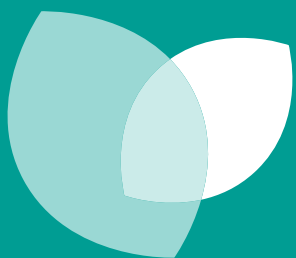


IMPACT REPORT 2022



CO₂-PERFORMANCE LADDER



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SKAO was founded just over 10 years ago to make the CO₂ Performance Ladder a widely applicable instrument for governments and companies. We wanted to use it to make a substantial contribution to CO₂ reduction and limit climate change. Our mission has not changed.

At that time, the CO₂ Performance Ladder and its use really took off and that growth continues. The content of the CO₂ Performance Ladder also continues to develop with the help of our stakeholders' efforts and involvement. We are having an increasingly greater impact with a small team and a large, ever-growing network of national and now international partners and users!

The number of certificate holders continues to rise and increasingly more sectors are participating. The number of central and decentralised government organisations that issue tenders with the ladder is rising. And these authorities are also increasingly successfully certifying themselves, which we wholeheartedly applaud. In the meantime, interest in 'the Ladder' has also spread outside the Netherlands.

The numbers speak for themselves. We would also like to show the story behind the numbers.

Which is why I am proud to present to you the SKAO Impact Report 2022. We, the SKAO team, introduce ourselves in this impact report and tell you about the developments of the past year. We also present figures and stories to show our progress. We are very happy to continue this together with you in the coming year.

Pascal Budding
SKAO Foundation Manager



The CO₂ Performance Ladder: success in the Netherlands, ready for Europe

The CO₂ Performance Ladder is an effective instrument that helps organisations reduce CO₂. This sustainability instrument helps organisations to make their emissions transparent and embed reduction measures. The ‘Ladder’ is both a CO₂ management system and a procurement instrument: with a certificate on the CO₂ Performance Ladder organisations can obtain an award advantage in procurements. More than 5,000 organisations (with 1,400 certificates) in Europe are certified on the CO₂ Performance Ladder and more than 300 commissioning parties use the CO₂ Performance Ladder in their procurements. In the coming years, the CO₂ Performance Ladder will be used increasingly by European contracting authorities in procurements.

The Foundation for Climate Friendly Procurement and Business
The Foundation for Climate Friendly Procurement and Business (in Dutch: **SKAO [Stichting Klimaatvriendelijk Aanbesteden & Ondernemen]**) is the independent owner and manager of the CO₂ Performance Ladder and is responsible for the use and continued development of the certification scheme. We also promote the wider use of the CO₂ Performance Ladder in different sectors and with contracting authorities.

SKAO intends to reduce global warming and climate change as much as possible. We contribute to this goal by stimulating CO₂ reduction with the use of the CO₂ Performance Ladder.

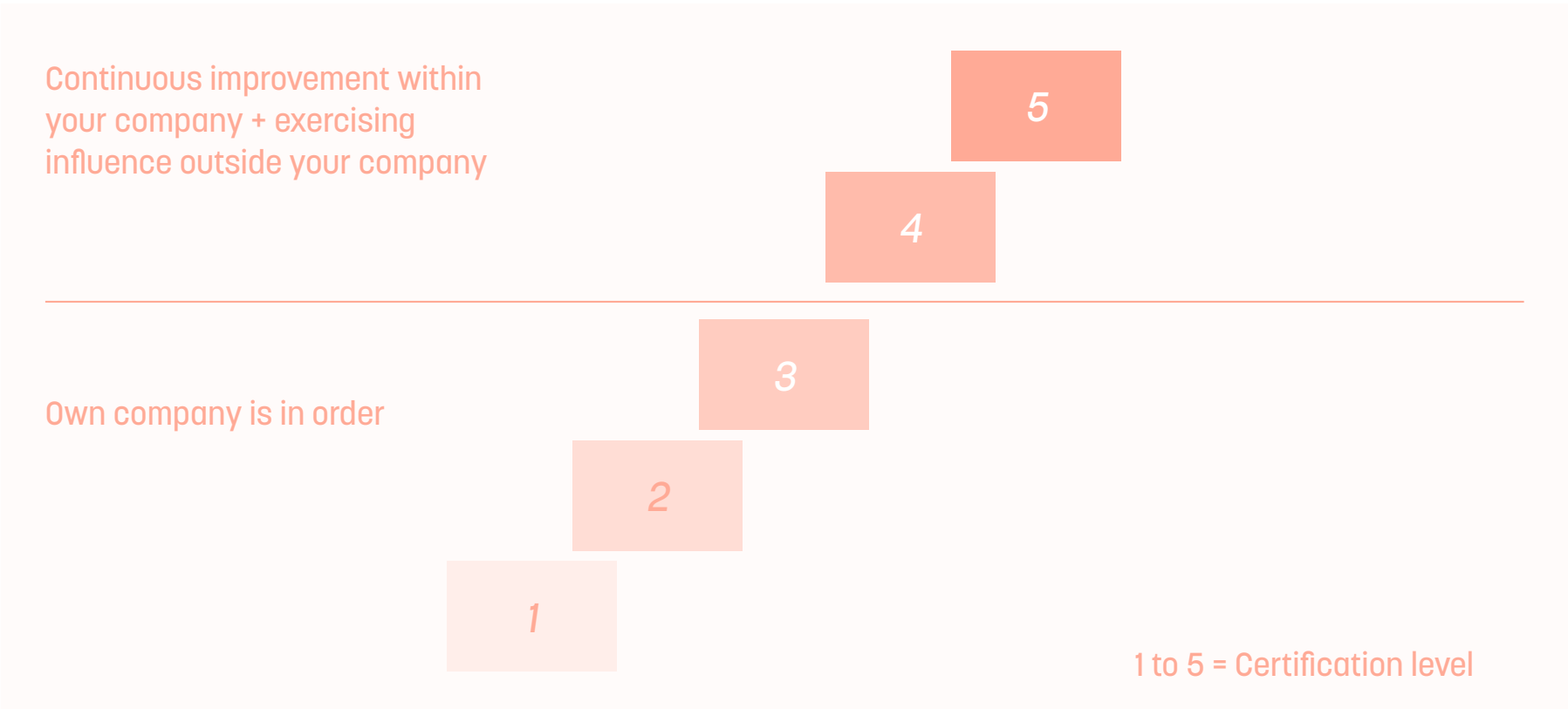


Want to know how you can start using the CO₂ Performance Ladder? Watch our [videos](#) about the CO₂ Performance Ladder for use as a CO₂ management system and procurement instrument. Visit our [website](#) for inspiration on how to get started with the Ladder.

The ladder system in a nutshell

The CO₂ Performance Ladder is the sustainability instrument of the Netherlands that helps companies and governments reduce CO₂ and costs. This involves a reduction in operational management, in projects, and the value chain. The Ladder is used as a CO₂ management system and as a procurement instrument.

Organisations certified according to the Ladder will see this investment immediately pay off in terms of lower energy costs, material savings and innovation gains.



The CO₂ Performance Ladder is a CO₂ management system comprising of 5 levels. Up to and including Level 3, an organisation works on the emissions of its own organisation (and all projects). As of Levels 4 and 5, work also occurs on CO₂ emissions in the chain and sector. A certified organisation meets the requirements of the CO₂ Performance Ladder at a certain level (and all underlying levels). These requirements come from four different angles:

- A Insight: Determining the energy flows and the CO₂ footprint;
- B Reduction: developing ambitious targets for CO₂ reduction;
- C Transparency: Structural communication about the CO₂ policy;
- D Participation: Participation in sector initiatives in the field of CO₂ reduction.



Each certified organisation is audited annually by an independent and accredited Certification body (CI). So, a certified organisation is guaranteed a working CO₂ management system for the organisation and the projects. This is tested annually on ambitions, reduction and continuous improvement.

Tender advantage
Certified companies receive a discount on the tender price in the procurement process. Companies on the Ladder are rewarded with a concrete award advantage in the tender process. The higher the step, the higher the discount. The contracting authority or commissioning party determines the award advantage per Ladder level.

How does the award advantage work with the CO₂ Performance Ladder?

Organisation:	Tender price	Ladder level	Fictitious advantage	Fictitious price	Tender awarded
A	€ 9.7 million	not	0%	€ 9.7 million	NO
B	€ 10 million	3	4%	€ 9.6 million	NO
C	€ 10.3 million	4	7%	€ 9.58 million	YES: € 10.3 million

‘This is an example - the actual amount of the fictitious benefit is determined by the commissioning party in a tender.’



