

Conference Report

Buying Green! The power of the public purse for reducing environmental impacts of public purchases and stimulating eco-innovative supplies

Event organised by DG ENV in cooperation with DG ELARG (TAIEX)

Very successful event, considering the high number of participants, their demonstrated interest in the matter and the many motivating and diverse presentations.

It became clear that there is an enormous scope for improvement, in terms of both strategic programming and concrete implementation of green public procurement. The Handbook, which has been translated into all EU languages, was perceived as a good tool for initiating GPP policies and raising awareness of local authorities.

Training on GPP seems essential and could be easily/usefully integrated into the more general training programmes on public procurement.

TAIEX offers an efficient framework for the organisation of GPP seminars in the respective Member States.

1. Objectives of the conference:

Awareness raising event targeted at relevant Member States representatives of the 10 new Member States and other “multipliers”. Launch of the translated versions of the Handbook on environmental public procurement.

2. Participants:

Conference organised by DG ENLARG (financial-logistics) and DG ENV (programme-participants-speakers)

64 participants from 10 new MS;

14 speakers from CE, new and old MS national or local organisations

Agenda and conference material available on <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/gpp/> under “media and events”.

3. Results:

The morning of day 1 was mainly dedicated to introductory speeches by Herbert Aichinger (DG ENV/G.2) on the political background, Claudio Romanini (DG MARKT/C.3) on the legal background and Jill Michielssen (DG ENV/G.2) introducing the Handbook on green public procurement. The last speech of the morning was made by Peter Szuppinger of the Center for Environmental Studies, HU, on procurement strategies for local authorities in Hungary. It showed that green public procurement in HU is still more based on isolated trials than on a specific policy (which would focus on a certain product group for example) even less so on a global strategy. It was mentioned that 3000 public authorities were about to be trained on public procurement (with help of Structural Funds) and that it needed to be checked whether the training programme would also cover green public procurement (see also <http://www.ktk-ces.hu>).

The afternoon started with a presentation by Katalin Kovács from the city of Pécs who talked about good practices on GPP in HU. She suggested GPP –in the first stage- to focus on areas

in which environmental permissions are needed : construction works, waste management and waste water treatment. She presented an example of the extension of a sewage system calling for continuous environmental monitoring in order to prevent pollution of drinking water due to close presence of a former uranium mine. She stressed the need for training! Representatives of the HU government underlined the work already achieved in terms of transposition of public procurement directives and training in this field, whilst recognizing the usefulness of additional green public procurement training.

Then followed two presentations on the Dutch strategy and environmental information system by Christel Ankersmit of the Dutch environment ministry and by Corine Van As of SenterNovem, an independent agency working for the government.

In terms of strategy, Dutch GPP is based upon a Memorandum and procurement programme (including a website, criteria, events and training), and an Action Programme setting targets by way of a political commitment (50 % GPP for 2010, 100 % for the government level) and seeking regular monitoring of the situation. Studies have shown that 23 % of public purchasing is "green". To make it happen, NL has developed a database containing environmental information for 32 products, distinguishing for each category between three levels of "greenness" to choose from, presented as "Menukaarten". It was announced that the database would be translated into EN and could therefore become a very useful tool also in other Member States ([SenterNovem - Duurzaam inkopen](#)).

There has been some discussion on the extent of the notion of "green" : according to the Dutch interpretation, "green" procurement would imply a minimal "green" outcome. EC services explained that they had opted for a more extensive definition, covering all procurement where environmental considerations are included, at whatever stage, therefore including also cases where green criteria have only been included at the award stage, even though the latter would not always lead to a "green" result (in case other award criteria are outweighing the green one for example). At EU level, it was indeed felt necessary not to discourage "starters" in the field of GPP, who would not be willing to introduce minimal environmental requirements for products because they wouldn't be sure about market presence or price of products complying with such environmental requirements. By putting the environmental criteria in the award criteria, the risk of ending up with no offers or only very expensive offers is excluded.

