

## **Discussion paper**

### **Implementation plan for a future environmental life cycle assessment framework for construction products, 2 March 2020**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

In the context of this document and the discussions it intends to instigate, we propose to use the term “BWR7+”. This term denotes all the impacts on the wider environment that occur during the whole life cycle of a construction product. Accordingly, it goes beyond BWR 7 and also includes the relevant parts of BWR 3 and BWR 6. It also assumes that, in order to fairly and consistently quantify the environmental impacts of construction products, it is necessary to use a life cycle assessment approach.

The objective of this document is to identify questions and issues that need to be addressed with a view to the implementation of BWR7+ in the context of the current and the future CPR. It will also discuss how these questions and issues should be addressed - in which order and, as much as possible, when.

#### **B. OPEN QUESTIONS AND ISSUES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BWR7+**

##### **I. STRATEGIC QUESTIONS – to be answered at the earliest stage**

EU industry has already developed over 6000 Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) based on EN 15804. In addition, a substantial number of national and regional administrations are involved in the development of these EPDs and there are economic operators who offer services related to the implementation of EN 15804.

Moreover, any decision taken on the method to be applied in order to obtain an EPD in the construction sector will resonate throughout the economy as construction represents a significant proportion of the consumption of cement, steel, aluminium, plastics, etc. We also have to keep in mind that these supply sectors serve other customers and value chains apart from construction. It would be unfavourable if suppliers would be subject to different and non-compatible methods depending on the use-applications of the final products for which they supply materials.

It is also worth noting, finally, that the Commission services are currently considering putting forward product legislation containing life cycle based environmental impact requirements. At this stage, the

Commission services consider the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) method<sup>1</sup> as a promising option for the underlying method.

Given these considerations, the following questions and issues have to be addressed:

1. We assume that, whatever it might be, the chosen methodology has to serve the assessment of both construction products and construction works, i.e. the product level approach must be compatible with the building level approach. ***Do Member States share this view? If not, please specify.***
2. We assume that for the construction industry, the choice for the underlying method is going to be between EN 15804 and PEF (and possibly an “in-between” or “and-or” solution, see also point 3). No other / third methods should be considered. ***Do Member States share this view? If not, please specify the reasons for disagreement and nominate any potentially interesting other / third method.***
3. We assume that all construction products will and should be subject to the same underlying method. We also assume that:
  - (1) the needs of the construction sector go beyond PEF;
  - (2) PEF goes beyond the needs of the construction sector; and
  - (3) not only the needs of the construction sector are to be covered<sup>2</sup>.

Accordingly: either EN 15804’s currently non-obligatory “additional indicators” derived from PEF should be made obligatory or, if PEF is chosen, PEF has to be complemented with the material flows<sup>3</sup> related indicators of EN 15804 (please note that this could be done by listing them as required “additional technical information” in the relevant category rules). ***Assuming that our two assumptions are right: do Member States share this view? If not, please specify.***

4. **Which other elements covered by EN 15804 are not covered by PEF?**
5. **Which are the construction sector specific needs even not reflected in EN 15804?**
6. We assume that both EN 15804 and PEF are able to cover all environmental impacts included in the current set of BWRs. ***Do Member States share this view? If not, please specify.***
7. We assume that neither EN 15804 nor PEF include environmental impacts lying outside the scope of the current set of BWRs. ***Do Member States share this view? If not, please specify.***
8. Both methodologies (EN 15804 and PEF) require secondary life cycle indicator databases. We assume that, independent of the methodology chosen, only a single EU-wide database will be

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<sup>1</sup> More information on PEF method and the results of its pilot phase are available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/PEFCR\\_OEFSR\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/PEFCR_OEFSR_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Horizontal policies regarding environmental impacts are unlikely to accept methodological derogations for specific sectors.

<sup>3</sup> “Material flows” are apparently a topic that is – at least under the current BWRs - very important for our sector.

able to provide the necessary harmonisation and guarantee a level playing field. **Do Member States share this view? If not, please specify the reasons why not.**

**9. Would Member States be willing to nominate a national expert or a contact point with whom all the aspects linked to the implementation of BWR7+ can be discussed directly?**

*We expect Member States to provide their response to these questions and to identify any other relevant strategic questions by April 28<sup>th</sup> so that the review of the results and a discussion on conclusions can take place during the meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Our objective is to be able to have a common position on the above questions to guide the work down the line.*

*In addition, we would like Member States to look into to the set of operational questions listed below and indicate any other questions or issues that they think are relevant for the next steps in the process. This input is also expected by April 28<sup>th</sup>.*

*In formulating input on the operational question, we would hope for the involvement of the nominated experts. The nominated experts are also expected to attend the second meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>.*

