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Interreg
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Partner Event

CE-PRINCE

Common Circular criteria, a means to shift market demand toward sustainable solutions – introducing the Circular Criteria Sets of CE-PRINCE

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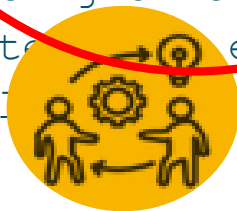
Investing in nature via Circular
Green Public Procurement



Practical activities

Public sector

- Analysis of current circular principle in existing GPP criteria
- Development of upgraded criteria in the key sectors of the project
- Testing of the new criteria on existing public works



Private sector

- Selection of a sample of companies
- Individual assessment of circularity level of each enterprises
- Development of specific-solutions to improve circularity



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1. Analysis of circular principles in existing criteria

Analysis and comparison of

- EU voluntary GPP criteria for selected categories of product/services
- National GPP criteria for categories of product/services (equivalent to those selected for EU)
- Their alignment with circular economy principles

Methodology

- Analysis through a shared excel-based analytical framework
- Criteria evaluated according to **19 circular economy principles**, derived from:
 - ISO 59004 . International standard defining key topics, principles and implementation guidelines of Circular economy
 - EU Circular Economy Action Plan
 - EU GPP Framework

The objective of the analysis was to identify:

- which principles are most frequently integrated,
- which remain underrepresented,
- and where the greatest circularity gaps exist across sectors and countries.

Circular principles included in the assessment

Design for circularity

Circular sourcing

Circular procurement

Process optimisation

Industrial, regional or urban symbiosis

Reduce, reuse and repurpose

Resource recovery

Life-cycle thinking

Product life extension

Durability

Repairability

Recyclability

Modular design

Waste prevention

Sustainable use of resources

Renewable materials and energy

Reduction of hazardous substances

Shared use and service-based models

Transparency and traceability of materials

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1. Analysis of circular principles in existing criteria

Main findings of the analysis

Strongest circular integration observed in:

- construction sector
- technical specifications
- energy and material efficiency criteria

Most frequent principles:

- Actions to regenerate ecosystems
- Design for circularity
- EU Ecolabel and certification schemes
- Process optimization

Least represented principles:

- Remanufacturing,
- Sharing models,
- Reverse logistics,
- Limited performance-based procurement

Construction, the most mature sector:

- LCA
- Recycled materials
- Energy efficiency
- Durability criteria

Agrifood, focus on:

- Local sourcing
- Organic products
- Food waste reduction

Manufacturing, more emphasis on:

- Eco-design
- Recycled content
- Supplier management

Tourism, still less structured:

- Eco-labels dominate
- Fewer measurable circular criteria

Main challenges identified:

- Different maturity levels among countries
- Fragmented national GPP systems
- Limited use of measurable circular indicators
- Lack of harmonised approaches
- Circular principles often remain indirect or implicit

Overall:

strong focus on environmental aspects, but weaker focus on systemic circularity

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2. Upgrade of circular criteria and guidelines for implementation

The development of upgraded criteria followed this approach:

- Given the differences among GPP legislation in PP countries and the delicate procurement issue, we set up a coherent and accessible method for upgrading existing criteria **transnationally** for all partners.
- The analysis of existing circular criteria provided the foundation for developing the upgraded ones.
- Upgraded criteria are referred to as the indications to progressively integrate circular principles within each GPP legislation and depending on the national baseline. Indications are based on **circular thematic clusters** and **priority** of circular principles
- **Criteria are “upgraded” compared to the regulations in force in each individual country** and may be inspired by what already exists in other countries (**transnational and cross-border cooperation approach**)
- 3 options to apply upgraded criteria in national legislation:
 - Intensify quantitative thresholds already in force in your country (e.g. % of organic food)
 - “Borrow” and take inspiration from prescriptions effective in other countries
 - Add brand-new prescriptions

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2. Upgrade of circular criteria and guidelines for implementation

Methodology

- An overall table with criteria from all countries in the selected product/service categories was created
- Single prescriptions were grouped into common thematic clusters and similar contents
- A **priority from 5 – 1** was given to each content:
 - The criteria have been assessed according to their **contribution to closing material loops and operationalising the R-strategies hierarchy** (Refuse, Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Refurbish, Remanufacture, Repurpose, Recycle, Recover)
 - This is based on the **Ellen MacArthur Foundation definition of the circular economy** as *a system that is "restorative and regenerative by design, aiming to keep products, components and materials at their highest utility and value at all times, distinguishing between technical and biological cycles"*.
 - **The scale therefore measures the extent to which a criterion acts directly, indirectly or not at all on material cycles**, and has been applied uniformly across the four sectors to ensure cross-sectoral comparability.
 - The guiding principle of the assessment is that **circularity and environmental sustainability do not coincide**: a criterion may be environmentally meritorious (energy efficiency, air quality, biodiversity protection) without being circular.