Gijs Termeer
Programme director

'I'm proud of how the entire team performed and the impact we made! The steps taken with the new Handbook 4.0, the international successes, the flawless NTA assessment of the organisation, the strong growth in the number of certified authorities and certificate holders and the fantastic event in Tivoli in October.'



Tijmen de Groot
Project manager policy and development

'The progress in the development of Handbook 4.0 was my highlight of 2022. At the beginning of this year, we had a huge list of possible points for improvement, but no idea then about feasibility and coherence. At the end of 2022, some important decisions were taken and we have clarity about the contours of the Handbook. And all this with a careful process and base of support.'



Thijs Wenting
Project manager sustainable procurement

'The enthusiasm that certified companies and contracting authorities have when talking about using the CO₂ Performance Ladder in their own organisation makes me proud. In 2022, we worked hard on an online Testimonials page where all kinds of people from different organisations that use the ladder have their say in text, images and video. It's a wonderful calling card for governments and companies in other EU countries to also get started with the CO₂ Performance Ladder. I'm proud of this and we're already reaping the benefits of starting CO₂ Performance Ladder pilots in different countries!'



Christiaan van der Spijk
Quality assurance manager

'Within SKAO, I'm increasingly focusing on impact monitoring. For instance, using the PID, we gain increasingly more insight into the projects of our certificate holders. In my research on the more than 1,250 certificates, I discovered that more than 5,000 individual companies and organisations have already been certified. We see increasingly more governments that put out to tender using the CO₂ Performance Ladder and that also certify themselves. Such research makes my work fun and varied.'



Ghislaine Dubvalois
Programme manager CO₂ Performance Ladder

'Knowledge transfer and development play a major role in achieving CO₂ reduction. When we organise communities of practices, we create a dynamic environment where expertise, experiences and best practices are shared. As every new party participates, we create a harmonious interaction. This is how we continue to build a resilient and learning network that can meet the challenges of climate change. Because the key to a sustainable world lies in the connectedness.'

Highlights of 2022 according to the SKAO secretariat



Brian Heikamp
Manager marketing and communications

'You can see the impact of the CO₂ Performance Ladder in the development of valuable content and the successful organisation of meetings and events for our (international) stakeholders. Using cogent success stories, we were able to reach a wide range of stakeholders and demonstrate how successful the CO₂ Performance Ladder is.'



Joleen Zuidema
Project manager communications

'What a resilient and close-knit team we are. We shared many highs and lows with each other last year and that also strengthens our professional bond!'



Pascal Budding
Manager SKAO

'SKAO calls itself the heart of a large network. It is wonderful to see how everyone makes this happen in their own role in the team and how much commitment we saw from all the partners and organisations we work with. We come together for a common goal. That gives a lot of energy.'



Maud Vastbinder
Manager CO₂ Performance Ladder Europe

'The Ladder is recognised (and widely acknowledged) by international stakeholders as a best practice for sustainable procurement and for effectively working on decarbonisation. So, there's a lot of interest in rolling out the Ladder in Europe and we are now working on that.'



George Thurley
Policy advisor CO₂ Performance Ladder Europe

'I'm extremely proud of the international relationships we have built in 2022, which underlie the international development of the CO₂ Performance Ladder in Ireland, France and beyond. These great collaborations show that our collaborative approach can achieve great impact everywhere!'



Demi van Laaren
Office manager SKAO

'The number of certified organisations and contracting authorities has grown considerably in 2022. Our small team is creating increasingly more impact, both nationally and internationally. I'm very proud of that!'

Companies in a bind due to topped-out electricity grid

The Netherlands is rapidly electrifying. Electricity consumption is expected to be 2 to 3 times higher in 2050. A lot more electricity will be needed in the coming years for industry, heating the built environment, and mobility. At the same time, we are rapidly making the electricity supply more sustainable. The Expert Team Energy System 2050 recently advised Minister Jetten (Climate and Energy) that, if the Netherlands wants to be climate neutral by 2050, the energy system must have net zero CO₂ emissions between 2040 and 2045 and that the associated electricity system in 2035 must not emit any more CO₂. That was just over 10 years ago!

New challenges for the electricity grid

The sustainability of the electricity supply and the growing electricity demand pose enormous new challenges for the electricity grid. For example, it means that we are moving from centrally generated electricity to much more decentralised generation by wind and sun, which is supplied to the grid in variable quantities at variable times. As a result, the medium-voltage grid has become overloaded in recent years. This is called congestion and leads to a shortage of transmission capacity on the electricity grid. These problems also occur on a larger scale on the low-voltage grid. We see many of the above developments reflected in SKAO's annually published report on the measures taken by the certified organisations (more than 1300). Over the past two years, we have seen a sharp increase in some measures that (will) require a lot more electricity.

Gasless offices

In 2021, we saw 140 organisations strive for gasless offices for the first time. In 2022, this number almost doubled to 254. This means that almost 20% of the certified organisations now have this ambition. Given the location of most offices, we assume here that these mainly concern

all-electric solutions with heat pumps (and possibly heat/cold storage) and not connections to a heat network.

Charge points for vehicles and equipment

There is also a very sharp growth in the number of charge points installed. Almost one-third of the organisations now have (plans for) charge points. In addition, many organisations that work with the CO₂ Performance Ladder are active in the field of civil engineering. Here, partly under the influence of the climate and nitrogen agenda, mobile equipment using fossil fuels is being phased out and the use of electrical equipment is increasing. This means some companies will also need charge points for charging this heavy equipment. Thus, the electricity demand will increase even more in these organisations.

Self-generation

At the same time, we are also seeing positive growth in sustainable energy generation, mainly through the solar panels on the roofs of business premises. A quarter of the organisations are now working on generating energy.

Biggest challenge: Peaks in supply and demand

In a large proportion of cases, the medium and low-voltage grid will be able to cope with the increased supply and demand. However, measures are also needed to cope with the peaks on the medium and low-voltage grid. The peaks in supply and demand are the problem. However, we do not yet see many measures that address this issue. Only 5 companies are experimenting with their own production of green hydrogen. Fifteen companies have the ambition to focus on the simultaneity of supply and demand. As far as we can see, no organisation is yet investing in its own battery capacity.

Flatten peaks with hybrid aggregates

We do see an increase in the use of hybrid aggregates. These can be used for peak shaving (smoothing the peaks in electricity supply or demand). And this makes sense given that electricity consumption at construction sites has major peaks. The use of (hybrid) generators and construction

power allows a smaller temporary power connection to be used, which can save costs and congestion.

The CO₂ Performance Ladder and a sustainable electricity supply

The Ladder allows us to contribute to energy savings and a sustainable electricity supply. Commitment to energy saving and own generation of sustainable energy are part of the Ladder and contribute to it. The rapid electrification and the growing sustainable ambitions of organisations bring new challenges to the electricity grid. As the electricity demand increases and electricity supply is becoming more sustainable, we must also address the peaks and troughs in supply and demand. For our new Handbook, we are considering how we can make flexibility play a role in this. In the meantime, organisations can make a start themselves. For example, by entering into flexible contracts, avoiding peaks, and actively responding to price signals.