*When addressing the two input requests above, Member States are free to consult stakeholders within their territories as they see fit. However, we expect one aggregated response per Member State.*

**II. OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS<sup>4</sup> – to be addressed in context of implementation**

- a) If EN 15804 is chosen as the underlying method, would it be acceptable to include all 16 impact categories currently included in PEF (i.e. making EN 15804 “additional indicators” mandatory)?
- b) PEF includes tools (e.g. benchmarks and identification of “hotspots”) to facilitate the improve product’s environmental performance. Should the method chosen for BWR7+ include such tools?
- c) EN 15804 does not support the calculation of a single aggregate BWR7+ value for the product in question, which means that the comparison between similar products can only be done on the basis of a set of environmental impact indicators (which are not comparable among themselves, due to the lack of a weighting step). Should the method chosen for BWR7+ provide for calculation a single value at product level?
- d) It could occur that EN 15804’s module D is used for addressing the End of Life (EoL) of construction products while other products are addressed through PEF’s EoL approach (through the so-called Circular Footprint Formula, CFF). This situation will likely lead to double counting of the environmental benefits of secondary materials when reintroduced into the system (the impacts prevented by recycling or reuse would be subtracted both from the total impacts of the

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<sup>4</sup> Some of these questions can definitively only be answered by the legislators. However, the best possible implementation depends on what the legislators most likely stipulate. As the Member States will be part of the Council, raising these questions to them in this context might provide us with a foretaste and thus optimise the implementation process of BWR7+.

product from which the secondary material emanates and of the product using this material). How can this situation be prevented or managed?

- e) BWR7+ requires standardised uniform scenarios to ensure comparability. How and by whom will these scenarios be developed? European Commission / CEN TC only / dedicated expert group / mixture of these / wider consensus needed?
- f) BWR7+ requires standardised Product Category Rules (c-PCRs) to ensure comparability. How and by whom will these c-PCRs be developed? European Commission / CEN TC only / dedicated expert group / mixture of these / wider consensus needed?
- g) Should classes of performance and thresholds be defined within the context of BWR7+?
- h) How will the reference service life be approached? Each product independently / building related / per family (i.e. structural products = life of the building)? Who defines this?
- i) How should the secondary database be developed and managed? Who takes the lead? Who ensures maintenance once the system is up-and running? Who will be hosting the system?
- j) For reasons of consistency, it seems that all construction products should have the same AVCP system. Is this a viable way forward?
- k) Introduction of BWR7+ would potentially require a dedicated Notified Body system. Is this viable or should BWR7+ be integrated into the CPR's current Notified Body system?
- l) How long should the resulting EPDs be valid? 5 years as in PEF? Permanent? How can improvements in products or production technology be taken into account?
- m) Should there be one single Declaration of Performance (DoP) for everything? Is a BWR7+ specific DoP complementing the "technical" DoP a better solution? Would this require an electronic DoP?
- n) In addition to BWR7+ requirements, what other requirements are to be included? Information on SoHC (Annex VI of CLP) and SVHC (REACH)?
- o) Should sharing and cascading, as allowed under the current CPR, also be allowed in relation to BWR7+? If yes, under what circumstances?
- p) Waste related questions:
  - (1) Uniformisation of waste criteria at Member State level will be necessary. Would Member States provide us guidance on the key factors?
  - (2) Better definitions may be required. What should they be? As an example, rather than recycle and reuse, we could have 'reuse without change', 'reuse with change', 'recycle' and 'waste'. A stable framework is needed for products that can safely be used without change. What would the needs of the Member States be in this respect?

(3) Should the DoP include information on deconstruction and recyclability?

q) How can CPR data, including data on BWR7+, be integrated into LEVELs?

### **C. EXPECTED PROGRESS**

At the upcoming March meeting, we will discuss the strategic questions outlined in this document. As indicated above, we expect that after the meeting we will collect Member States' consolidated position on the strategic questions listed in this document and on any other strategic issues they think should be addressed (deadline April 28<sup>th</sup>). During the May meeting, we will then decide on a common position based on the positions of the Member States.

After the strategic level is indeed stable enough, we can start working on the operational questions (with the flexibility to adjust if new information emerges). We expect this discussion to start at the May meeting. The discussion will be based on Member States' input on the operational questions sent before April 28<sup>th</sup>. Here again, we will need a complete list of questions or issues that need to be addressed in order to work out a strategy.

Once the list of questions is there, we need to analyse which order to follow in finding the answers. Once this is done, we will be able to decide whether to work as one big group (with experts) or if it make more sense to split up into smaller groups addressing specific issues. In the latter case, we will need to ensure coordination, i.e. someone will need to follow the work of the different sub-groups and to bring them together when necessary.