern Spain with a population of over two million. The Basque Government has been incorporating GPP into its strategic environmental plans and programmes since 2004, which at the time arose from its ecodesign actions (through the Basque Programme for the Promotion of Ecodesign from 2004-2006). This framework established a means for organising a pre-procurement dialogue process with potential suppliers in the region to prepare the groundwork for tendering processes.

The region’s current programme - GPP Programme of the Basque Country 2020 (GPP 2020) - was launched in September 2016 (covering the period 2016-2020) following a participatory process involving all levels of the Basque public sector. It has three over-arching goals:

i) Contribute to achieving a more efficient administration, by making more efficient use of resources;
ii) Optimise coordination with the market, ensuring that GPP incorporates eco-innovation and fosters the better positioning of Basque companies; and
iii) Ensure that the Basque Country is recognised as a benchmark in Southern Europe, by mobilising all the stakeholders involved.

The GPP 2020 Programme is financed through the Basque Government’s own funding sources.

This process has been strongly supported by the public Environmental Management Company belonging to the Ministry for the Environment and Territorial Policy - Ihobe. Ihobe has been an active leader in GPP in the region and in wider European networks since 2004. Ihobe provides ongoing support to local authorities in the region, provincial councils and the Basque Government for greening public tendering procedures, and includes green criteria in 100% of its own public tenders (worth more than €8 million). In 2008, a first Manual on GPP was developed. The most recent version of the Manual available was published in January 2014 – it contains guidance, good practice and GPP criteria for numerous products and services. The GPP Criteria were inspired by the EU’s GPP Criteria and also taking into account market availability in the region, and specific priorities in the region.
Objectives of the approach

The GPP 2020 Programme aims to mobilise the Basque public sector, as a whole, to establish GPP as standard practice, and introduce a life cycle approach into the procurement process. It sets two voluntary objectives to achieve this:

1) To progress towards the institutionalisation of GPP in the various participating public administrations. The degree of institutionalisation will be measured via the following:

- Leadership: Appointment of a manager tasked with leading and coordinating the GPP actions in the administration
- Planning: Defining an annual work plan in the priority groups of the Programme (see point 2, below) and in at least one other sphere of interest (chosen by the entity) for each administration
- Integration: Analysing and integrating GPP into procurement procedures and tools existing in the administration
- Training: Increasing the number of contracting staff trained in GPP
- Measurement: Monitoring the degree of ‘greening’ of procurement

2) To achieve a degree of greening in public procurement of 50% by 2020, in line with the general target set across the EU. Objectives regarding actual results achieved are measured by the inclusion of GPP criteria in 50% of tenders (calculated by number of contracts as well as by financial value) for more than 20 priority groups. Priority groups are split between:

- By 2018: Paper, computers, imaging equipment, cleaning services, vehicles, publications, food and catering, gardening services, street cleaning, civil works, and infrastructure.
- By 2020: Buildings, urban development, waste collection, electricity supply, public transport, courier services, office furniture, textiles, travel services and events.

The 50% target is a minimum target, and authorities are encouraged to display leadership and set targets higher. In addition, each authority is required to set individual targets for at least one other group which has not been prioritised but which is of special interest to that authority.

Development of approach

The Programme encourages the participation of all Basque authorities, including the Basque Government, the provincial councils and local authorities. In total, 64 departments, entities and authorities from all levels of the Basque Government administration were involved in developing the GPP 2020 Programme through reflection and brainstorming meetings. These entailed four meetings (held during 2014) each bringing together different stakeholders: i) Ihobe, ii) Departments and public companies of the Basque government, iii) Regional government representatives and the three local government capitals, iv) Representatives of the other local governments in the Basque Country.

As a result of these meetings, the following priorities were identified and included in the GPP 2020 Programme:

- Expanding the GPP Programme to include all public entities operating in the Basque Country (not only the regional government) in order to mobilise stakeholders and consolidate GPP
- Setting process (such as setting up an annual plan, allocating GPP responsibilities to staff, etc) and outcome targets
- Establishing the Manual for GPP (from 2014) as the technical benchmark to use for sending a clear signal to the market
- Arranging opportunities for collaboration and sharing best practice
- Providing training, advisory services and market coordination measures
- Including highly effective multiplier actions, such as centralised purchasing, and setting up pilots to test out new approaches, such as circular procurement, application of life cycle costing and/or eco-innovative procurement
- Optimising monitoring systems to ensure greater efficiencies, by integrating them into already existing platforms and tools
Governance of approach

The Basque Government’s approach to GPP is led by a so-called ‘Driver Group’, which meets annually and is tasked with coordinating the deployment of the GPP 2020 Programme. The Group was set up in 2016 and will begin work in September 2017 (due to the recent changes in the Basque Government following the last elections at the end of 2016).