The impact of the 2022 Measure List in figures

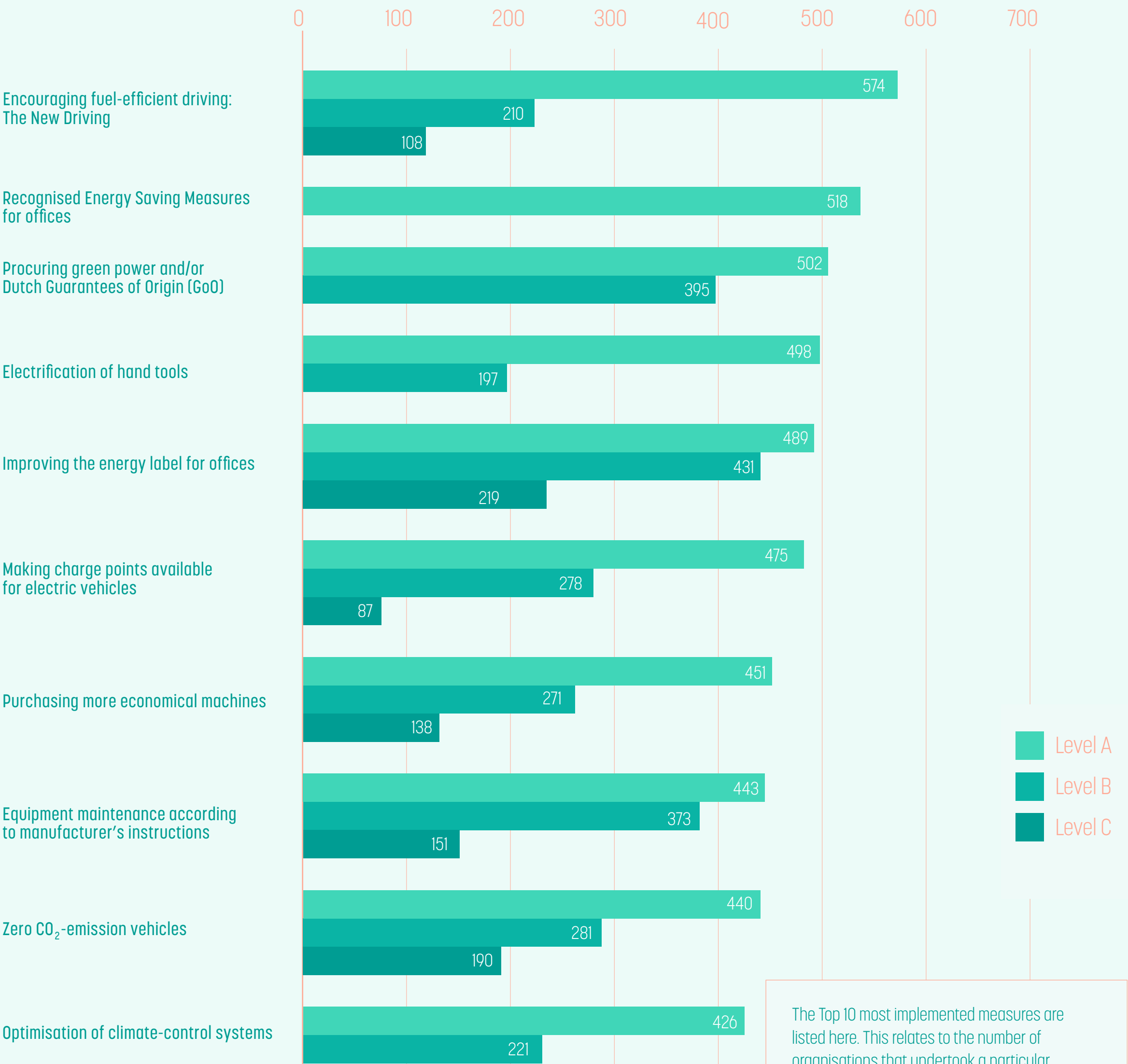
Organisations set ambitious CO₂ reduction objectives for the CO₂ Performance Ladder and define reduction measures. Organisations can use the Measure List to compare themselves with industry peers with similar business operations. When organisations start out with the CO₂ Performance Ladder, the list can also provide ideas about possible measures to take.

Measure list in figures

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Number of organisations that completed the Action List*	1321	1175	1044	945	880	839	722
Implemented actions (total)	19621	17970	15042	13560	11403	10010	6033
Planned actions (total)	11011	10223	8282	7175	6095	4749	3259
NEWLY added actions (total)	743	582	466	528	382	603	850
Implemented actions (average per company)	16.7	17.3	16.2	16.4	14.9	13.6	9.4
Planned actions (average per company)	8.3	8.7	7.9	7.6	6.9	5.7	4.5
NEWLY added actions (average per company)	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.7	1.2

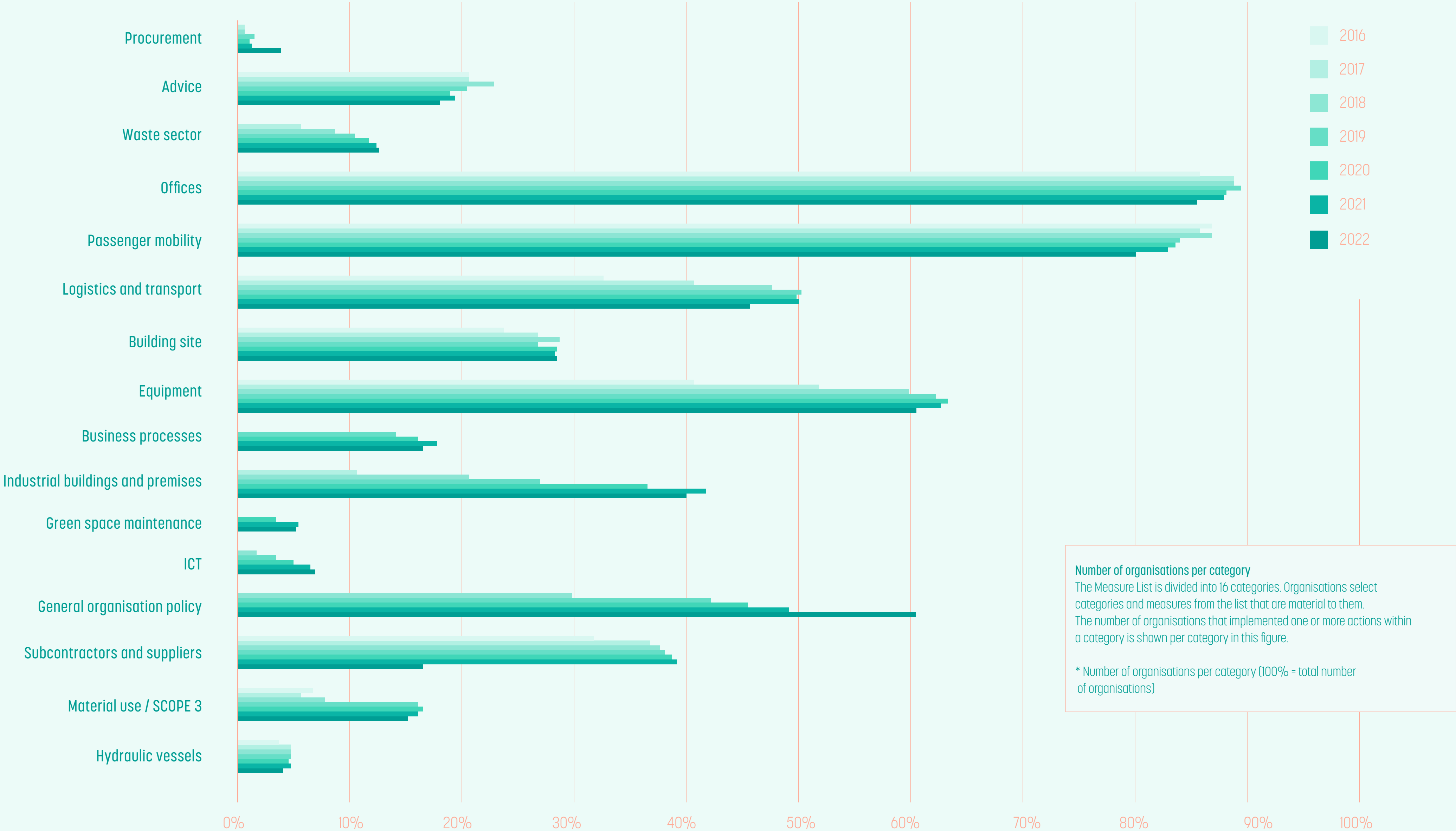
*This series was corrected (including previous years) due to double counting of measures per level.

Most implemented measures



The Top 10 most implemented measures are listed here. This relates to the number of organisations that undertook a particular action. For each measure, the degree of implementation is shown (Level A, B, or C).

Number of organisations per category



Number of organisations per category
The Measure List is divided into 16 categories. Organisations select categories and measures from the list that are material to them. The number of organisations that implemented one or more actions within a category is shown per category in this figure.

* Number of organisations per category (100% = total number of organisations)

Registration will now become a lot easier for companies that have been awarded projects with an award advantage. That is the promise of the Project Impact Dashboard, or 'PID' for short.

Project Impact Dashboard

The PID is a registration tool for projects that have been awarded with an award advantage. All parts associated with the registration of a project are entered in the tool. Organisations are guided step by step by the PID when completing and uploading data about the consumption of transport, energy, material and waste. In the PID, a CO₂ footprint is calculated based on [CO2emissiefactoren.nl](#). You can also enter all measures taken in a project.

Project registration all in one place

The CO₂ Performance Ladder includes requirements, such as maintaining a project registration for projects that were awarded with the Ladder. With the PID, you have one central place to register projects where you can enter a project's CO₂ footprint and the associated measures. For example, you can share this information with a certification body or with a contracting authority. This is managed by the implementing party.

Tool for Dialogue for commissioning party

There are advantages when an organisation opts to share data with the commissioning party. Sharing relevant information with the commissioning party provides a powerful tool for a dialogue about a project. What are the objectives of the project, how are the objectives achieved and how can adjustments be made? PID data is crucial for progress meetings between the commissioning party and the contractor. As soon as enough certified organisations share their projects with SKAO, a benchmark is created that allows the contractor to see where their project stands compared to (the averages of) other projects.