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2. Upgrade of circular criteria and guidelines for implementation

Score	Meaning	What it covers
5	Direct circular priority	Implements an R-strategy: mandatory recycled/reused content, design for disassembly, design for recycling, take-back systems, waste prevention, on-site reuse, substitution of virgin with secondary materials, organic recovery
4	Strong circular enabler	Durability and service-life extension, structural bio-based substitution, LCA/EPD/LCC frameworks, quality standards for secondary materials, repairability and spare-part availability
3	Adjacent or supporting contribution	Water reuse and recycling, restriction of hazardous substances that hinder end-of-life recycling, Type I ecolabels with embedded circular content, monitoring of waste flows, traceable sourcing of renewable materials
2	Addresses other sustainability dimensions	Criteria addressing environmental sustainability goals other than circular economy (climate mitigation, air quality, energy efficiency, occupational training); meritorious but not directly contributing to material loop closure
1	Outside the circular economy scope	Criteria pursuing legitimate objectives that are not part of the circular economy framework (biodiversity protection, safety compliance, social/ESG, contract enforcement); their relevance lies in other sustainability or governance

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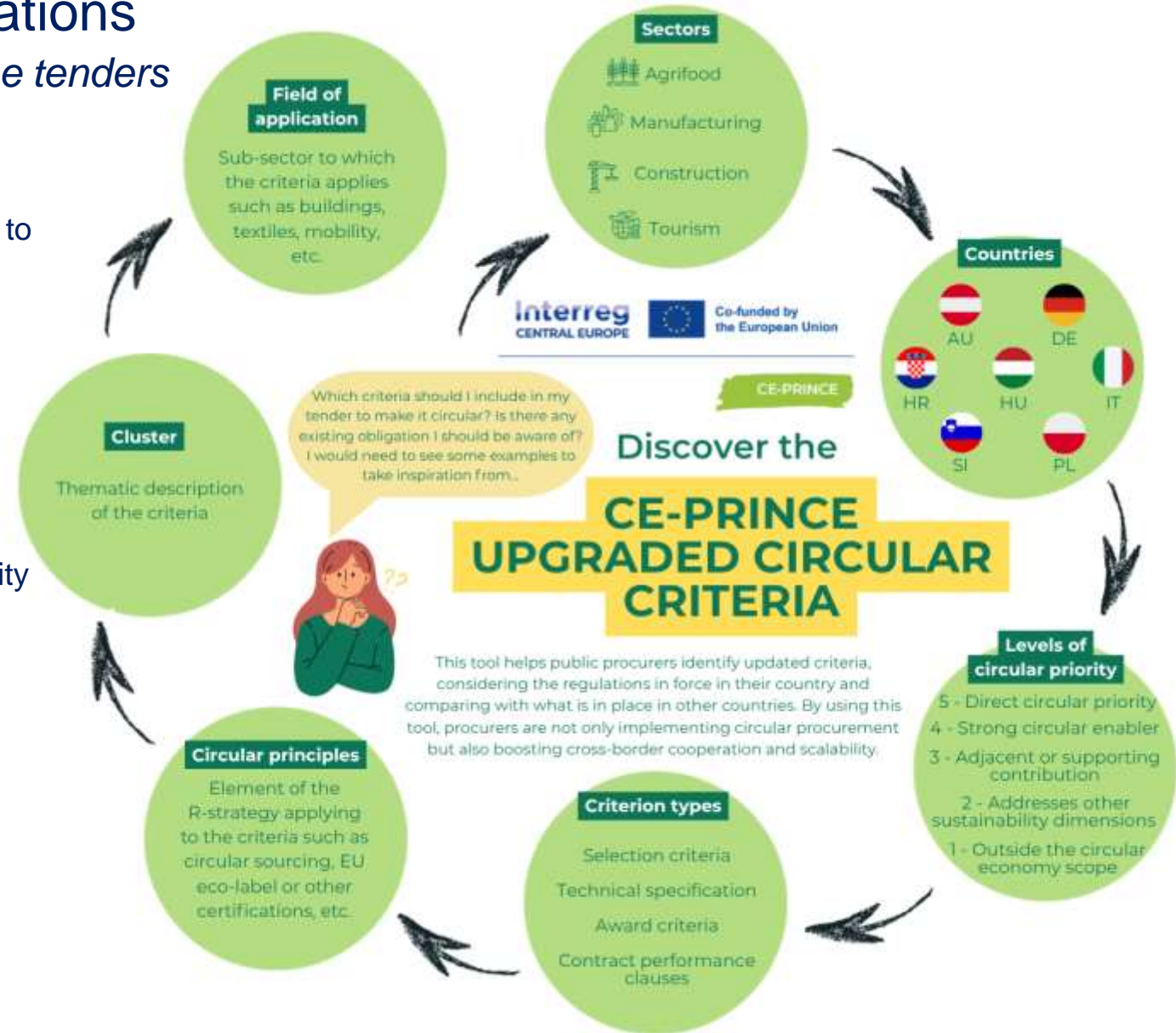
3. Test of upgraded circular criteria in real-case tenders

Upcoming activities:

- Preparation of pilot procurement procedures: PPs will have to identify forthcoming public tenders and select appropriate upgraded criteria to be included as awarding criteria in the tender.
- Upgraded criteria might need to be formally adapted to be included in the real tender document for the procurement
- Inclusion in the publication of the public tender for real procurement procedure
- Training and support for procurers of the contracting authority for inclusion of upgraded criteria

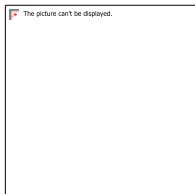
FOCUS MOVING FORWARD

- Implementing upgrade criteria as:
 - practical procurement tools,
 - measurable circular outcomes,
 - and scalable good practices





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



Central Europe Green PRocurement and Innovation Network for Circular Economy
<https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/ce-prince/>



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