

CO₂ PERFORMANCE LADDER

Essentials 2023

This document gives a brief overview of the CO₂ Performance Ladder, the owner and manager of the Ladder (SKAO), and our international work.

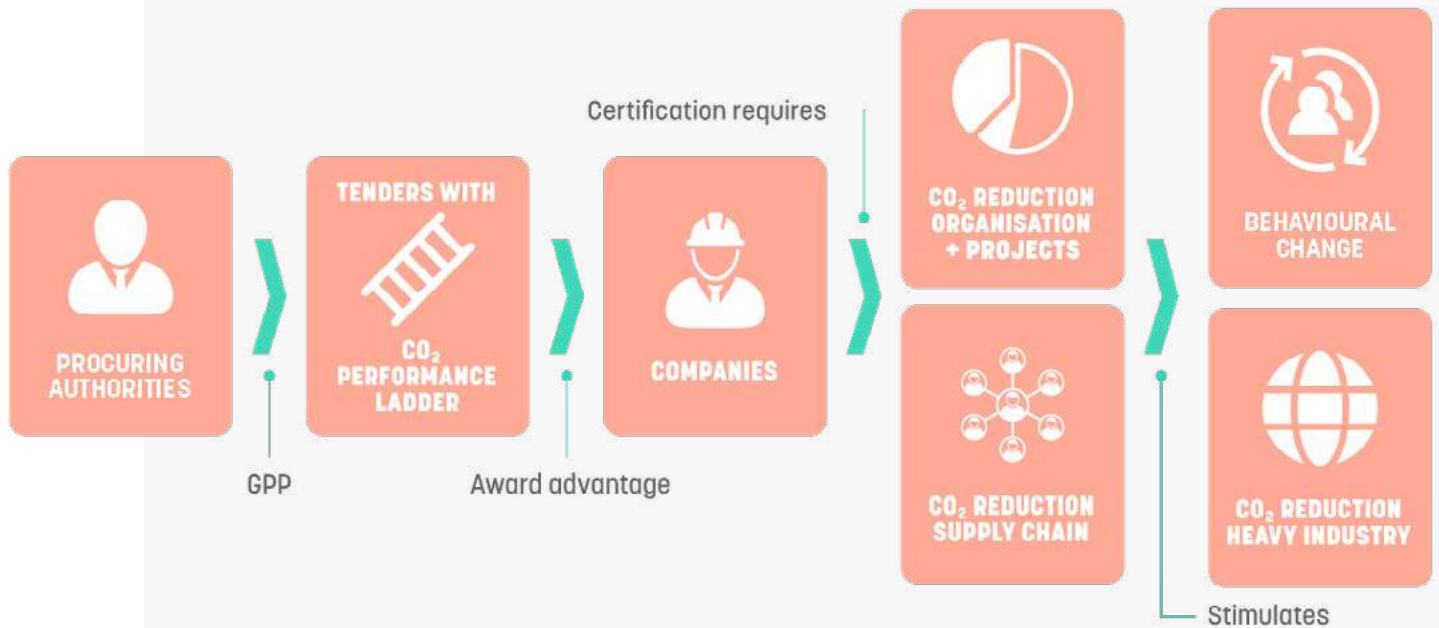


CO₂ Performance Ladder

The CO₂ Performance Ladder (CO2PL) is an instrument that helps organisations reduce their carbon emissions within their organisation, projects, and their supply chain. With a certificate on the Ladder, organisations can receive an award advantage in tenders. The instrument is used as both a CO₂ management system and as a green procurement instrument.

Over **5000** organisations (**1400** certificates) in the Netherlands, Belgium and beyond have already been certified on the CO₂ Performance Ladder as a carbon management system, and over **300** contracting authorities across Belgium and the Netherlands (from national ministries to municipalities, regional governments and other semi-public bodies) use the CO₂ Performance Ladder in their tendering processes as a green procurement instrument. From 2023 the CO2PL is also being implemented in more European countries.

The Theory of Change of the CO₂PL is based on the power of procurement. By using the CO₂PL in their tender processes to grant tenderers an award advantage based on their ambition level, contracting authorities can stimulate structural CO₂ reduction throughout their



supplier base and beyond, creating behavioural change and stimulating CO₂ reductions in heavy industry. In this way, the CO₂PL enables governments to offer a green business case for businesses to invest in carbon reduction: a carrot for decarbonisation.