SKAO also gains more insight into what is happening on projects with the data from the PID. Insight and monitoring are important pillars for the further development of the CO₂ Performance Ladder Handbook and the PID fits in seamlessly with this.

Enthusiastic yet? Certificate holders can now find the PID in the *customer portal*.





Event

The CO₂ Performance Ladder for governments

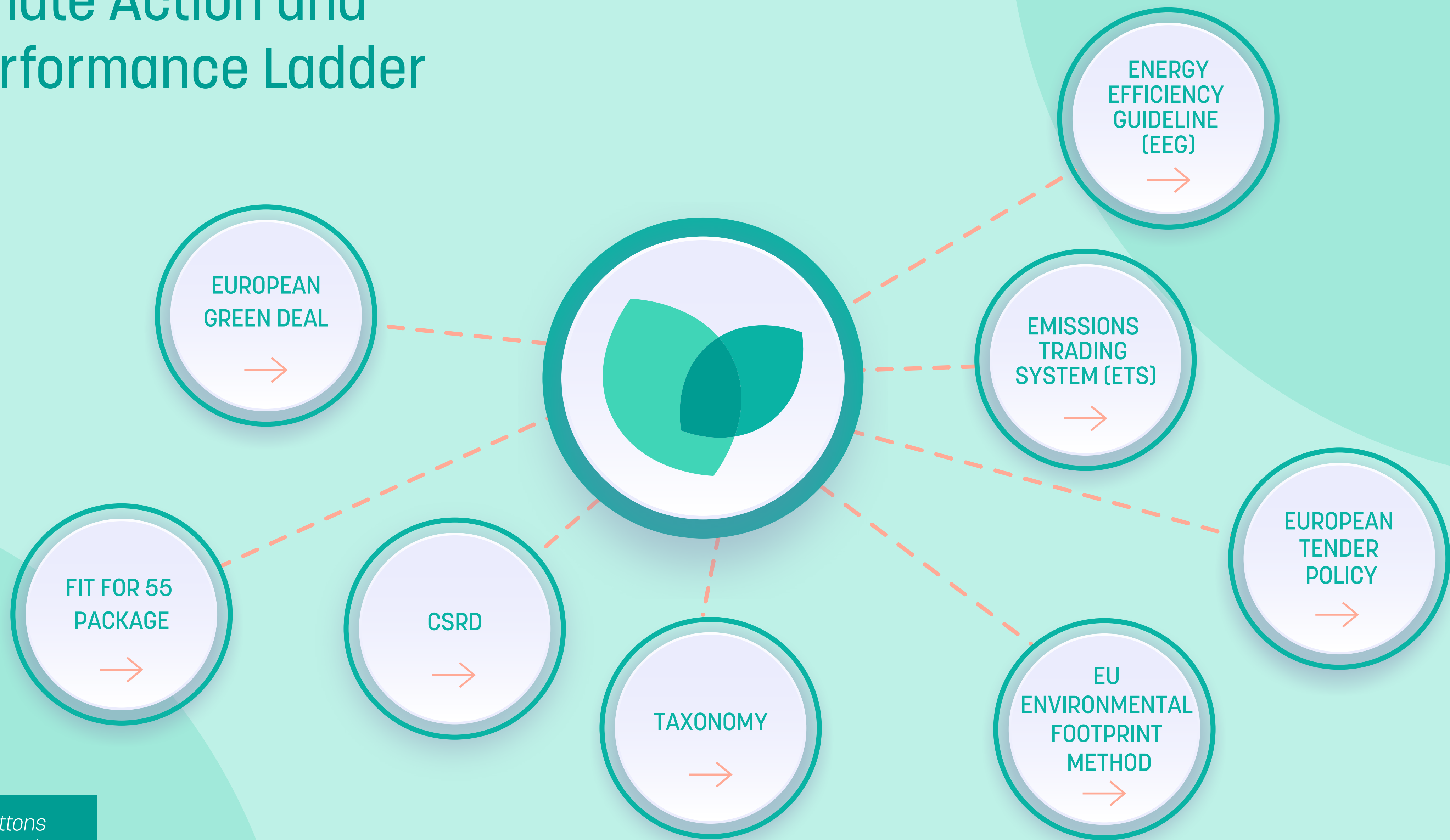
On Tuesday afternoon, 11 October 2022, SKAO organised a meeting in TivoliVredenburg in Utrecht, especially for all governments and quasi-governments that want to use the CO₂ Performance Ladder to reduce CO₂.

Dutch governments purchase more than 85 billion euros worth of products, works and services every year. This 'power of procurement' lends them significant influence over the climate and society. Governments are increasingly using the CO₂ Performance Ladder to implement the Manifesto for Socially Responsible Contracting and Procurement (In Dutch: MVOI [Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Opdrachtgeven en Inkopen]).

Making socially responsible choices creates a double boon: your organisation contributes to a better world and you encourage market players to develop and supply increasingly more sustainable and social products and services. Municipalities, provinces, and water boards play an important role in shaping the energy transition.



