

# Green Public Procurement at the University of Malta

State of the Art and Perception

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# Background

## Green Public Procurement

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured (EC, 2008). Thus, by integrating environmental criteria into all stages of their procurement process, GPP encourages the spread of environmental technologies and the development of environmentally sound products.

GPP is seen as an integral part of the new EU Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industry Policy. Public authorities are major consumers in Europe: they spend approximately 17% of the EU's gross domestic product. By using their purchasing power to choose goods and services with lower impacts on the environment, they can make an important contribution to sustainable consumption and production (OPM, 2011a).



Figure 1. Logo of GPP used by the EU

## GPP in Malta

Implementation of GPP has been identified amongst the priority actions of the **National Environment Policy** of Malta, published in February 2012. Whereby, the level of GPP in terms of value and number of tenders is projected to reach 50% of public procurement by 2015 (Ministry for Tourism, the Environment and Culture, 2012).

This contrasts with the current level of GPP uptake in the country. Several studies have revealed a very low level of GPP uptake in the 2007-2009 period. It was found that whilst many tenders have indeed contained environmental consideration, none of the tenders were actually found to be fully compliant with GPP common criteria<sup>1</sup>. This is largely due to lack of information on EU GPP common criteria at the level of purchasing officers, lack of practical guidance on GPP, lack of specific and measurable GPP targets owned by all government ministries, and lack of appropriate structures to oversee GPP implementation (OPM, 2011a).

In order to promote the application of GPP in Malta, by promoting good purchasing practices, reducing their environmental impacts, and maximising on economic opportunities; the government has adopted a GPP **National Action Plan (NAP)**. The Plan establishes GPP targets for 18 product and service groups and proposes a series of measures for their attainment. Thus, the three-year NAP, published in August 2011, aims to kick-start the GPP process in Malta, in line with the EU efforts of greening public procurement. In order to avoid market distortions and other possible

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<sup>1</sup> The European Commission has developed a set of EU common criteria for a set of product and service groups, which may be included in tender documents as part of technical specifications or terms of reference for the provision of the required supplies, works or services. These criteria address the most significant environmental impacts, and are designed to be used with minimum additional verification effort or cost increases.

adverse effects on the local supply market, the adoption of an incremental approach is one of the main thrusts of the Action Plan.

One of the NAP objectives is to integrate the environmental dimension within the national public procurement process. A measure to attain this objective is a GPP circular (Contracts Circular No. 5021/2011 on GPP) for procurers that has recently been disseminated amongst all contracting authorities, including the University of Malta (OPM, 2011b). The circular, issued by the Department of Contracts of the Office of the Prime Minister, instructs contracting authorities to integrate GPP criteria by following the National Guidelines established in the NAP. This makes the consideration of GPP in all tenders mandatory for several product and service groups from January 2012. In addition, in order to ensure the achievement of GPP objectives, all tenders will be pre-screened for compliance with GPP prior to publication.

## The University of Malta

The University of Malta is the highest teaching institution in Malta. It is publicly funded and is open to all those who have the requisite qualifications. Conscious of its public role, the University strives to create courses which are relevant and timely in response to the needs of the country.

There are some 11,000 students including over 650 international students from 77 different countries, following full-time or part-time degree and diploma courses.

The University is geared towards the infrastructural and industrial needs of the country so as to provide expertise in crucial fields. The degree courses at the University are designed to produce highly qualified professionals, with experience of research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general. There are a further 2,800 pre-tertiary students at the Junior College which is also managed by the University.

Today the University has fourteen Faculties, a number of Institutes and Centres and a School of Performing Arts. The area within the University ring road measures approximately 115,000 square metres. The other areas outside the ring road measure approximately 80,000 square metres, giving a grand total area of 195,000 square metres.

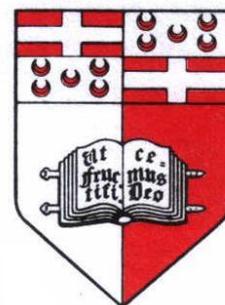


Figure 2. Logo of the University of Malta

# State of the Art and Perception of GPP at the University

This section presents the findings from the surveys carried out on the staff from the Procurement Directorate of the University of Malta in September 2012. More details on the surveys can be found in the next section ('Methodologies employed').

## Procurement at the University of Malta

All University procurement is done centrally through the Procurement Directorate. The process in place is that all Faculties and Departments forward their purchasing requests to the Procurement Directorate and all purchases are done according to the Procurement Regulations set by the Directorate.

