

SPM² Certification Handbook



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This Handbook has been developed as part of the Erasmus+ KA220-HED project Sustainable Project Management through PM² (SPM²). It contributes to the project objective of establishing a flexible micro-credential and certification framework for Sustainable Project Management through PM². Within this framework, the SPM² Certification Programme has been designed in alignment with internationally recognised principles for personnel certification and quality assurance, supporting the project's objective of establishing an ISO 17024-compliant certification framework.

The Handbook defines the structure and operational rules of the SPM² Certification Programme. It covers each certification level, its competence focus, examination format, study material, learning objectives, target audience, exam outline, assessment criteria and sample questions.

The Handbook is aligned with the SPM² Guide, curriculum, training resources and pilot validation activities developed within the project. It applies to all delivery modes, including online proctored examinations. Candidates are expected to familiarise themselves with this document prior to registering for any certification level.

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A. About ECVC

The European Centre for Vocational Certification (ECVC) is a leading authority in providing globally recognized certifications across a wide range of high-demand fields. Our mission is to empower individuals and organizations through cutting-edge, industry-relevant qualifications that reflect excellence and support professional success in today's competitive environment.

Rooted in European Union legislation, policies, and official publications, ECVC certifications not only meet global standards but are also closely aligned with the regulatory frameworks and policy guidelines that shape professional practices within the EU.

ECVC is more than just a certification provider, we are a dedicated partner in your professional journey. With a strong commitment to quality and innovation, we strive to make your certification experience both meaningful and transformative. Our programs are designed to strengthen your knowledge, enhance your skills, and support your career advancement.

B. Overview of the SPM² Certification Programme

The SPM² Certification Programme validates professional competence in applying the Sustainable Project Management through PM² (SPM²) Methodology. SPM² is a structured sustainability-oriented extension of the PM² Project Management Methodology (Guide 3.1), preserving its governance architecture, lifecycle logic, artefact structure and RASCI-based accountability.

SPM² does not replace PM². It builds upon it by embedding sustainability considerations directly into governance roles, decision criteria, lifecycle checkpoints and core artefacts.

In contemporary project environments, performance is no longer assessed solely through time, cost and scope. Increasingly, projects are evaluated based on environmental impact, stakeholder responsibility, governance transparency and long-term value creation. Sustainability therefore cannot be treated as an additional reporting requirement. It must be integrated into the governance logic of projects.

The SPM² Certification Programme exists to validate the capability to operationalise this integration within structured project environments.

B.1. Why SPM² Certification Matters Now

Regulatory, societal and economic developments have reshaped expectations placed on projects and project-based organisations. European and global frameworks such as the EU Green Deal, EU Taxonomy, CSRD and the Sustainable Development Goals require organisations to demonstrate accountable, measurable and strategically aligned sustainability performance.

While existing project management certifications validate methodological competence, they do not systematically assess the structured integration of sustainability into governance architecture, artefacts and decision-making processes. This creates a competence gap.

The SPM² Certification Programme addresses this structural need by validating the ability to embed sustainability within established governance systems rather than treating it as a parallel advisory function.

B.2. Certification Architecture

The SPM² Certification Programme is structured across two levels:

LEVEL 1 – Foundation	
Sustainable PM² Associate	
Conceptual understanding of SPM ² structure and sustainability integration	EQF 5–6
LEVEL 2 – Practitioner	
Certified Sustainable PM² Practitioner	
Applied integration of sustainability within project governance and artefacts	EQF 6–7

The EQF ranges reflect the increasing complexity and autonomy expected at each level, and the two levels form part of a stackable SPM² micro-credential pathway. The Foundation level (EQF 5–6) represents conceptual understanding of the SPM² Methodology and how sustainability is embedded within PM² governance, while the Practitioner level (EQF 6–7) represents applied competence and contextual decision-making, integrating sustainability into governance checkpoints, artefacts and lifecycle decisions within real project environments. The two levels overlap at EQF 6: the distinction between them lies in the increasing depth and complexity of the competence assessed, rather than in separate domain coverage, since both levels draw on the same core SPM² methodological areas.

B.3. Relationship to PM² Certification

SPM² Certification complements – but does not substitute – PM² Certification. While PM² Certification validates methodological understanding of governance, lifecycle, processes and artefacts, SPM² Certification validates the structured integration of sustainability within those elements.

PM² Basic or higher certification is recommended (but not mandatory) prior to SPM² progression. This ensures methodological fluency before sustainability extension.