EU Climate Action and CO₂ Performance Ladder



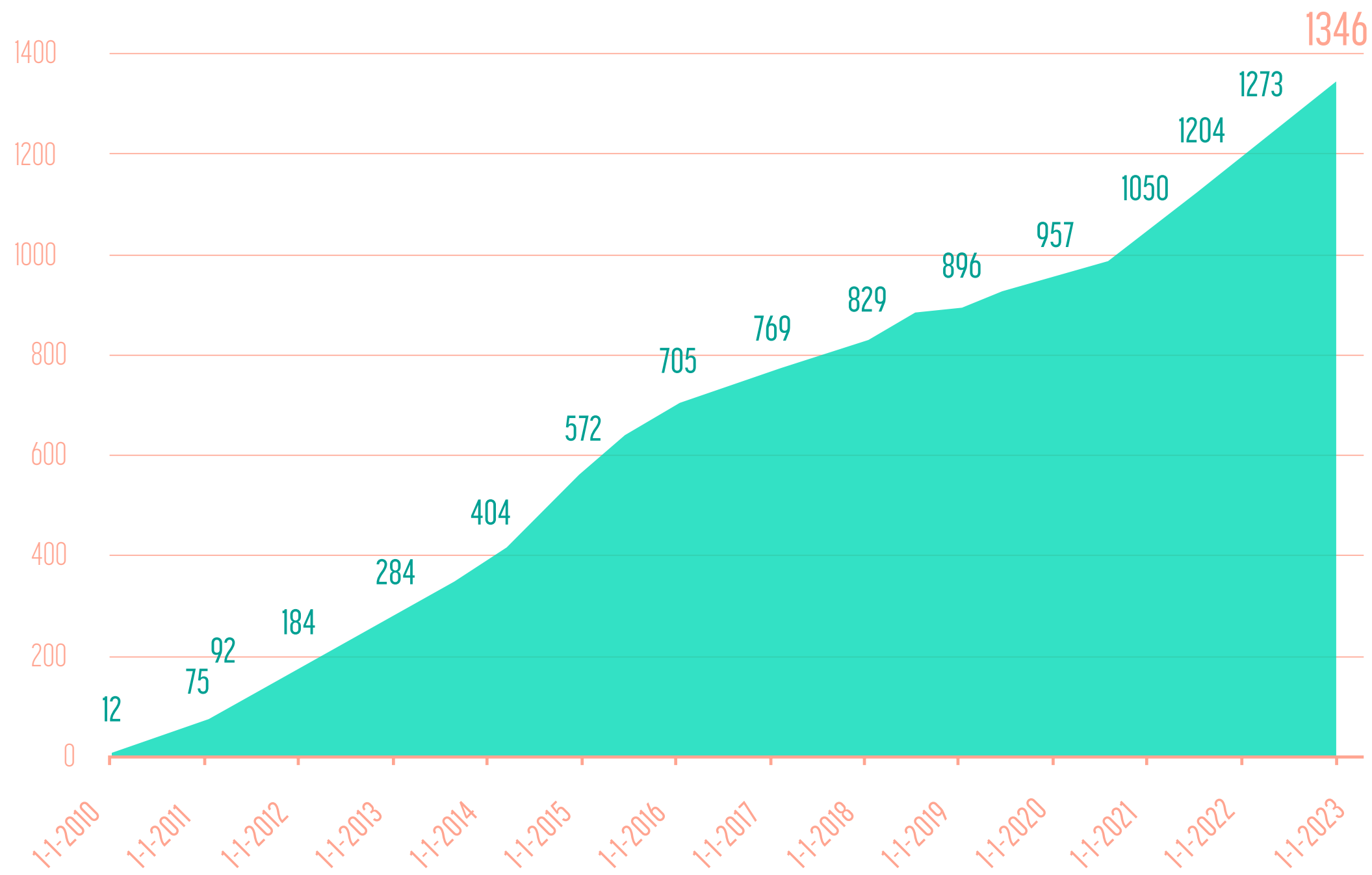
Click the buttons
for more information

Facts and Figures 2022

The CO₂ Performance Ladder

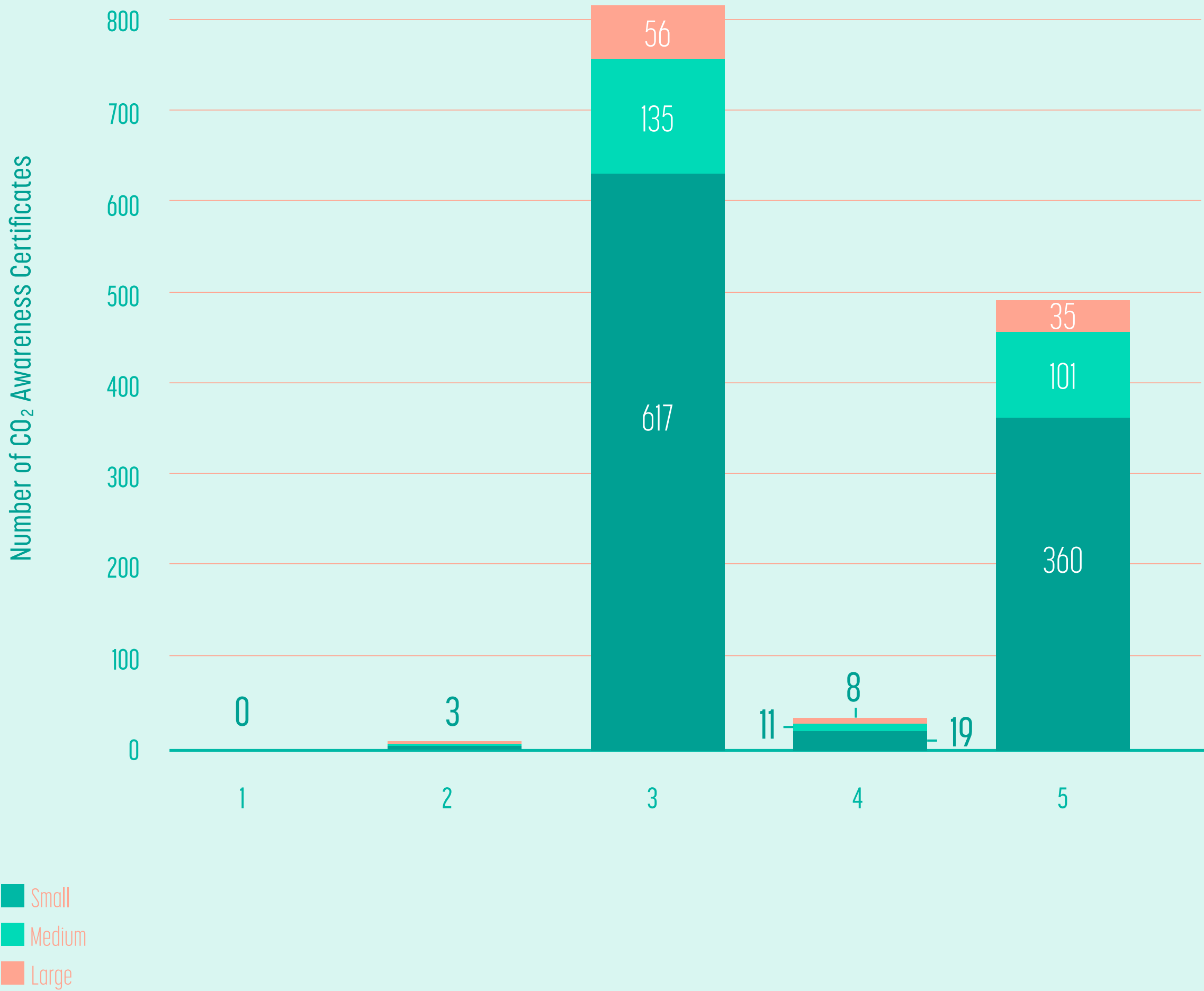


Number of certificates issued



Number of certificates per

Number of CO₂ Awareness Certificates



Municipalities have put out tenders for more than 400 projects worth 2 billion euros since 2020

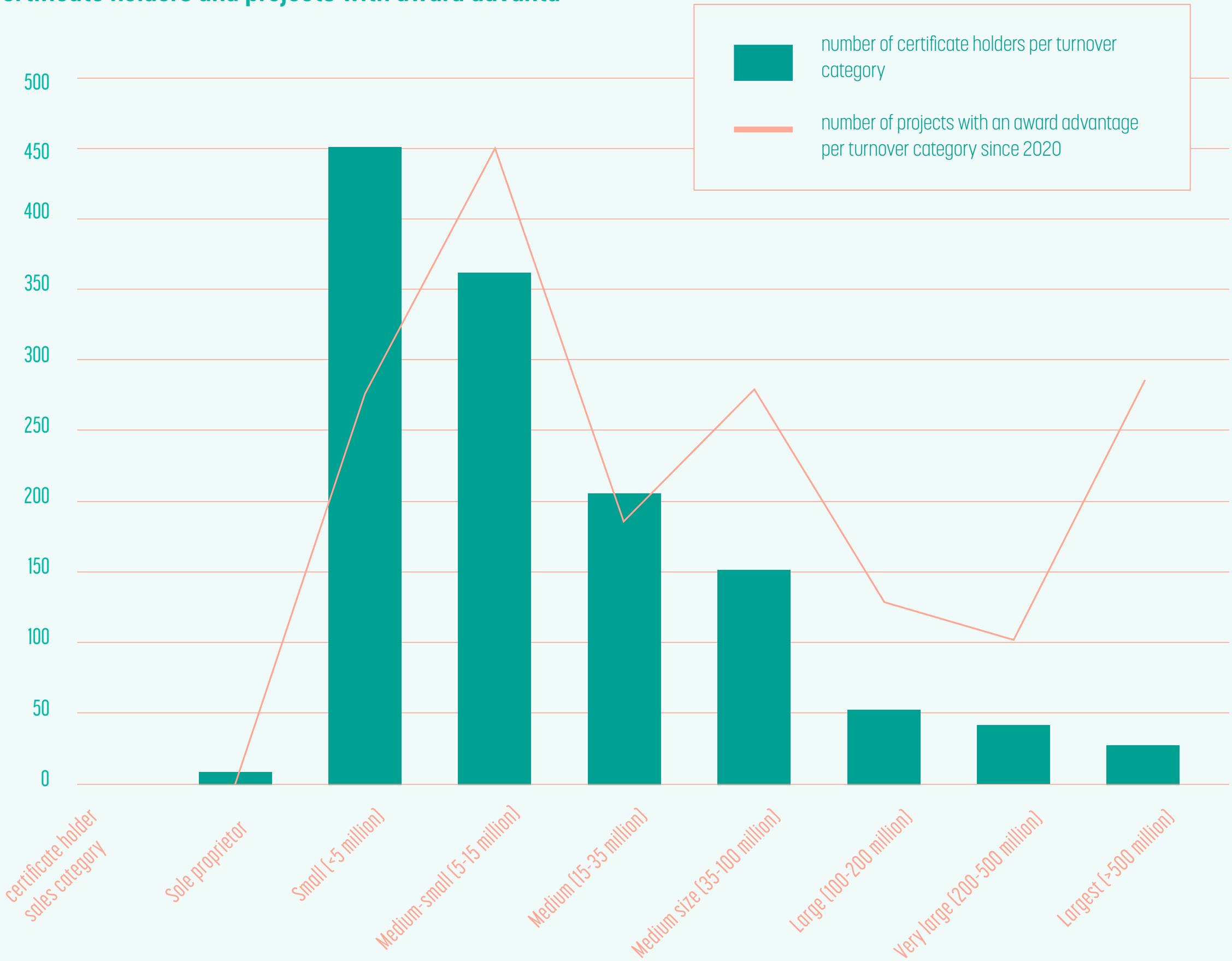
About one-third of all municipalities have put out to tender at least once using the CO₂ Performance Ladder

Certificate holders by turnover/category	# certificate holders
Sole proprietor	9
Small (<5 million)	451
Medium-small (5-15 million)	362
Medium (15-35 million)	206
Medium size (35-100 million)	152
Large (100-200 million)	53
Very large (200-500 million)	42
Largest (>500 million)	28
Municipalities	26
Ministry	5
Province	4
Water board	9