Learn more about the CO₂ Performance Ladder in our [online academy](#).

The CO₂ Performance Ladder as a Procurement Tool

Award advantage: During tendering processes, commissioning parties using the CO₂ Performance Ladder as a Green Public Procurement (GPP) instrument give financial advantage to sustainable tenders. The higher the tenderer's level of ambition regarding sustainability, the greater the advantage they receive. The five ambition levels are in line with the five levels of certification that organisations can obtain, enabling government bodies to reward companies that actively work to reduce the carbon footprint of their business operations.

The power of procurement: The CO₂ Performance Ladder harnesses the 'power of procurement' to: direct investments towards a low carbon economy and stimulate companies participating in tenders to improve their CO₂ awareness and reduction in their organisation, projects and supply chain.

Third party verification: Implementing the CO₂ Performance Ladder is easy for contracting authorities as they only need to check organisations' certificate, which is issued by an independent third party. This lowers the burden on procurement authorities to verify that companies comply to their requirements. Certifying bodies are required to be accredited by the relevant accreditation body.

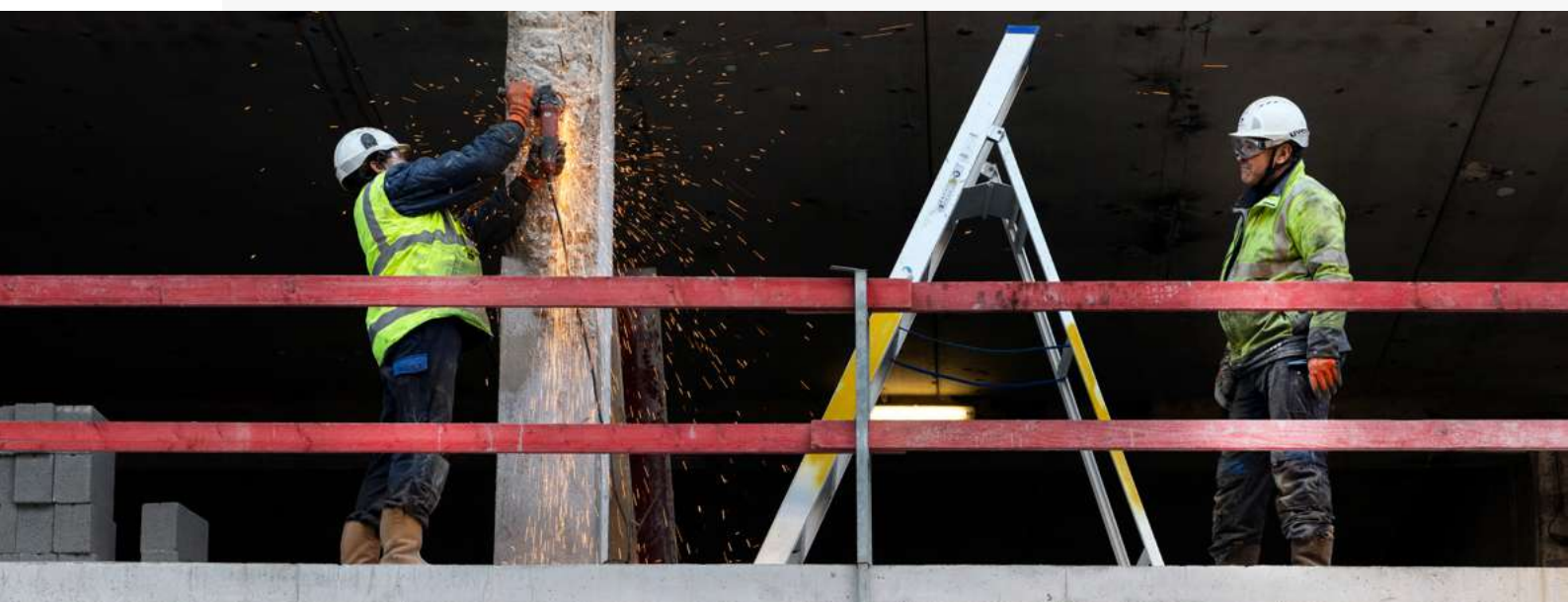
Compliant with the EU procurement directive: The [CO₂ Performance Ladder is immediately applicable in other EU countries](#) due to its compliance with the 2014 [EU Procurement Directive](#).