Thus, the Procurement Directorate scrutinises overall expenditure of goods and/or services by the University of Malta and provides support to the administrative staff responsible for procurement in each Faculty, Institute and Centre. This situation results in a quite centralized procurement system, which favours the implementation of a GPP Strategy at the University of Malta.

The Directorate is Headed by a Director and comprises four Departments:

1. The *Procurement Department* which caters for all Tender Business and which has two sections, one section issues tenders that are financed through University funds and another section that issues tenders that are financed through European Regional Development Funds.

2. The *Purchasing Department* that does all the purchases that fall beneath the tender threshold and processes all purchase orders beyond the tender process.

3. The *Receiving and Asset Management Department* that takes care of all receipts of deliveries and upkeep of the Asset Ledger.

4. The *Travel Office and On-line Purchases* that caters for all travel bookings and on-line purchases of for example books

Suppliers need to be registered before providing products/services to the University, and from then on they are included in a database on suppliers for the whole University.

According to procurement costs, the main products/services that the University of Malta consumes are: construction, security, cleaning, furniture and IT equipment. According to the amount consumed, paper, research kits and ironmongery items are of relevance.

Regarding the Procurement Regulations, since the University is a Government entity, it has to abide with the General Procurement Regulations as set by the Department of Contracts of the Government of Malta, based on the guidelines of the EU which are common with all member states (see Circular No. 5021/2011 for more details). Thus, the Department of Contracts has the capacity to vet all tender documents and makes sure that the publication of tenders conforms with GPP regulations. Therefore, the Procurement Directorate of the University is required to incorporate green purchasing targets in their procurement and to complete a GPP checklist prior to tender publication.

## General knowledge

### Familiarity with the concept of GPP

The level of familiarity with the concept of GPP is quite high: 75% of the Procurement Directorate staff is familiar with it (figure 3).

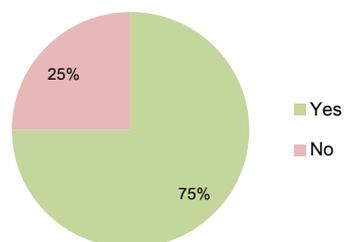


Figure 3. Familiarity with the concept of GPP

### Awareness of information sources

About 60% of the staff are aware of the Maltese Government National Action Plan (NAP) and also the European Commission programme as sources of information on GPP. However, only 25% are aware of ecolabelling schemes (figure 4).

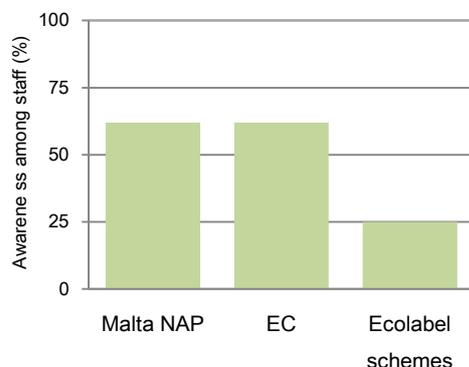


Figure 4. Awareness of information sources

### Training and information

Training on green public procurement is not made available for the staff at the Procurement Directorate neither regular information is provided.

### Cooperation with environmental experts

At the moment no defined mechanisms or structures are in place to organise cooperation between purchases and environmental experts.

## Current criteria for procurement

### Main criteria used in the procurement process

The most important criteria for procurement are price, followed by the quality of the product/service and thirdly the reliability on the service. Only 25% of the respondents affirm that environmental features are considered a criterion (figure 5).

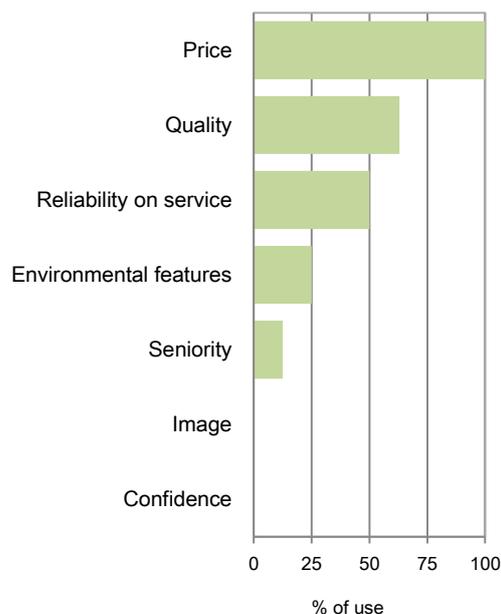


Figure 5. Main criteria used in procurement

### Inclusion of environmental criteria into calls for tender

Approximately 60% of the staff (including those people with higher responsibilities in the Directorate) affirm that some sort of environmental criteria are included into the University's calls for tender, although in less than 50% of the calls for tender. However, this contrasts with the remaining staff which considers that environmental criteria are not included.

