

AGENCY FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE, BULGARIA

Procurement objectives

The Agency for Social Assistance (ASA) is an executive agency of the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. It is responsible for providing social and family benefits, as well as other social services. The implementation of a project funded under the European Social Fund was seen as an opportunity to pilot the application of GPP criteria.

The project focused on improving quality of life for people with disabilities and had a procurement budget of approximately 200 000 BGN (€100 000). The contracts awarded related to the supply of seals, logistics in organising and conducting seminars and the supply of printed material, paper and office supplies. The EU GPP criteria were consulted.

Background

Bulgaria adopted its first National Action Plan for GPP in 2011. This covers the period 2012-2014 and sets binding targets for the percentage of contracts awarded by the central administration which apply GPP criteria. The targets range from 50 to 100 percent for six product groups.

In 2010 representatives from the ASA took part in a seminar on GPP organised by the [Centre for human resources development and regional initiatives](#). After this awareness-raising event, the ASA committed to using green criteria in its procurement.



Criteria used

Subject matter of the contract:

Provision of logistical services (seminars and publicity)

Technical specifications:

- At least one of the elements of sound equipment in the halls must meet the latest Energy Star specifications for energy efficiency. *Verification:* Products bearing the Energy Star Label will be presumed to comply. Equivalent labels or a technical dossier demonstrating that the criteria have been met will also be accepted.

- Two of the products offered for lunch must be of organic origin;
- Two of the products during the coffee break must be of organic origin; coffee, tea or juice. These must be clearly marked as organic products.

Verification: A certificate or label attesting to the organic production methods applied.

- Cups used during coffee breaks should be produced from recycled materials and clearly marked as such. *Verification:* An eco-label or declaration from the manufacturer regarding the recycled content of the products.

- It must be recommended that participants use a mode of transport with a lower environmental impact, e.g. preference for rail transport.

Subject matter of the contract:

Supply of printed information and advertising materials for the project (in lots)

Technical specifications:

- Posters and brochures are to be produced on paper with at least 75% recycled fibre
- Writing pads are to be produced from paper with at least 65% recycled fibre

Verification: An eco-label or declaration from the manufacturer regarding the recycled content of the products.

Sustainable project management and events

Subject matter of the contract:

Supply of 100% recycled copy paper, stationery and office supplies

Technical specifications:

- Copy paper is to be produced from 100% recycled fibres
- Binders for documents, cubes with sticky tape and notebooks are to be produced from recycled material with paper being at least 75% recycled fibres
- Pens and bags for documents are to be produced from recycled materials (metal, plastic, paper)

Verification: An eco-label or declaration from the manufacturer regarding the recycled content of the products.

Subject matter of the contract:

Supply of seals made of recycled plastic

Technical specifications:

Seals must contain a minimum of 80% recycled plastic material.

Verification: Evidence of the manufacturing process applied by the producer must be provided, for example an ISO 14 001 certificate or equivalent.

Results

Contracts have been successfully concluded for all lots. The supply of seals made from recycled plastic proved to be the most difficult, with only one tender received despite market research showing multiple suppliers could meet the requirement. An average of three tenders was received for the other lots. The evaluation committee was able to assess and verify the tenders submitted and was happy with the technical merit of the products offered. Feedback from the events indicated that participants were pleased to use products identified as sustainable options.

Environmental impacts

Although the direct impact of a small-scale procurement such as this is minimal, it creates awareness amongst participants, the procuring authority and suppliers regarding environmentally friendly alternatives.

The production of virgin paper fibres can contribute to the global shrinking of forested areas and the associated loss of biodiversity, as not all forests are managed in a legal and sustainable manner. The purchase of 100% recycled paper addresses these impacts by reducing the volume of virgin pulp required. Over 12.1 mega tonnes of post-consumer plastic waste were sent to landfill in the EU, Norway and Switzerland in 2008 ([Plastic Waste in the Environment](#), pg 73). The use of recycled plastic in a wide range of products helps to reduce this burden and encourage more sustainable use of resources.

Lessons learned

As a result of the successful implementation of GPP in these contracts, the ASA is emerging as one of the leading institutions in Bulgaria with a targeted policy associated with the purchase of products and services that are environmentally friendly. Currently, it is responsible for implementing a further two projects in which a total of ten green tenders have been launched.

A dedicated workshop was held in December 2011 on the implementation of Bulgaria's NAP for the period 2012-2014, at which ASA presented its approach and the results. This was attended by approximately 40 representatives of federal agencies and other contracting authorities. The ASA is also providing direct assistance to the National Employment Agency to green its procurement.