European implementation: In 2023 implementation of the CO₂PL in tenders will begin in Ireland and France, among other European countries. Further, following a successful pilot (beginning in 2019) the CO₂PL will be implemented structurally in Belgian construction procurement from 2023. [See our website for the latest news.](#)

Circular: The CO₂ Performance Ladder has also proven that it can be used as a procurement instrument to promote a circular economy, as [independent research](#) shows.

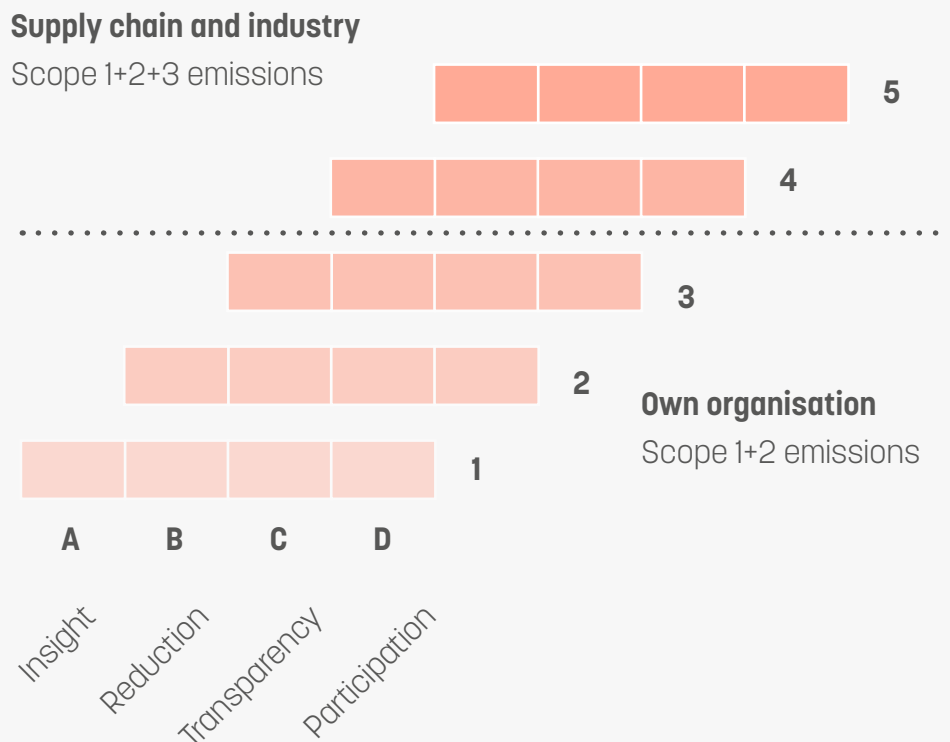
Best Practice: The [OECD](#), [IPCC](#) and [WEF](#) recognize the CO₂ Performance Ladder as a Best Practice for sustainable procurement.

Practice what you preach: A recent development is that contracting authorities are certifying their own organisations on the CO₂ Performance Ladder in the context of 'practice what you preach'. For example, the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management is certified on level 5, and [all Dutch ministries are certified to level 3 or higher.](#)



The CO₂ Performance Ladder as a CO₂ management system

Five levels: The CO₂ Performance Ladder consists of 5 levels. Up to level 3, an organisation focuses on their scope 1 and 2 emissions, i.e., their own organisation and projects. On levels 4 and 5 the supply chain and industry also come into focus (scope 3 emissions).



Four angles: On all levels there are requirements for each of the 4 angles: insight (e.g., footprint), reduction (e.g., carbon reduction targets for each scope), transparency (e.g. structural internal and external communication) and participation (e.g. development of carbon innovations together with industry partners).

Third party verification: The Ladder is an accredited CO₂ management system for organisations based on international standards. Certified organisations are audited annually by an independent accredited certifying body.

Continuous improvement: Any type of organisation can obtain a certificate on the CO₂ Performance Ladder. This certificate demonstrates that the organisation has insight into its emissions, that ambitious objectives and measures are in place to reduce these emissions, that structural communication and collaboration is conducted in this area and that the organisation is continuously improving.

