

# **TOOL G –Information on specifications, products and consortia.**

## **An introduction to the database**

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## 1. Objectives of this tool



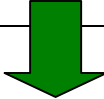
To provide access to information regarding specifications and products for a number of key product groups

## 2. Benefits of this tool

The tool is designed to assist:

- When undertaking research at the start of the procurement;
- Planning and evaluation phases;
- When choosing specifications for products and writing calls for tenders.

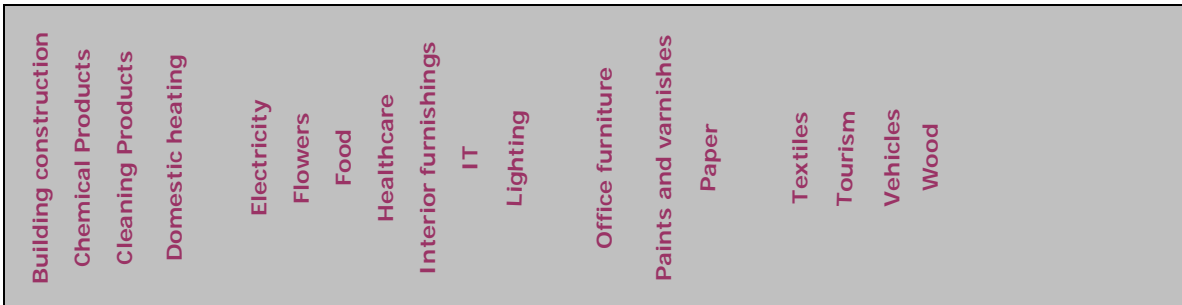
Example of when to use this tool

Action	Question	Tool
Need identified for ..... 	Do we have a policy that states our intentions in this area?	<b>A</b>
	Do we have an EMS that encourages taking into account environmental specifications?	<b>B</b>
	Can we meet this need in any other way?	<b>G</b>
Developing a specification based on current and best practice 	Who else within the organization needs to be involved in developing and researching a new specification?	
	What can the market place provide?	<b>H</b>
	Are there examples of criteria that we can use?	<b>G and E</b>
	Are there any eco-labels we can use?	<b>G</b>
Developing an invitation to tender 	What have other people done?	<b>G</b>

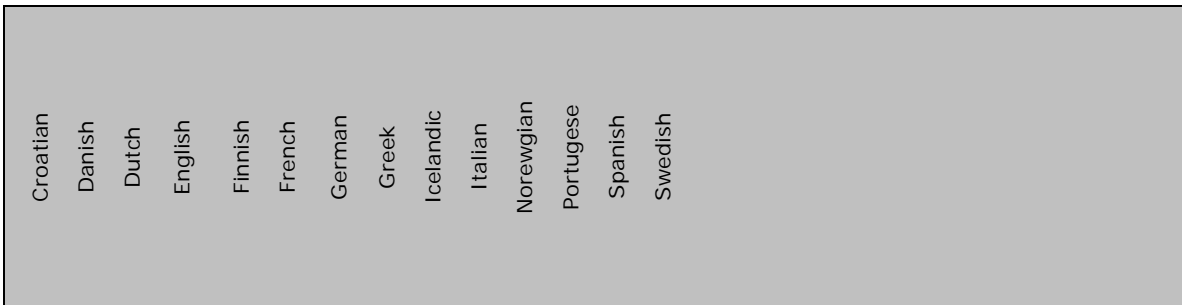
Rest of procurement process.....

### 3. What does this tool do?

The data base is intended to help you draw up specifications. It contains a wide range of websites which offer between them extensive information related to specifications and products. Product related information is identified for the key product groups identified in the LEAP projects with a number of additions. Information is provided for the following groups:



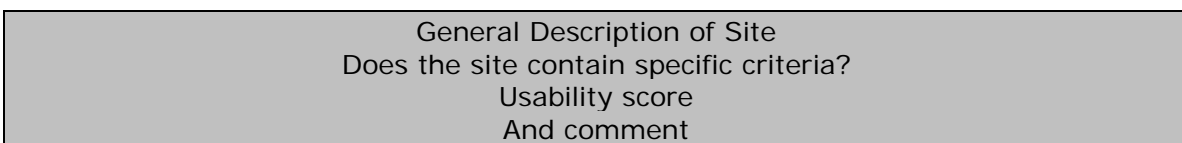
Sites have been identified in the following languages, many of which also provide English summaries of key sections:



The types of sites covered in the database have been produced by the following type of organisations:



The data base gives some indication of the following aspects:



For each site there is a hyperlink which allows the user to go straight to the relevant part of the website. For example:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ecolabel/>

## 4. Quick Actions

Example

### **I need to know specifications for Energy, IT, Construction, Transport Services, Food, Cleaning Agents, Paper.**

Go to Tool E first. There you will find detailed information about specifications for these product groups;

### **I need to know more or need information about other products.**

Go to Tool G database. Chose the product group you are interested in and sort the database as per instructions. The data base contains a number of web-sites some of which almost certainly will deal with the type of product you are looking for. The database indicates in which languages the information is held, gives a general description and indicates whether the site contains detailed specifications.

## 5. Step by step guidance

Question	Go to Tool G, database
I am a specialist in procurement and need to know how to start to use this tool	Explanation, section 3 above
I am an environmental specialist and need to identify the most environmentally significant aspects of this tool	Whichever commodity you are investigating use the sort function to highlight a number of websites that will provide you with a range of background information and example specifications.
How can I best streamline management procedures using this tool?	Inform all staff involved in the procurement and development of specifications of the availability of this tool and ensure that it is included and linked to your procurement policy and procedures.
I have limited resources, how can I make the most effective use of this tool? (Please indicate easy-wins)	<p>1 Look up eco labels first and if applicable specify an eco label or equivalent, or use some of the specific criteria from the relevant eco label</p> <p>2 Look up the sites that have explicit specifications and if relevant use these.</p> <p>3 Ensure that you use this tool with plenty of time to allow you</p>

	to use all the relevant websites to inform yourself of the environmental issues associated with your purchase.
I do not have EMS – how can this tool fit within other management structures?	This tool is designed to be a practical and useful resource for environmental or procurement people. It can be included in the procurement process or as a resource for environmental staff.

## 6. Essential background on the use of the information in this Tool

The LEAP project intends to assist public procurers in finding an easy way into the complex maze of sustainable procurement. The 8 tools deal with most aspects of green procurement and support both procurers and environmental specialists in introducing key management steps needed to make green procurement the rule rather than the exception. Throughout the tools we stress the importance of a management systems approach to ensure that green procurement goes mainstream.

This document primarily provides information regarding specifications and products and contains a wide range of web site references that hold such information.

Whilst there is a wide range of such information available by both public and private sector bodies the information on the selected sites such as the different specifications for eco-labels are not necessarily completely compatible with each other. Neither can they all be used without reservation for specification purposes in the public sector as examples of criteria can be found that do not meet the EU procurement requirements. This issue is dealt with extensively in **Tools E and F**, which set out the requirements that need to be met before eco-label criteria can be used. In the view of the European Commission the only set of eco-labels that can be used without reservation as these criteria do not include extraneous or irrelevant criteria are those relating to the EU Ecolabel. Even here the specifications must offer the opportunity of 'equivalent' and allow other means of proving that the product meets those requirements. Regrettably the EU Ecolabel is not widely subscribed and does not cover a large proportion of products in the market.

This therefore presents a dilemma to procurers until Eco Labels become more standardised and harmonized and reflect a larger segment of the market. The challenge at the moment (in 2006) is therefore for procurers to take advantage of the huge amount of investment that has taken place into creating the range of eco-labels available, to identify the criteria underlying them and perhaps choosing a few relevant ones (according to the principle of focusing on the major environmental impacts of the product you are tendering for) and using these in your specification. It is important to be aware of what the market can offer and to encourage those market segments that are moving towards better environmental performance. You can then always point out to the tenderers that a certain Eco label (or even better a range of them) will be accepted as proof that the product you intend to procure meets the required specifications. Clearly other levels of proof will also need to be accepted.

## **7. Methodology**

Tool G was developed based on internet research and consultation with other LEAP partners. Global to local identified a number of key sites including eco labels, Government sites and other information sites. Each website was reviewed by two members of the Global to Local team before inclusion.

All other LEAP partners were also asked to include any websites they felt should be included in the tool and also fed back comments on a proposed structure.