B.4. Competency Progression Logic

Dimension	Level 1 – Foundation	Level 2 – Practitioner
Understanding of SPM ² Structure	Recognises core architecture and terminology	Applies pillars and artefacts in structured environments
Sustainability Integration	Identifies integration points	Implements sustainability in artefacts and checkpoints
Artefact Usage	Recognises artefact purpose	Develops and tailors artefacts
Governance Accountability	Understands roles and lifecycle structure	Operates within governance layers
Decision Complexity	Conceptual	Applied

C. Overview of SPM² Foundation Certification



The SPM² Foundation Certification (Sustainable PM² Associate) is an entry-level certification that validates foundational literacy in the Sustainable Project Management through PM² (SPM²) Methodology. It confirms structured understanding of the PM² governance architecture and the integration of sustainability within its lifecycle, processes and artefacts. This level establishes a common sustainability-aware project language and ensures that candidates understand how sustainability considerations are embedded within structured project environments. The Foundation level does not assess applied decision-making or leadership capability.

C.1. Key Benefits

For Organisations

- Builds a common sustainability-aware project vocabulary across teams and departments
- Ensures project staff understand the governance logic of SPM² before engaging in structured projects
- Supports onboarding of new team members into sustainability-integrated project environments
- Establishes a measurable baseline of competence aligned with the EU SPM² Methodology
- Contributes to organisational readiness for sustainability-oriented project governance

For Individuals

- Provides formal recognition of foundational knowledge in Sustainable Project Management

- Serves as a starting point for progression within the SPM² certification pathway
- Enhances employability in sustainability-oriented, EU-funded or governance-driven project environments
- Demonstrates commitment to structured, responsible project management practice
- Aligns individual competence with contemporary regulatory and ESG-related professional requirements

C.2. Learning Objectives

By completing this certification, candidates will be able to:

- Describe the structure, purpose and logic of the Sustainable PM² Methodology
- Identify the four SPM² lifecycle phases and their associated governance checkpoints
- Explain governance layers, roles and RASCI-based accountability structures
- Recognise sustainability integration points within the PM² governance architecture
- Identify sustainability-enhanced artefacts and explain their purpose
- Understand the relationship between sustainability and project decision-making in structured environments
- Follow the flow of an SPM²-based project from initiation through closure
- Recognise the relevance of the SPM² Mindsets for sustainability-integrated project behaviour.

C.3. Target Audience

The Foundation Certification is suitable for professionals entering or operating within sustainability-oriented project environments, including:

- Project team members
- Junior project managers
- Students (BSc, MSc, MBA)
- EU-funded project participants
- Administrative and operational staff
- Professionals transitioning into sustainability-oriented project environments
- Public sector employees involved in project-based work

C.4. Study Material

The examination is based exclusively on:

- SPM² Guide v.1.0 (full document) – the sole mandatory study reference
- SPM² Core Artefact templates (as described within the Guide)
- No external project management frameworks or supplementary reading is required or assessed

C.5. Exam Format & Difficulty Level

The SPM² Foundation Certification corresponds to EQF Level 5–6, representing structured knowledge and foundational applied understanding of sustainability integration within the PM² governance framework. At this level, candidates demonstrate the ability to comprehend and describe how sustainability principles are embedded within project governance, lifecycle phases and artefacts, reflecting the knowledge and skills required to work effectively within sustainability-integrated project environments under structured supervision.

- Multiple choice questions
- 45 questions per exam
- 45 minutes duration
- At least 35 questions need to be answered correctly to pass the exam
- One mark awarded for every correct answer
- No negative marking for wrong answers
- Difficulty level: Easy

**The assessment focuses on comprehension and structured recognition of SPM² concepts, governance elements and sustainability integration logic.*

C.6. Exam Outline

The 45 exam questions are distributed in thematic categories as per the below table:

Thematic Category	No. of questions	Percentage
1. SPM ² Governance	9	20%
2. SPM ² Lifecycle	9	20%
3. SPM ² Processes	15	30%
4. SPM ² Artefacts	9	20%
5. SPM ² PM ² Mindsets	3	10%
Total Number of Questions	45	100%

C.7. Prerequisites

There are no mandatory prerequisites. However, it is recommended to have:

- PM² Basic Certification (or higher), to ensure familiarity with the underlying PM² governance architecture
- Completion of an SPM² introductory training programme or workshop
- Basic awareness of sustainability concepts and EU regulatory frameworks (e.g. SDGs, EU Green Deal)

D. Overview of the SPM² Practitioner Certification



The SPM² Practitioner Certification (Certified Sustainable PM² Practitioner) validates the ability to apply the Sustainable PM² Methodology in structured, real-world project environments. While the Foundation level confirms conceptual literacy, the Practitioner level confirms operational capability. It demonstrates that candidates can integrate sustainability into governance checkpoints, lifecycle management and artefact development within actual project contexts. This certification confirms that the holder can manage sustainability considerations as an active governance responsibility – not as an afterthought or reporting layer.