## Incentives to undertake GPP

### Major incentives

The major incentives to undertake (more) GPP at the University of Malta are (figure 6), according to the staff's perception:

- It improves the **image** of the University
- It fosters a change towards **more sustainable habits** along the whole University community<sup>2</sup>
- It is an effective way to demonstrate a public authority's **commitment to environmental protection** and sustainable consumption and production<sup>3</sup>.
- It is mechanism for giving **incentives for industry** to develop 'green' technologies<sup>4</sup>
- It helps establish high **environmental performance standards** for products and services<sup>5</sup>.

In all these cases, nobody from the staff disagreed with the statements.

### Minor incentives

Other incentives to undertake GPP appear to be:

- It allows public authorities to achieve environmental targets (emission reduction, saving of resources, etc.)
- It contributes to the strategic objectives of public authorities for enhancing quality of life

However, there is more dispersion in opinions and there are fewer consensuses on these aspects.

Finally, two statements do not represent a clear incentive for undertaking GPP:

- It can reduce prices for environmental technologies.
- It saves money and resources when the life-cycle cost of products is considered.

In particular, the last one is quite controversial since quite divergent opinions are obtained. However, this contrasts with a recent EU Commission study (PwC Sustainability, 2009) that highlights that the increase in direct purchasing costs is nearly always compensated for by reductions in operational costs over the product life. By considering the life-cycle cost of products, GPP often leads to savings - for public authorities making the purchases and for society in general. While applying environmental criteria to procurement procedures can sometimes mean higher initial purchasing costs, the overall costs often actually decrease since the higher purchasing prices of green goods and services are compensated for by lower operating, maintenance or disposal costs.

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<sup>2</sup> Green procurement means setting an example for the general public and the private sector, and influencing the marketplace. Establishing a GPP policy, and communicating initiatives and their results, demonstrates that action in this area is possible and that it leads to positive outcomes. GPP can also act as a useful channel for raising environmental awareness by describing environmental impacts of a particular product/service throughout its life cycle and providing information on the benefits of green procurement.

<sup>3</sup> A clear majority of the EU's citizens perceive the protection of the environment as one of the Union's key priorities. A visible focus on 'greening' the purchase of products and services will therefore likely result in a positive perception of the University.

<sup>4</sup> Promoting green procurement gives important incentives for industry to develop 'green' technologies and products and promote them in the market place. In particular, small- and medium-sized companies may profit from environmental procurement, as it offers an opportunity to find markets for their innovative solutions and products.

<sup>5</sup> Products and services purchased in line with GPP principles have the potential to meet higher quality standards and deliver better performance for public authorities and ultimately citizens. New products and services which have been developed to meet the requirements of GPP may also become popular with private consumers.