Proven methodology: CE Delft, a renowned and independent Dutch research institute [evaluated the effectiveness of the CO2PL in carbon reduction](#), concluding that the CO2PL helps organisations make their CO₂ emissions comprehensible and embed reduction measures. [Earlier scientific research](#) shows that certified organisations reduce their CO₂ emissions at twice the rate of uncertified organisations.

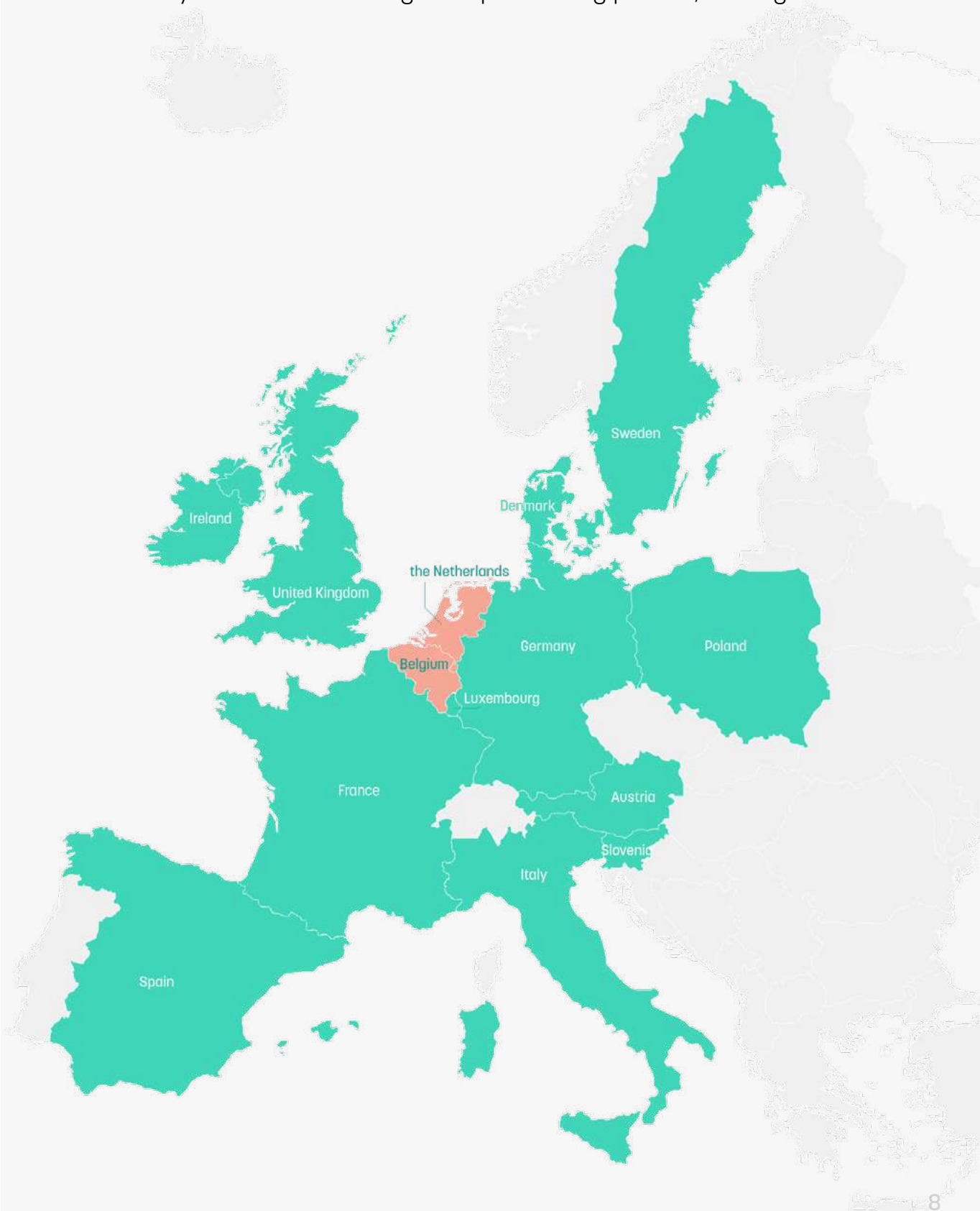
User-friendly: The CO₂ Performance Ladder is user-friendly, with low transaction costs to get started for organisations looking to get certified. 75% of certificate holders are small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Multi-use certificate: One certificate can be used for all tenders for all contracting authorities using the Ladder in their procurement. Whether local, regional, national, or international.