Facts and Figures

The CO₂ Performance Ladder

Certificate holders and projects with award advantage





CO₂ Performance Ladder:

Selection of certified organisations 2022



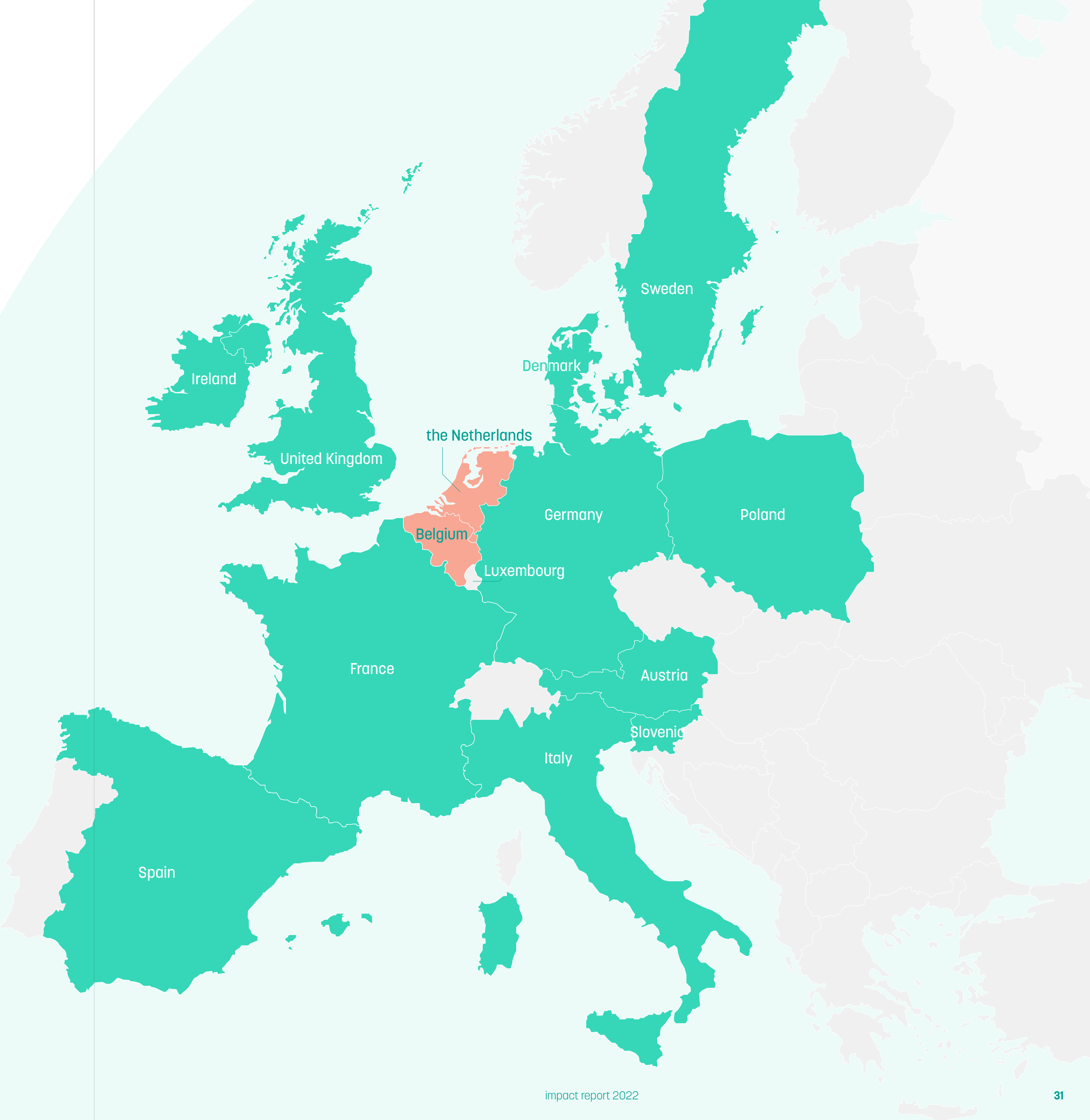
The CO₂ Performance Ladder in Europe

Increasing international interest prompted SKAO to investigate last year whether the CO₂ Performance Ladder can also be used in Europe. The project '*Accelerating carbon emission reduction through the power of procurement, by dissemination of the CO₂ Performance Ladder in Europe*' aims to accelerate CO₂ reduction in Europe by encouraging sustainable procurement using the CO₂ Performance Ladder.

In the initial phase of the project, a **quick scan** was carried out into the applicability of the CO₂ Performance Ladder in different countries and regions. The results of the quick scan were the basis for the feasibility study in which the potential of the Ladder in 10 European countries was specifically researched. Local stakeholders were assessed through interviews and focus groups.

The **feasibility study** shows that compared to other tools and approaches, the CO₂ Performance Ladder distinguishes itself in public procurement, the effect of CO₂ reduction and the verification system implemented by independent bodies. The research provides insight into the procurement context in 10 European countries.

Ireland and France have already committed themselves to the implementation of the CO₂ Performance Ladder in government tenders. The United Kingdom, Germany and Denmark may follow.





United Kingdom
European Bank of Reconstruction and Development
Public Procurement Analysis
Sustainable Global Resources
ICG
We mean business
Sustainable Global Resources
Cardiff Municipality
Infrastructure Clients Group
Government Commercial Function
Department for Business and Trade
Cabinet Office
Environment Agency
Mott MacDonald
Infrastructure and Projects Authority
Mixergy
WSP
Greater London Authority
Scottish Power
Network Rail
LCP
The Green Register
LgiU

Germany
European International Contractors (EIC)
European Climate Foundation
WWF Germany
GPP competence centre
Deutsche Bahn
Kiwa
Raiisponsible
ICLEI

Norway
Public Procurement Office
Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management

Sweden
Miljogiraff
SPP research programme PROCSIBE
ICLEI World congress
Adda
National procurement agency (Upphandlingsmyndigheten)
SEI

International
SFC
OECD
WEF
UN
NABU
EY
WRI
UNIDO

Canada
Circular Procurement Summit

United States
Yale University
United Nations
Climate Works

Ireland
National Standards Authority of Ireland
Procurement Expert Dublin City University
Office of Government Procurement
ESB (public energy authority)
Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Irish Green Building Council
Energy Supply Board
Future Planet
Technological University of the Shannon
Construction cluster
Construction Industry Federation
Office of Public Works
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
OGS consulting
TU Dublin
Irish Rail
Galway city council
South Dublin county council

Belgium
Healthcare without Harm
European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC)
Polis Network
European Commission (DG GROW, DG ENV)
EuroCities
L'Échelle de performance CO2 séduit tant les entrepreneurs que les maîtres d'ouvrage, Wallonia
ECOS
SBTI
Covenant of Mayors/Climate Alliance
Conference of European Directors of Roads
EU
FIEC
EIC
CEDR
EBRD
European Climate Foundation
Bable/Smart Cities
EPRC
Polis
Nowy Styl
Sustainable public affairs?

Spain
EcolInstitut
Barcelona Metropolitan Region
State Public Procurement Advisory Board

France
ORIS
OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2x, one as interview, and one to present our project)
Climate Works
La poste
Saint Germain en Lay
Breakthrough Energy
ASEA
Obsar
UGAP
Supply Chain Sustainability School
Aéroports de Paris
Ministry of Finance
Reseco
RTE

Italy
Associazione Italiana Società Concessionarie Autostrade e Trafori
Legambiente
Central Purchasing Body Consip
Fondazione Ecosistemi
Climate Alliance
ABI Cert

Switzerland
World Economic Forum
International Roads Federation

Poland
Office for Government Procurement
General Directorate for Roads Poland
SST Consult

Austria
ÖBB
Procurement competence centre, BBG Bundesbeschaffung
Vienna, ÖkoKauf /GPP team
naBe GPP platform, IFZ
Kommunkredit Public Consulting

Hungary
OECD webinar

Denmark
COWI (as part of an EC-led research process)
GPP forum, secretariat at environment agency
Danish Technical University University, Lyngby
The Agency for Public Finance and Management
COWI
City of Copenhagen
Eco Labeling Denmark
Danish Regions
Competition and Consumer Authority
Environment ministry
Banedanmark
Energistyrelsen
Vejdirektorat
Bygningsstyrelsen

Slovenia
Care4climate
Ministry for the Environment and Spatial Planning
Slovenian National Building and Civil Engineering Institute
Zag
Government Office for European Cohesion
CER Sustainable Business Network
Slovenia
Green Star Slovenia

Thailand
OECD webinar

Chile
Seminar new technologies and management models in road infrastructure

International network SKAO

Recently published reports from IPCC and WEF describe the options for halving our CO₂ emissions in the coming years. It is striking that the purchasing power of the government is specifically named as one of these options to bring about change.