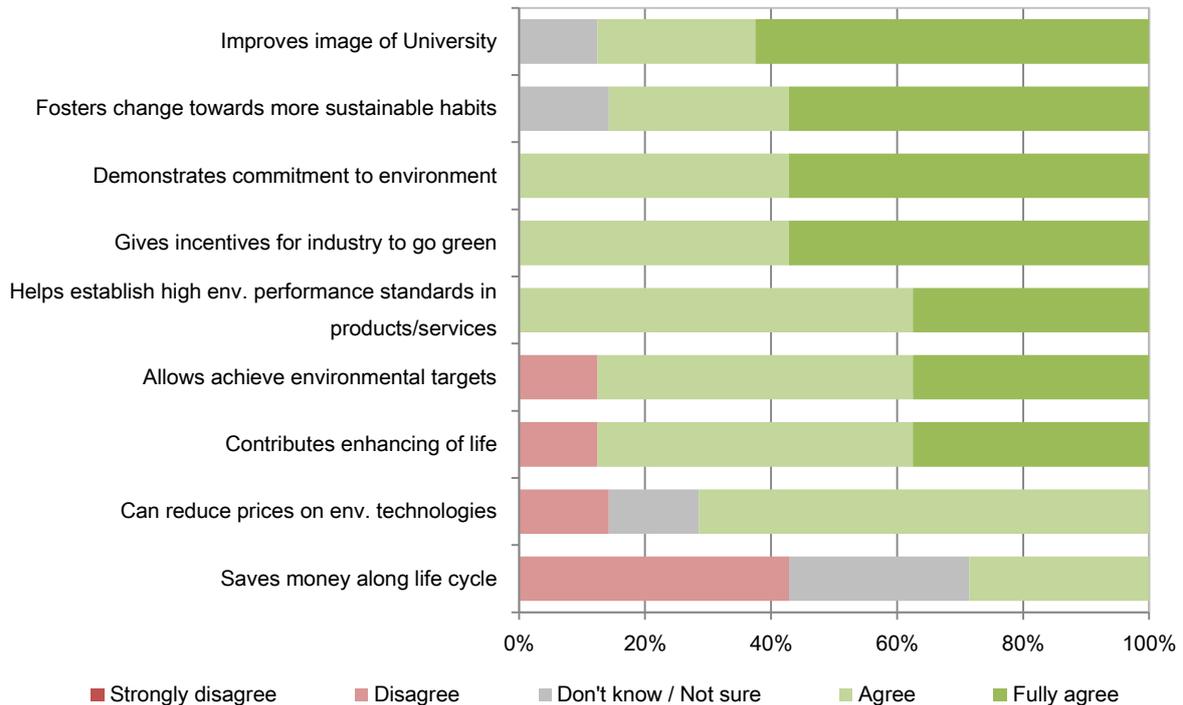


Figure 6. Assessment of incentives to undertake GPP at the University (Staff perception)

## Barriers to undertake GPP

### Major barriers

There are three major barriers to undertake (more) GPP at the University of Malta, according to the staff's perception (figure 7), which no one person in the staff disagrees:

- Lack of **training**<sup>6</sup> (\*)
- Lack of **practical tools** (\*)
- **Unavailability** of green products and services in the market<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Staff responsible for carrying out specific tasks do not always have the skills, or are not provided with the appropriate training. Training is generally required for procurers on the legal and technical aspects of GPP implementation, on the concept of life-cycle costing and for end-users on the sustainable use of products.

<sup>7</sup> The consideration of the local market is essential in order to implement GPP. A supplier analysis carried out in preparation of the NAP indicates that service providers and importers are the main suppliers delivering public goods/services. In contrast, local manufacturers represent a minor contribution, suggesting that they will have to borne the greatest impact in adapting to GPP expectations (OPM, 2011a).

Besides these, other identified obstacles are:

- Lack of knowledge about the environment and how to develop environmental criteria (\*)
- Green products are perceived to cost more (lack of money)<sup>8</sup> (\*)
- Lack of cooperation between authorities or departments
- Concerns about legality of environmental procurement
- Lack of long-term vision (life-cycle cost of products)
- Limited established environmental criteria for product and services

<sup>8</sup> As mentioned previously, several studies empirically contradict this perceived barrier. A study carried out in 2008 revealed that in general GPP does not increase costs but can actually help the purchasing organisation to cut costs (PwC Sustainability, 2009). Using a Life-Cycle Costing approach to calculate the financial impact of GPP, the average financial impact of GPP within the seven best performing Member States was -1% (on average for 10 priority products groups/services) in 2006/2007.

Some of these obstacles -the ones with an asterisk (\*)- coincide with some of the key barriers to the introduction of GPP in Malta, identified in the National Action Plan (OPM, 2011a), and with one of the most comprehensive reports on GPP throughout Europe (Bower M et al., 2009), namely:

- Lack of environmental information, knowledge and training (including lack of technical capacity at the level of public procurers and poor awareness of the benefits of GPP)
- Higher costs attributed to green products

Therefore, it is suggested that efforts will need to be addressed in this direction.

