

Putting the metrics behind sustainability at the European Commission.



European Commission DG Environment PRé's role as technical helpdesk for testing environmental footprint rules



The challenge

Any company interested in circulating or promoting a product with environmental advantages in the European market is confronted with an overwhelming offer of methods and initiatives to comply with. Several countries have their own methodology and communication standards. To help people see through this overwhelm, the European Commission (EC) published a [communication on Building the Single Market for Green Products](#) (2013), aiming to facilitate better information on the environmental performance of products and organisations in Europe. With this initiative, the EC proposed two life cycle assessment (LCA) methods to assess the environmental footprint of products (product environmental footprint - PEF) and organisations (organisational environmental footprint - OEF).

The initiative included a pilot phase of four and a half years with multiple objectives:

- To set up and validate the rules at product category level (PEFCR) and at the level of an organisation or sector (OEFSR). These rules were developed and tested by 26 pilot groups (from now on referred to as 'pilots').
- To test the communication of life-cycle-based environmental performance information to different target audiences, and to test different methods of verification.
- To explore solutions for practical challenges, such as access to and quality of life cycle data, cost-effective verification methods, and communication.

PRé was selected to act as the technical helpdesk for the pilot phase, in partnership with [Ecofys](#) and [RDC Environment](#) – a task that lasted from October 2013 to April 2017.

PRé solution

As part of the technical helpdesk, PRé's role was manifold.

Technical assistance to the pilots

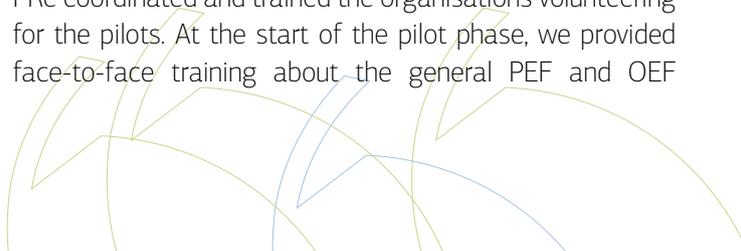
8 out of the 26 pilots were allocated to PRé for technical assistance. To be able to fulfil this task, we needed to be knowledgeable of the developments and the latest changes in the Commission's guidance document and be available to answer a wide range of technical questions.

Technical assistance to the European Commission

For topics that raised a lot of questions, we collaborated with the Commission to develop helicopter and technical issue papers (where rules are described) and helicopter papers (where the implementation of the rules by the pilots was evaluated), to be used in the guidance document. Examples include papers on the use stage and biodiversity. Additionally, we co-chaired three workshops for the refinement of the Circular Footprint Formula (CFF).

Training

PRé coordinated and trained the organisations volunteering for the pilots. At the start of the pilot phase, we provided face-to-face training about the general PEF and OEF



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methodologies. To facilitate the implementation of draft PEFCRs/OEFSRs for specific companies, we gave specific face-to-face trainings focused on specific PEFCRs/ OEFSRs. Additionally, we held 13 webinars on topics such as the representative product, the functional unit, data and quality requirements and development of EF-compliant datasets. The pilot phase was concluded with the development of 3 e-learning courses for footwear, intermediate paper products and retail delivered in three languages.

Online working space

To facilitate the exchange of minutes, draft documents, review comments and other kinds of information, PRé developed and maintained a web workspace. This so-called wiki was used intensively by members from all groups of the governance model: the European Commission, the Steering Committee, the Technical Advisory Board (TAB), pilot technical secretariats (TS), cross-cutting working groups and stakeholders.

Evaluation of the pilot phase in terms of content

At the end of the pilot phase, we put together an overall evaluation of the content of the pilot phase. The findings of the evaluation were structured around four success factors, set by the EC:

1. pilots managed to complete the PEFCR/OEFSR;
2. the methodology demonstrably works in any value chain;
3. simplification compared to conventional LCA;
4. reduced costs for companies for the environmental analysis (compared to LCA).

Business value

- **Expert assistance and access to expert knowledge** – Through the technical helpdesk, pilots could address their technical questions to experienced LCA practitioners who were well-informed about the ongoing developments in the pilot phase.
- **Optimal information exchange and support** – The online working space we developed was a great tool for the exchange of information with stakeholders, which can be applied elsewhere as well. This optimised the development process of PEFCRs and OEFSRs and created support.
- **Increased understanding and alignment with guidance** – The general and specific training provided by the technical helpdesk clarified the rules and guidance for the pilots and enabled them to complete the pilot phase. This improved the development process of PEFCRs and OEFSRs and smoothed the alignment with the Commission's guidance. Now the pilot phase is concluded, e-learning materials are especially useful for new actors. Our consultants are fully trained in how to introduce the PEFCRs and OEFSRs to others.





Creating business value through sustainability metrics

Sustainability metrics consulting

Sustainability in business has become a core business concern and a driving factor in creating business value. PRé offers a range of consulting services, provided by a team of experts who will work with you to choose, create and deliver the right metrics for your sustainability goals.



INTEGRATION

Developing innovative new metrics for new challenges

Societal and stakeholder expectations for implementing sustainability in business are becoming more demanding. Sometimes, off-the-shelf metrics cannot help you answer their questions. PRé has extensive experience in life-cycle-based metrics pioneering: implementing cutting-edge new product metrics and developing completely new, scientifically sound and robust metrics. PRé has been the driving force behind many ground-breaking initiatives like ReCiPe or the Handbook for Product Social Impact Assessment.



PIONEERING

Integrating sustainability metrics in your business

To create business value from sustainability, your business needs to integrate sustainability metrics across its business functions. You can't improve what you can't measure. PRé has the expertise required to help you choose the right metrics and to integrate sustainability into your day-to-day operations. PRé also supports you in increasing the efficiency of your LCA work and in empowering your LCA practitioners.



DELIVERY

Expert LCA knowledge to measure sustainability performance

LCA has proven to be a robust and science-based way to measure and communicate your sustainability performance. PRé can review your LCA studies, deliver EPDs, footprints and other metrics, and provide you with completely new LCA studies to measure your impact. Our consultants are renowned for their expertise in specific topics, such as impact assessment, uncertainty, normalisation, toxicity, social sustainability and databases. PRé offers training courses and in-house training that build a solid knowledge base to help you conduct LCA studies yourself.

Market-leading businesses that create value from sustainability metrics

PRé has built a worldwide reputation as a leader on environmental and social impact assessment. We work with organisations and institutes such as the European Commission, European Space Agency, Heineken, Philips, L'Oréal and DSM.



Get in touch

We are happy to hear from you and discuss your sustainability challenges and opportunities.

PRé Consultants bv
Stationsplein 121
3818 LE Amersfoort
The Netherlands

+31 33 450 4010
consultancy@pre-sustainability.com
pre-sustainability.com