The power of public procurement and the CO₂ Performance Ladder specifically mentioned in IPCC and WEF reports

Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change: Leveraging government purchasing power
Green Public Procurement (GPP) is an important driver for innovation and gives companies an important incentive to do business sustainably. This is especially true in sectors where public commissioning parties have a large market share (such as construction, healthcare and infrastructure). If purchasing is more sustainable, several problems can be solved at the same time: the climate and the environment receive more attention, and at the same time growth is created in companies that do business sustainably. GPP is a crucial part of a green economy.

European governments spend around 1.8 trillion euros annually, which represents around 14% of the EU's gross domestic product. GPP is considered an effective policy instrument to combat climate change, yet many European countries still face certain obstacles in implementing such

a policy. The key issues are: insufficient political support, the perception that GPP is expensive, minimal GPP expertise and lack of practical tools.

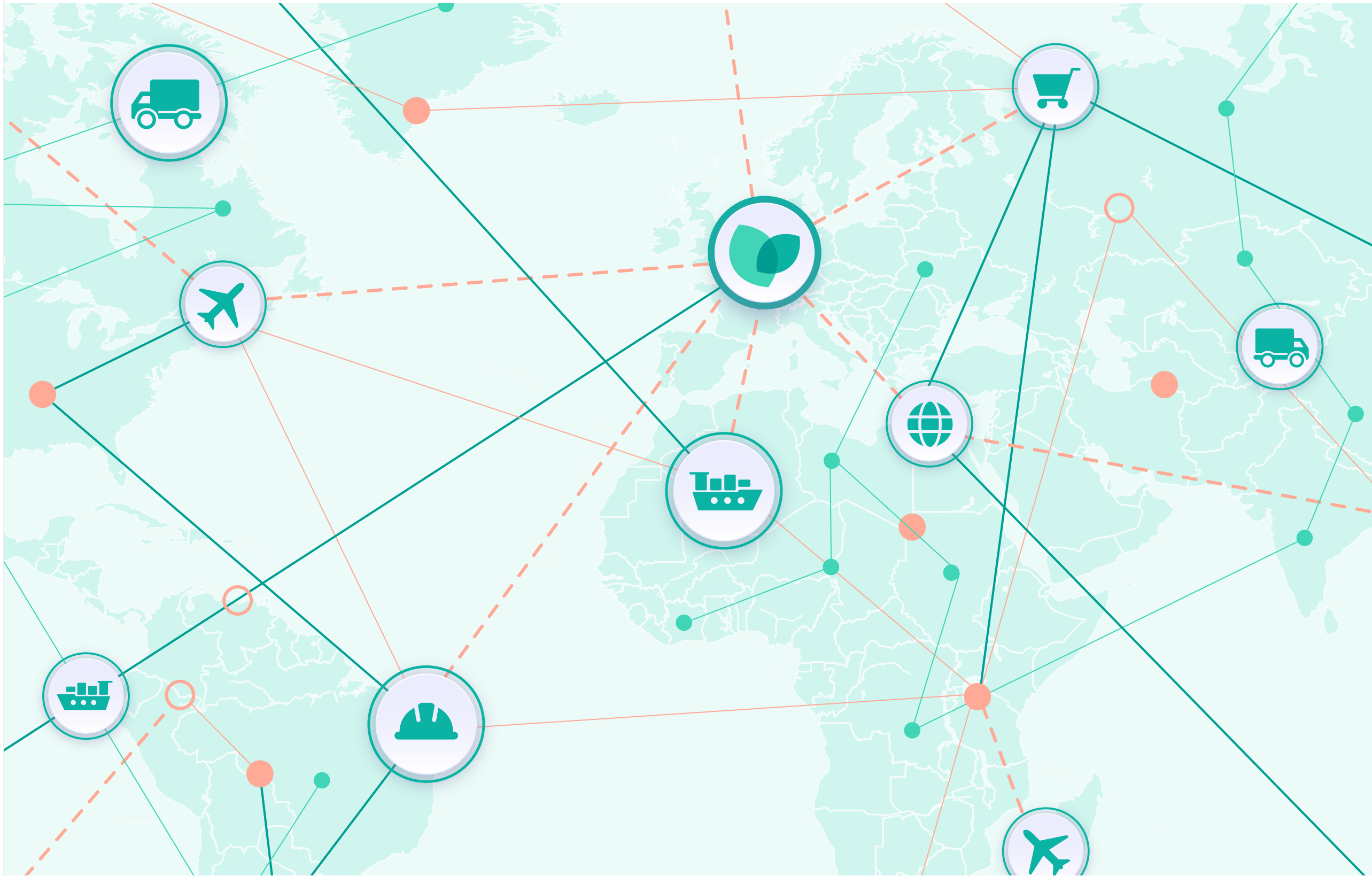
The CO₂ Performance Ladder: reduce CO₂ twice as fast
The CO₂ Performance Ladder has developed in the past 10 years into the most significant GPP instrument in the Netherlands. It helps companies and governments with ambitious and structural reductions in CO₂ and costs. This involves a reduction in operational management, in projects, and the value chain. In the civil engineering sector, the CO₂ Performance Ladder has brought about a sustainable revolution. The success of 'the Ladder' has not gone unnoticed in other sectors. The CO₂ Performance Ladder is specifically mentioned in the IPCC report as a best practice for sustainable procurement.

An overview of green procurement programmes
A recently published report from the World Economic Forum examines the purchasing of sustainable concrete and infrastructure in six leading countries, including the Netherlands. They identify the CO₂ Performance Ladder as an important instrument in the Dutch GPP approach.

The report was prepared by the World Economic Forum and the Global Cement and Concrete Association (GCCA) in collaboration with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG). The research is based on interviews with construction and procurement experts from the public and private sectors in

the Netherlands, France, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. The report examines tools and regulations implemented within policies to support the shift to sustainable concrete.

The CO₂ Performance Ladder is specifically mentioned as a way to stimulate and economically reward the climate ambition on projects (and the entire implementing organisation) in the purchasing policy. Furthermore, the role of the Ladder in sustainable civil engineering and the Concrete Agreement is highlighted.



Province of Groningen obtains certificate on CO₂ Performance Ladder:

‘A new foundation to build on’

For many organisations, certification on the CO₂ Performance Ladder is the starting point for a sustainable adventure. It is quite different for the province of Groningen. The province had been making efforts to become more sustainable for years. Deputy Fleur Gräper-van Koolwijk: ‘The CO₂ Performance Ladder gave us a new ‘normal boundary’, a new basis to build on.’

Sustainability has been an important agenda item for the province of Groningen for years. For example, the provincial government building has been completely gas-free since 2020 (thanks in part to 660 solar panels and heat pumps) and a large part of the vehicle fleet runs on electricity or HVO 100 (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil). Moreover, one of the province’s inspection vessels has also been sailing on electricity since 2019 and the first hydrogen-powered lorries have now been ordered.

Their ambitions for the future are excellent. By 2030, the province wants to have achieved a CO₂ reduction of 55 per cent. And, from 2028, all buildings it manages must be energy-neutral. By 2030, the entire fleet of light vehicles will also be emission-free. So, they have many sustainable achievements and ambitions. The province was recently permitted to add a Level 3 certificate on the CO₂ Performance Ladder to their achievements list.



A unique province

A logical choice, says Deputy Tjeerd van Dekken (whose portfolio includes the environment). He noted that the choice saw little resistance from the board: ‘We recognise the urgency of sustainability in Groningen more than anyone and do as much as we can about it. The CO₂ Performance Ladder is a superb additional instrument for shaping our ambitions.’

Gräper-van Koolwijk added: ‘We are a unique province in this respect. We feel the negative consequences of a fossil society every day here. So, there is a heightened awareness that things must change. Everyone is looking for answers to the question: how can we do it better?’

Practice what you preach

So, the province did not start working on sustainability to obtain a certificate on the Ladder. It had been already doing this for years. But it does have added value, explains Dorien Cramer (project leader CO₂ Performance Ladder): ‘First of all, it reinforces the exemplary role that we want to play as a province: practice what you preach. And (and perhaps even more importantly), certification on the Ladder provides detailed insight into what we have already done. For us, it’s much more a test of whether we are on the right track than a starting point: are we doing in practice what we believe we are doing? And what else is possible? It provides a good foundation to build on and stay on track.’