#### Minor barriers

There are other aspects for which there is high dispersion in the answers, combining attitudes

agreeing and disagreeing on them as barriers. These are the following:

- Extreme decentralization of the procurement system
- Saturation of work for the personal responsible of procurement
- Procurement habits (fear of innovation or inertia in the existing process)
- Lack of interest

Finally, there are a total of three aspects for which the answers are relatively balanced towards not considering them as barriers. These are:

- Lack of political support (governments)
- Distrust on green products or services (bad image, not reliable...)
- Lack of corporate commitment (University)

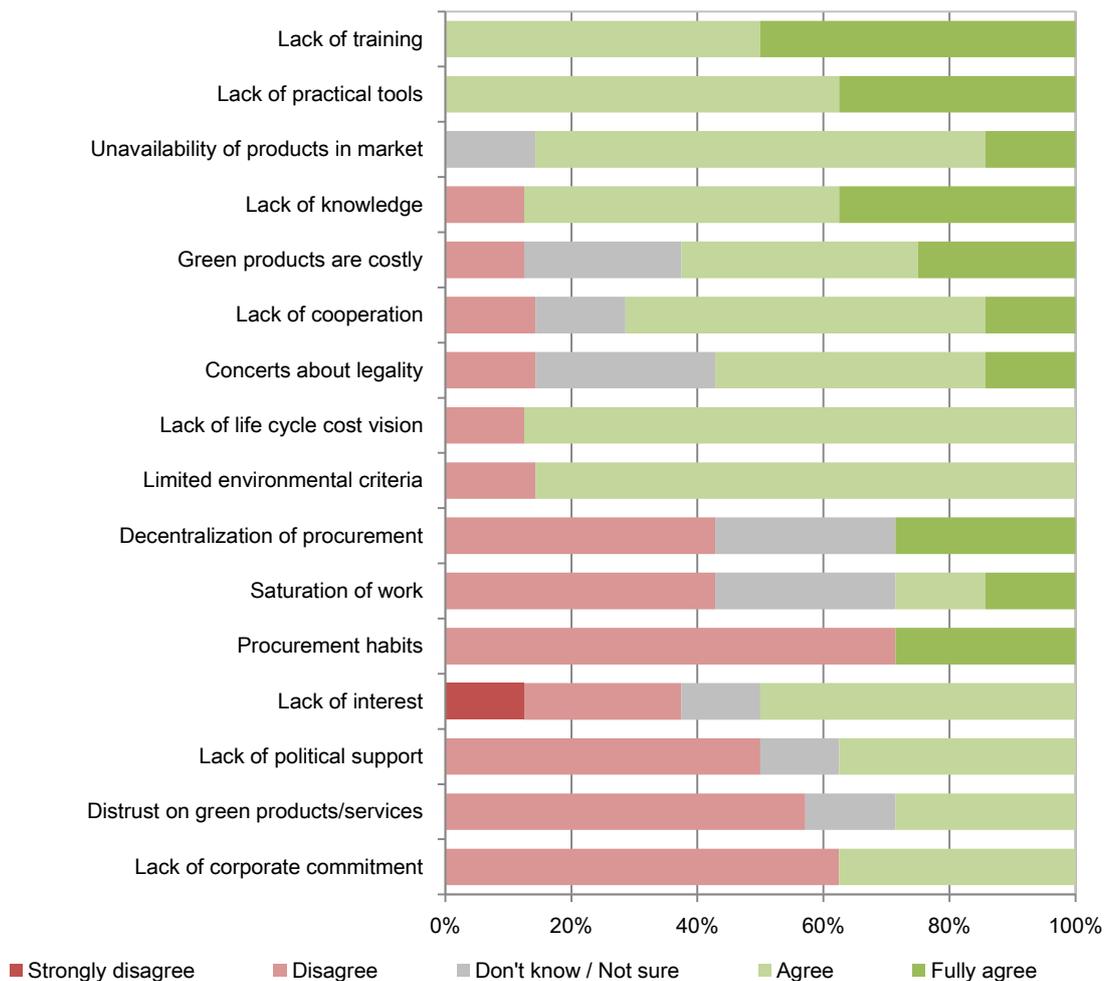


Figure 7. Assessment of barriers to undertake GPP at the University (Staff perception)

## Priorities

### Consideration of environmental aspects

The same people that affirmed that environmental criteria are included into calls of tender agree in the fact that the environmental consequences of the purchase of the following products and services have been in some time considered:

- Paper
- Electricity
- Cleaning

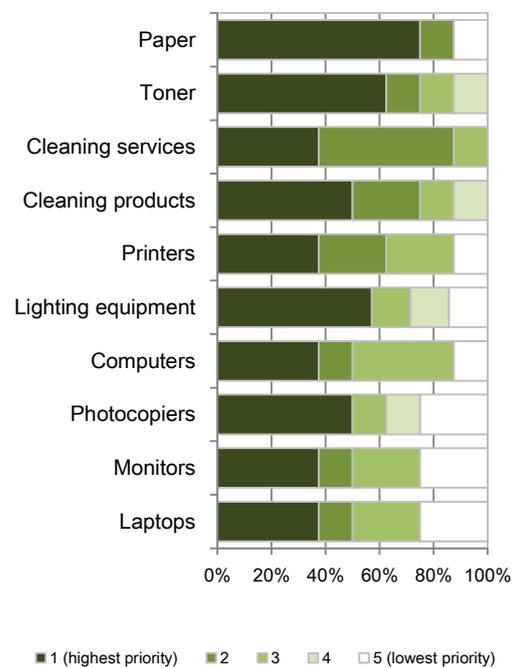
Besides these, some answers indicate that the environmental aspects have also been considered for other product categories, namely :

- Water
- Information and Technology equipment
- Furniture

### Prioritisation

According to the staff's knowledge, Figure 8 presents the priority given to a set of products and services that could potentially be purchased by applying environmental criteria, taking into account the reality of the market and the experience of staff.

Findings show that paper, toner and cleaning products/services would be the highest priorities at the University of Malta



**Figure 8.** *Priorities in procurement at the University*

However, it needs to be taken into account that the final prioritization of products and services to be procured at the University of Malta will need to take into account different factors, namely (EC, 2011):

- Environmental impact
- Budgetary importance
- Potential to influence the market
- Political priorities
- Market availability

# Methodologies employed

## Survey 1. Green Procurement at the University of Malta

This survey aimed to obtain general information about the procurement system at the University of Malta and, particularly, to identify the actors involved in the procurement process. The survey was sent to the Director of the Procurement Directorate.

### General Information

1. Does the University of Malta (UM) have an Environmental Management System in place?

- EMAS  
 ISO 14001  
 Other (please provide name): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Does the UM have an Agenda 21?

- No  
 Yes

### Procurement at the University

3. Which departments are directly involved in the procurement? How many procurement points (people, individuals) are involved in the procurement? (please, make a list and provide a way of contact)

\_\_\_\_\_

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate how centralised the procurement structures in your organisation is (with 10 being completely centralised and 0 completely decentralised).

Indicate

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Where are the suppliers of the products and services from?

Please indicate the main supplying countries and an approximate % if possible.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do suppliers need to be registered before providing their products/services?

- No  
 Yes

7. Is there a database on suppliers for the whole University?

- No  
 Yes

8. What are the main criteria currently used in the procurement process? Please feel free to tick more than one and to specify your own.

- Price  
 Quality  
 Image  
 Environmental features  
 Confidence  
 Reliability on service  
 Seniority (time that the supplier has been providing its product/service)  
 Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

9. What are the main products/services that the University of Malta consumes... (please, make a list of the most relevant ones)

...according to the procurement cost? (i.e. vehicles, ...)

\_\_\_\_\_

...according to the amount consumed? (i.e. paper, ...)

\_\_\_\_\_

...having into account the visualization to the University community? (i.e. banners in the Campus, ...)

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What was the total expenditure in goods and services accounted for as current expenses (intermediate consumption) and as investments (gross fixed capital formation) in the year 2011?

Current expenses: \_\_\_\_\_

Investments: \_\_\_\_\_

Sum: \_\_\_\_\_

What was your organisation's total expenditure in the year 2011?

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

## Survey 2. Green Procurement at the University of Malta

This survey aimed to assess the state of the art of the procurement system at the University of Malta and, particularly, to assess the perception of the actors involved in the procurement process. The survey was sent to all staff within the Procurement Directorate, and 8 answers were obtained (including the Director's one).

### General Information

#### Name and e-mail

##### 1. About your current position.

Area or department within the Procurement Directorate

- Procurement Department
- Purchasing Department
- Receiving and Asset Management Department
- Travel Office and On-line Purchases
- Other (please provide name) \_\_\_\_\_

##### 2. About the organisation you work for, which of the following statements best describes your responsibility in relation to procurement?

If possible, check only the one that best describes your situation.