D.1. Key Benefits

For Organisations

- Confirms that project managers can operationally integrate sustainability into governance and artefact development
- Reduces the risk of superficial ESG compliance by validating structured sustainability reasoning
- Supports the deployment of sustainability-integrated project management across portfolios and programmes
- Demonstrates organisational commitment to responsible project governance to stakeholders and regulators
- Provides assurance that project leads are equipped to manage sustainability trade-offs within structured governance frameworks
- Strengthens alignment with EU regulatory requirements including CSRD, EU Taxonomy and the EU Green Deal

For Individuals

- Validates operational competence in applying SPM² within real project environments
- Positions the holder as a qualified sustainable project manager capable of leading governance-integrated sustainability
- Supports career progression in ESG transformation, PMO leadership, sustainability governance and EU-funded projects
- Demonstrates applied competence that goes beyond awareness – reflecting the ability to act, decide and lead
- Provides a recognised credential aligned with contemporary professional and regulatory expectations
- Creates a foundation for progression to the SPM² Advanced level

D.2. Learning Objectives

By completing this certification, candidates will be able to:

- Apply SPM² governance principles within structured project environments, including sustainability-integrated decision-making
- Translate sustainability principles into core project artefacts including Business Case, Project Handbook, Sustainability Management Plan and Risk Management Plan
- Manage sustainability-related risks, stakeholder considerations and acceptance criteria across the project lifecycle
- Navigate governance interdependencies and lifecycle transitions with sustainability integration
- Apply proportionality and tailoring logic when adapting SPM² to specific project contexts
- Align project deliverables with long-term value creation and sustainability objectives

- Evaluate sustainability trade-offs within real or simulated project scenarios
- Demonstrate applied competence across the full SPM² artefact landscape.

D.3. Target Audience

The Practitioner Certification is suitable for professionals who apply or oversee project management in sustainability-oriented environments, including:

- Project managers
- Work Package Leaders
- Programme coordinators
- PMO members and sustainability focal points
- Sustainability officers operating within project environments
- Consultants integrating sustainability into project governance
- EU-funded project leads with governance responsibilities

D.4. Study Material

The exam questions are based on:

- SPM² Guide v.1.0 (full document, all chapters including appendices) – the sole mandatory study reference
- SPM² Artefact templates (all artefacts described within the Guide, including sustainability-enhanced versions)
- No external project management frameworks or supplementary reading is required or assessed

D.5. Exam Format & Difficulty Level

The SPM² Practitioner Certification corresponds to EQF Level 6–7, representing advanced applied competence in integrating sustainability within project

governance structures, lifecycle management and artefact development. At this level, candidates demonstrate the ability to interpret, apply and evaluate SPM² methodology in structured project contexts – exercising independent judgement in sustainability-related decisions while operating within established governance frameworks.

- Multiple choice questions
- 60 questions per exam
- 60 minutes duration
- At least 45 correct answers to pass the exam
- One mark awarded for every right answer
- No negative marking for wrong answers
- Difficulty level: Medium-High

D.6. Exam Outline

The 60 exam questions are distributed in thematic categories as per the below table:

Thematic Category	No. of questions	Percentage
1. SPM ² Governance	9	15%
2. SPM ² Lifecycle	9	15%
3. SPM ² Processes	12	20%
4. SPM ² Artefacts	12	20%
5. SPM ² PM ² Mindsets	6	10%
6. Cross-thematic Advanced SPM ² Topics	12	20%
Total Number of Questions	60	100%

D.7. Prerequisites

There are no mandatory prerequisites for the Practitioner level; it is open to candidates who meet the recommended profile below:

- SPM² Foundation Certification (Sustainable PM² Associate)
- Demonstrated equivalent knowledge, together with relevant professional experience or completion of related training, subject to review by the certification body.
- PM² Essentials Certification (or higher) – to ensure familiarity with the underlying PM² governance architecture
- Completion of an official SPM² Practitioner training programme
- Minimum one year of project management experience in a professional or institutional context

Familiarity with EU regulatory sustainability frameworks (e.g. CSRD, EU Taxonomy, SDGs)



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