

- It had to be a practical Guide, aiming for precise guidelines for use in practice. These are presented separately from the descriptions of operational methods and data and from the description of the scientific background. They are illustrated by a number of examples.
- It had to present the guidelines in the framework of a number of possible decision situations, specifying the relevant procedural steps to be taken.

5. Reading guide

The present Guide consists of the following Parts.

Part 1, the part in front of you, gives a general overview of LCA in perspective: the reasons for developing a new Guide, the main characteristics of LCA, the main international developments and the guiding principles for the present Guide. The main target audience of this part is those who use the results of LCA, for instance policymakers and corporate managers.

Part 2 is the Guide itself, which itself consists of two parts. Part 2a deals with process management and procedural guidelines, and contains an overall description of the technical guidelines. Part 2b offers an operational annex, including elements for all LCA phases but emphasising modeling rules for the inventory phase and factors for the impact assessment phase. This part is mainly intended for those carrying out life cycle assessments.

Part 3 offers an overview of the scientific background for the guidelines presented in Part 2a. Its main intended readership is scientists working on the further development of LCA and persons carrying out LCAs or using the results of LCAs who wish to understand why certain methodological choices have been made, which other options could be considered, and why the possibilities and limitations of LCA are as they are.

Additional reading guides for Parts 2 and 3 are provided within these documents.