Green business case: By granting a financial award advantage in tenders based on their CO₂ reduction ambition, the CO2PL creates a green business case. The fictitious discount (or points bonus), in combination with the cost savings that are achieved through increased efficiency, more than cover the costs of certification, and motivate organisations to start structurally reducing their carbon emissions.

The CO₂ Performance Ladder goes international

Crucially, starting in 2023, **several other European countries will begin implementing the CO₂ Performance Ladder in procurement!** Ireland and France are leading the pack, with other pioneers to follow. These countries will be supported in testing the Ladder by SKAO, IISD, ICLEI, the University of Utrecht and Belgian implementing partner, CO2logic.



SKAO, together with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), funded by the IKEA Foundation, researched whether the CO₂ Performance Ladder can also be used in Europe. In 2023 the results were published:

- IISD published their [research](#) into the implementability of the **CO2PL in 10 countries**, concluding that the tool can be implemented in a range of different contexts, and that the CO2PL stands out for its track record of use in public procurement, its proven carbon mitigation impacts, and its third-party verification system.
- [‘Testimonials: the success of the CO₂ Performance Ladder’](#) was published, collecting selection of stories and examples from the history of the Ladder since 2009, through the eyes of our stakeholder - CEOs, ministers, policymakers and experts. They collect the lessons we have learned: what is needed to successfully implement the Ladder, and what benefits does it bring?
- SKAO identified the [building blocks](#) for implementation, based on experiences and lessons learned from the development and use of the CO2PL in the Netherlands and Belgium.
- IISD also developed [FAQ: Legal Considerations When Using the CO2 Performance Ladder in Public Procurement](#) which responds to frequently asked questions for procurement professionals so as to support legal certainty for scaling up the use of the Ladder.



Interested in more detail?

Visit our website via the QR code!

The Foundation for Climate Friendly Procurement and Business (Stichting Klimaatvriendelijk Aanbesteden en Ondernemen, SKAO, in Dutch) is the owner and manager of the CO₂ Performance Ladder. It is an independent, not for profit foundation.

SKAO aims to minimise global warming and climate change. We contribute to this by stimulating CO₂ reduction using the CO₂ Performance Ladder.

SKAO is responsible for the development, management, and dissemination of the CO₂ Performance Ladder as both carbon management system and procurement instrument. Further SKAO undertakes stakeholder management, research, capacity building, facilitates information exchange and provides a helpdesk for parties using the Ladder.

SKAO encourages organisations and governments to reduce CO₂ with the CO₂ Performance Ladder with the aim of realizing a climate-neutral economy. We connect parties, share knowledge and are the heart of a large network.

Since both private and public parties, along with academic experts and non-governmental environmental organisations are involved in the management and development of the CO₂ Performance Ladder in the Netherlands, all organisations have a stake in the instrument, and feel ownership over it. This cooperative model helps to ensure the instrument is widely supported, therefore increasing its impact.

SKAO's current governance structure consists of the board, central college of experts and technical commission:

The Board supervises the independence and organisation of SKAO, among other things. It consists of representatives of the most important stakeholder groups in the Netherlands. The board members are:

- Dimitri Kruik (chair):
Director of Capacity Management, ProRail
- Afke van Rijn (treasurer):
Director General, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management
- Leentje Volker:
Professor Integrated Project Delivery, University of Twente
- Marjolein Demmers:
Director, Natuur & Milieu
- Bart Smolders:
CEO, Heijmans Infra B.V. on behalf of Bouwend Nederland
- Erik van Engelen:
Managing Director, Techniek Nederland

Central College of Experts (CCvD): The CCvD is responsible for operational management of the CO₂ Performance Ladder. Its primary responsibility is to keep the certification scheme up to date and to serve as a point of contact for the Certifying Bodies. It consists of representatives of public authorities, industry associations and independent experts. For more information on the members of the Board and CCvD, please see our [website](#).

Technical Commission: [Ladder Certifying Bodies](#) are accredited by the Dutch or Belgian Accreditation Council for the CO₂ Performance Ladder. SKAO organises structural meetings between the (lead) auditors to harmonize how the Ladder is interpreted in practice.

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www.co2performanceladder.com