The Province of Groningen was already monitoring sustainable developments within the organisation, but Cramer soon noticed that the CO₂ Performance Ladder requires more thorough monitoring. ‘You don’t just do this as a side job,’ she said. ‘Different teams and domains had to work together to gain insight into everything, including at the management level. It’s detailed and in-depth, but that’s a good thing. This gives you a more complete insight into your own footprint, which also makes it easier for you to tweak the various dials.’

So there were challenges, but Cramer looks back positively on the certification process: ‘If sustainability is widely supported, it is much easier to put it into practice in the workplace. The practical implementation is almost secondary because the sustainable vision is rock solid in Groningen.’

Hard and soft instruments

Certification on the CO₂ Performance Ladder was indeed widely supported, agrees Gräper-van Koolwijk. ‘To get sustainability going in the province, we need both soft and hard instruments,’ she explained. ‘You use soft instruments to inspire other organisations and organise competitions. The CO₂ Performance Ladder is an excellent example of a hard instrument. It gives us a new normal boundary and allows us to set hard and measurable sustainability requirements for ourselves. We can use this as the basis for continued growth.’

The province of Groningen also plans to take further steps on the Ladder in the long term to get to Level 4 or 5. Although the province has already tendered several times with the Ladder, this will become increasingly important at those higher levels. But Gräper-van Koolwijk expects that this will not be a problem. The province is already explicitly working on sustainable commissioning. ‘The purchasing and tendering policy is an important part of our sustainable strategy and mission. We not only look at CO₂ reduction, but also at social issues, such as inclusion. We think that’s important because if you don’t pay attention to what you purchase, you’ll not make much progress.’

Giving the market a push

So, the Province of Groningen is consciously investigating how it can give the market a push in the right direction. What helps with this is creating clarity about the future. For example, the province developed a mobility roadmap that explains the plans and standards in that area. ‘This is how we bring companies into our future and they know which way things are going,’ said Gräper-van Koolwijk. ‘If companies know that in three years, they will only receive orders if they have electrical equipment, they can respond appropriately in a timely manner. It encourages them to make more sustainable choices today.’



*‘We feel the negative consequences of a fossil society every day in Groningen. So, there is a heightened awareness that things must change. Everyone is looking for answers to the question: how can we do it better?’
The CO₂ Performance Ladder enables us to set hard and measurable sustainability requirements for ourselves.’*

‘This is how you take the market with you,’ she continued. ‘You remove uncertainty and make the business case for sustainability more interesting.’

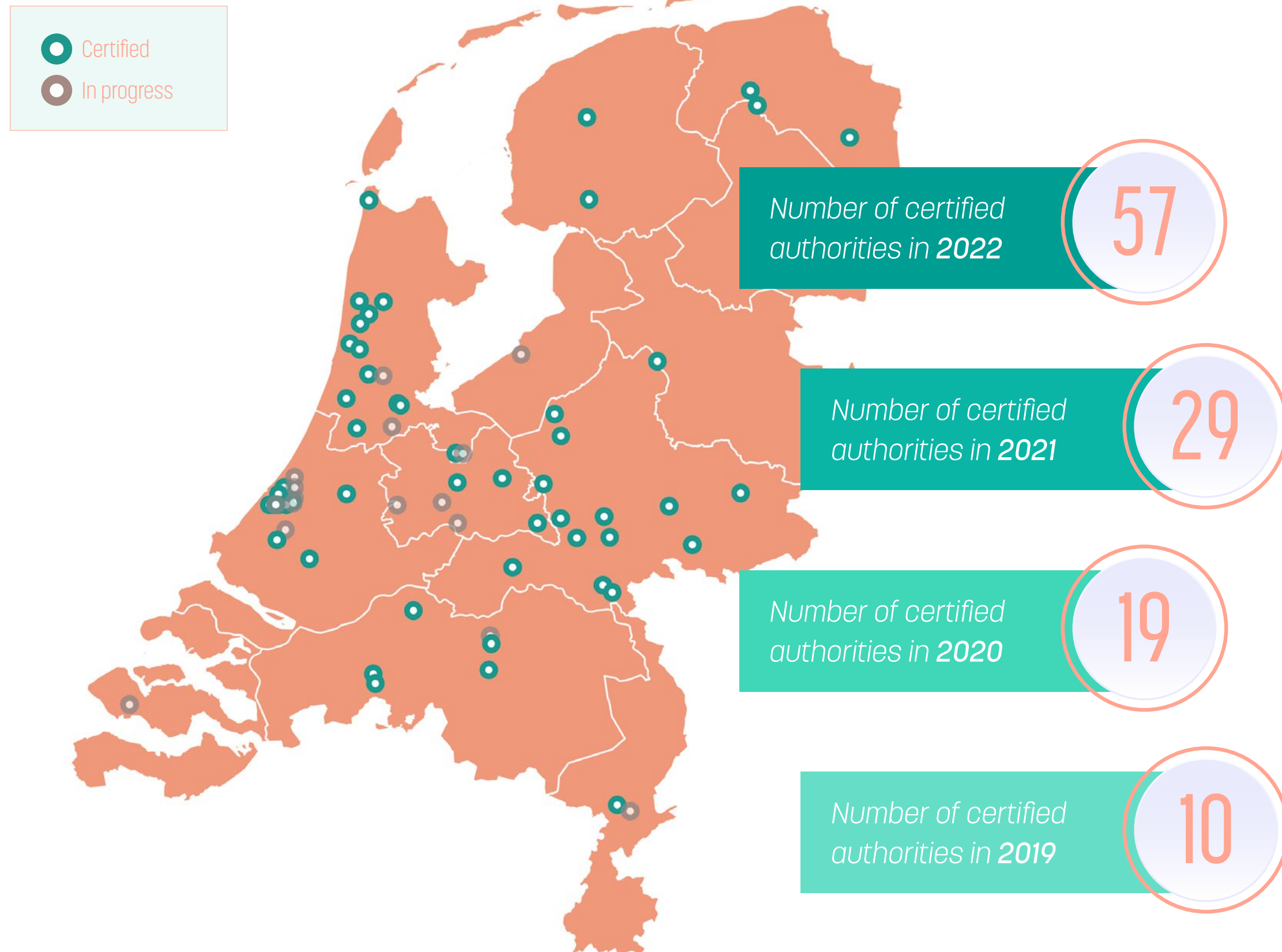
Choose sustainability

The province of Groningen is the third province in the Netherlands with a certificate on the Ladder. But more will follow soon if Gräper-van Koolwijk has her way. ‘Many provinces are much further along with sustainability than they think. That’s why I would say: don’t be shy about also getting a certificate on the Ladder. We must give ourselves a foundation to build on and the Ladder can really help with that.’

But just a certificate on the Ladder is not enough, she emphasised: ‘You must continue to invest in a broad vision and continue to opt for sustainability. There will undoubtedly be times when you would rather put the subject aside for a while and that is precisely when you must dare to keep pursuing it.’

Certified authorities

Number of certified authorities



Using the CO₂ Performance Ladder has a demonstrable effect in municipalities

Municipalities that are actively working on CO₂ reduction in their own operations achieve good results. This result can be attributed to the introduction of the CO₂ Performance Ladder, according to research conducted by CE Delft in 2022.

All municipalities are on track to achieve their goals. Between 2018 and 2020, their CO₂ emissions were reduced by an average of 23.9% (12.8% per year). A strong decrease in CO₂ emissions can be seen especially in the year that the municipality is certified on the CO₂ Performance Ladder or the year after. Eighteen municipalities that were certified on the CO₂ Performance Ladder in December 2021 were examined on behalf of the Foundation for Climate Friendly Procurement and Business (SKAO) and the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG).

Directors in the local energy transition

The certification gives municipalities insight into their CO₂ reduction. This ensures they are in a better position to discuss target achievement and identify measures. Finally, the goals are anchored and monitored, so that attention continues to be paid to CO₂ reduction in the long term. Twenty-four municipalities have now been certified. Gijs Termeer, director at SKAO: 'Municipalities have been working on their CO₂ reduction for years. It's good to see that things are now really moving in the right direction. The CO₂ Performance Ladder helps them with this in a structured way. This ensures they can take on an even better and more credible role as directors in the local energy transition.'

Examples: Renkum

Renkum had already implemented the CO₂ Performance Ladder in 2015 and has taken many measures since then, such as the construction of a bicycle path made of elephant grass, blue synthetic diesel for the municipal vehicle fleet and LED street lighting. Alderman Joa Maouche: 'It's the data that makes the difference.

This system pushes us to map out where we emit CO₂. And that leads to where we can take the most efficient energy-saving measures. Between 2015 and 2019, our organisation's CO₂ emissions decreased by 68 per cent.

'It's the data that makes the difference. This system pushes us to map out where we emit CO₂.'

- Joa Maouche, Alderman Renkum

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