- Purchases depend on your personal technical reports
- Purchases depend on reports in which you participate
- You receive instructions and implement them
- You participate in the development of the conditions of the tenders or supervise the procurement process in one of its phases
- You approve the purchasing process
- You participate actively in defining your organisation's procurement policies
- You have a degree of involvement in the definition of procurement policies

### General knowledge

##### 3. Are you familiar with the following concepts?

- Sustainable development
- Green purchasing
- Recycled/reusable
- Eco-efficient product / sustainable product
- Green procurement
- Efficient procurement
- Environment procurement
- Clean procurement
- Sustainable procurement
- Responsible procurement

##### 4. Are you aware of the following information sources on green public procurement?

Please feel free to tick more than one

- National Government Plan
- Local government association
- The European Commission
- The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)
- Industry Eco-label organisation
- Commercial consultancy firm (please provide name) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please provide name): \_\_\_\_\_

##### 5. Is training on green public procurement made available for purchasers in your organisation?

- Yes
- No

##### 6. Do you receive regular information on green procurement?

- Regularly
- Irregularly
- Once or very rarely
- Not at all

### Current criteria for procurement

##### 7. What are the main criteria currently used in the procurement process? Please feel free to tick more than one and to specify your own.

- Price
- Quality
- Image
- Environmental features
- Confidence
- Reliability on service
- Seniority (time that the supplier has been providing its product/service)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Is there a defined mechanism or structure that serves to organise co-operation between purchasers and environmental experts?**

- Yes  
 No

**If yes, please specify which of the following exists within your organisation:**

- Regular working group meetings between purchasers and environmental experts  
 Advice from environmental unit or external environmental consultants is sought on a regular basis by procurement unit  
 A work plan exists, whereby calls for tender are worked on both by the environmental and purchasing departments  
 Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**9. When purchasing, does your organisation include environmental criteria into its calls for tender? Please tick.**

- Yes  
 No

**If yes, please estimate the percentage of calls for tender which contain environmental criteria.**

- Less than 5%  
 5-50%  
 More than 50%

**If yes, please specify, out of the environmental management systems provided below, which of these is used as a criterion in procurement, if any.**

- EMAS  
 ISO 14001  
 Other (please provide name): \_\_\_\_\_

#### Incentives to undertake GPP

**10. Which of the following options might help to start or develop green procurement activities in your organisation?** Please feel free to tick more than one and to specify your own.

- Access to written information (e.g. manual, procurement guidelines)  
 An exchange of current green procurement practices with pioneer cities  
 Training workshops  
 Advice from an external consultant  
 Access to an online database of environmental criteria  
 A public campaign fostering Green procurement  
 Other (please, specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**11. What do you see as the major incentives to your organisation undertaking (more) green procurement?** Please cross on the 4 point scale hereunder the box that corresponds best with your opinion.

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Fully agree
It allows public authorities to achieve environmental targets (emission reduction, saving of resources, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It contributes to the strategic objectives of public authorities for enhancing quality of life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It helps establish high environmental performance standards for products and services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is a mechanism for giving incentives for industry to develop 'green' technologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It can reduce prices for environmental technologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It saves money and resources when the life-cycle cost of products is considered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is an effective way to demonstrate a public authority's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable consumption and production	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It improves the image of the university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It fosters a change towards more sustainable habits along the whole university community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Obstacles to undertake GPP

**12. What do you see as the obstacles to your organisation undertaking (more) green procurement?**

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Fully agree
Lack of interest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of knowledge about the environment and how to develop environmental criteria	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of practical tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of money / Green products are perceived to cost more	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of long term vision (life-cycle cost of products)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns about legality of environmental procurement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of political support (governments)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of corporate commitment (UM)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of co-operation between authorities or departments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited established environmental criteria for products/services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unavailability of green products and services in the market	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distrust on green products or services (bad image, not reliable, etc...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Purchasing habits. Fear of innovation or inertia in the existing process.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extreme decentralization of the procurement system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Saturation of work for the personal responsible of procurement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Priorities

**13. For purchases and/or consumption by your institution, have the environmental consequences of any of the following products or service ever been considered?**

- Paper
- Electricity
- Cleaning
- Water
- IT
- Furniture
- Other (please, specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**14. According to your knowledge, prioritise from 1 to 5 (where 1 = high priority, and 5 = low priority) the following products that could potentially be purchased by your organisation by applying environmental criteria, taking into account the reality of the market and your experience).**

	1	2	3	4	5
Lighting equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Toner	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Paper	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Photocopiers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Printers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cleaning services	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cleaning products	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Computers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Monitors	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Laptops	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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