Further there was a presentation by Athina Koutroumani (DG ENV/G.2) on the possible use of eco-label criteria in green public procurement. Peter Cernigoj from Slovenian Ministry of Finance made an interesting suggestion to include CPV codes (codes currently used to describe products and services in public procurement) in the eco-label website (http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm), next to the relevant eco-label criteria of the relevant product groups, as well as in the environmental database of the Commission which the Handbook refers to.

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/gpp/guidelines.htm#database>

Finally Karsten Andrup Pedersen, Chair of the federal Association of Danish public purchasing managers, explained how GPP is taken forward in Denmark, which is a "front-runner" in this field. He focussed on energy efficiency, because it's the easiest way of convincing authorities to buy "green". He also explained how suppliers were selected on the basis of specific questionnaires (including environmental questions) and the inclusion of environmental technical specifications and award criteria by relying on the help of environmental experts when drawing up tender documents. A study carried out in 2005 has demonstrated that 92 % of all framework agreements are "green"! He stressed how green public procurement could importantly raise the credibility of public purchasers when asking companies and citizens to comply with environmental measures. Further, suppliers would also be happy with the enhanced competitiveness resulting from it. The usefulness of the technical dialogue with potential suppliers before the drafting of the tender documents was also highlighted, in order to take away insecurity about environmental specifications, price or availability.

During the morning of the second day, there was first a presentation on the (complex) relation between Environmental management schemes and GPP by Patrick Hamon (DG ENV/G.2) (http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/emas/index_en.htm) followed by two new MS

presentations, one on green purchasing strategies in the Czech Republic by Miroslav Hajek of the CZ ministry of the environment and another by Peter Cernigoj of the Slovenian Ministry of Finance. In the Czech Republic, there is a resolution which makes the support of the development of selling/using environmental friendly products mandatory for central government and recommended for regional offices. Most success has been booked in the furniture sector, where 80 % of the purchases are "green". The presentation of Peter Cernigoj focussed on 5 concrete examples of GPP in Slovenia, amongst which the very successful "contracting for energy services", which allow public authorities to improve the quality of their buildings and reduce their energy use without having to invest (energy savings are shared with the contractor who ensures the building and maintenance of the heating system and fuel supply). The contract documents are available in German on the Slovenian website. Central purchasing agencies were also mentioned as welcome for "economies of scale" based green public procurement. It was suggested to link the DG MARKT Simap website (containing information on public procurement legislation and link to the TED database) http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/publicprocurement/simap_en.htm

to the DG ENV website so as to draw the attention to GPP. <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/gpp/>

After the Coffee break Sean O'Sullivan gave some practical advice on the possibility to organise local seminars on (Green) Public Procurement in the respective Member States, as a logical follow-up of the awareness raising event in Brussels. <http://taiex.cec.eu.int/>

Finally, Tomas Chicote from the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and Dag Nordby representing EUROCITIES (environmental network of major EU cities) gave presentations on the Swedish environmental database and the usefulness of networking for the spreading of green purchasing policies, including a presentation of the relevant networks in the field of GPP : EUROCITIES (<http://www.eurocities.org/INDEX.php>) and ICLEI (<http://www.iclei-europe.org/index.php?id=689>). EUROCITIES has recently published a guide on responsible procurement, referring also to the inclusion of social and ethical criteria (<http://www.carpe-net.org>).

Sweden has a free comprehensive database with environmental specifications for 60 products, managed and regularly updated by an agency gathering representatives of public and private sector (www.eku.nu).

4. Follow up:

Member states representatives were encouraged to take up green public procurement in their respective Member States by setting up or proposing the establishment of green public procurement strategies and instruments, in conformity with the recommendation of the Commission to adopt National Action Plans on Green Public Procurement by the end of 2006. As training is an important element in such GPP strategy, the organisation of practical seminars on GPP for purchasing officers in the respective countries would be mostly welcomed, and not too difficult to organise thanks to the TAIEX funding which is still available for the new Member States at least till 2007.

Continued cooperation with relevant services in DG ENV.

Jill Michielssen
Unit ENV/G.2

Cc. Conference participants, T. Makela, H. Aichinger, J. Wejchert, O. Csorba, B. Davidsson