The Driver Group includes representatives of the Basque Government’s Ministries of Environment and Territorial Policy, Treasury and Finances, Employment and Social Policies, Home Office, Education, Language Policy and Culture, and Health, as well as representatives of public entities including Osakidetza (Basque Health Service), VISESA (Public Society for Housing), EITB (Basque Public Broadcasting), and Eusko Trenbideak (Basque Rail Network). Each member of the Group is also expected to ‘lead by example’ in their own implementation of GPP.

The Driver Group is supported by a ‘Technical Secretariat’, formed by Ihobe. Its duties are to assist in implementation at a practical level, and carry out management and administration tasks related to the coordination of the Driver Group.

‘Participating Organisations’ – that is, public authorities who have committed to implementing the GPP 2020 Programme - are required to sign a ‘Commitment Form’ formalising their commitment to:

- Establish an annual work plan in the Programme’s areas of priority, and in at least one other area of interest to the organisation;
- Analyse and integrate GPP in the procedures and tools existing in their administration;
- Carry out staff training and share best practice with other authorities; and
- Report on the results (monitoring) on an annual basis and send these to the Technical Secretariat.

Communication between the participating organisations is coordinated through peer-to-peer groups that will meet once or twice a year. These groups will be formed around themes, or according to the type of organisation, and will involve technical staff.

Implementation

The GPP 2020 Programme has been organised in five strategic areas.

1) **Content and tools for implementation** - aims to provide the necessary basic resources to introduce environmental aspects into procurement processes, including carrying out relevant needs assessments, updating and expanding existing GPP criteria, providing customised support services, and running pilot schemes to trial new approaches (such as eco-innovation, life cycle costing and circular procurement).

2) **Integration into procurement processes, procedures and tools** - aims to identify and establish mechanisms that enable the mainstreaming and effective integration of environmental aspects/requirements into existing procurement tools, and analyse the opportunities possible for rolling these out through centralised purchasing (or central purchasing organisations), framework agreements and purchasing groups.

3) **Awareness raising and capacity building** - aims to train managers across the administration about the benefits and how-to of environmentally responsible procurement. This will entail awareness raising activities across the administration, the provision of at least two courses per year focusing on specific topics, and the provision of self-learning modules on GPP within the suite of training already offered by the Basque Public Administration Institute (IVAP).

4) **Coordination with the market** - aims to mobilise the private sector and actively involve it in public procurement processes, and increase its capacity to meet the needs of the public sector. This will be done through discussion forums involving manufacturers and suppliers in the process of preparing technical criteria; establishing dialogue platforms where suppliers and purchasers can exchange ideas and raise issues; providing training that supports industry involvement in innovative purchasing processes; and developing training courses for suppliers where they can be trained on how to include ‘green’ product characteristics into their offers.
5) **Communication, dissemination and networking** - aims to harvest synergies and position the Basque authorities as a reference point in Southern Europe for sustainable procurement. This will be achieved through regular dissemination and promotional activities, publishing results annually, and actively participating in other networking activities, working parties and projects in the European and international arenas.

**Keeping track of progress**
For each of the areas mentioned above, a number of specific measures have been defined to help keep track of progress. Factsheets have been developed for each measure and include the following information:

- Aim and description of the activity
- Details about the responsible entity
- Stakeholder involvement
- Inter-relationship to other measures in the GPP 2020 Programme
- Contribution to the objectives of the Environmental Framework Programme of the Basque Country 2020
- Stage of implementation (e.g. not started, underway, or finished) and time schedule

**Monitoring of approach**
The GPP 2020 Programme includes a monitoring and result measurement system, which will track the degree to which each objective is established/implemented. The Programme is being assessed annually against two measures:

1) **Degree of achievement of the objectives for the participating administrations established in the Programme.** This is carried out by each participating administration and collected by the Technical Secretariat, who then produces an Annual Report, including an estimation of the environmental savings achieved (where possible). The results inform the implementation plan for the year ahead.

2) **Degree of implementation of the measures set out for each strategic line of action.** This is carried out by the Technical Secretariat at the end of each financial year, and the results will be set out in a report to inform the Driver Group and the plan of action for the year ahead.

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