Joint procurement of 100% recycled copying paper
Municipality of Erlangen (Germany)

Background

Erlangen is located in the state of Bavaria and has a population of approximately 108,000 people. At the end of 2012, the Municipality expanded its sustainability profile by including expertise on sustainable procurement. This led to the establishment of an Office for Sustainable Procurement within the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy Affairs. Erlangen started purchasing recycled paper some 20 years ago. Since 2013 all municipal departments are obliged to use only paper consisting of 100% recycled fibres.

The purchase of copying paper by the Municipality of Erlangen is carried out centrally, by the Department of Building Management. Sustainability requirements for public tenders are then provided by the Environment Department.

Procurement objectives

Erlangen is a member of the German Municipal Purchasers Group (EKV), which forms part of the German Association of Cities, and has taken part in joint procurement actions of recycled paper organised by the EKV since 2013.

Contracts were awarded at the beginning of 2014 for a year-long supply of 100% recycled copying paper, following the publication of a Call for Tenders in the previous year. The German-wide joint purchase was made by the EKV and was divided into 29 lots based on the number of participating public bodies (councils and hospitals). These included, in addition to Erlangen, the cities of Nürnberg, Hannover and Wolfsburg. The ‘supply contract’ was in operation until the end of February 2015.

The latest joint call for tenders of a very similar nature was published in November 2016 (awarded in March 2017), was divided up into 27 lots, and is currently in operation until 28 February 2018.

Criteria used

Subject matter:
Supply of photocopying paper.

Technical criteria:
100% recycled A4-sized paper. To fulfil these specifications, products needed to either carry a certified eco-label, such as the “Blue Angel”, or to prove their sustainability by providing manufacturing data.

Award criteria:
Lowest price was set as the sole criteria for awarding the contract.
Results

The one-year contract was valued at three million euro and involved numerous suppliers. The joint procurement procedure, via the EKV, allowed for substantial savings to be made.

Environmental Impacts

Through the Pro Recycling Paper (IPR) Sustainability Calculation tool, and based on the annual consumption (from 2013) of 13.85 million sheets of Blue Angel certified 100% recycled copying paper (A4 sized), annual savings for the Municipality of Erlangen were predicted as follows:

- 12.03 tonnes of CO₂
- 2,191,093 litres of water
- 451,234 kWh energy

The figures were calculated based on a comparison of virgin paper fibres with 100% recycled fibres.

In Germany 800,000 tonnes of photocopying paper are used every year, weighing almost as much as San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge (source: Blue Angel website). The most significant environmental impacts from copying paper consumption are forest destruction and potential loss of biodiversity, emissions to air and water during pulp and paper production, energy, water and chemical consumption as well as waste generation (source: European Commission).

Lessons learned

- Securing the highest level of political support in the local government administration has enabled continuous positive progress to be made towards reaching 100% recycled paper purchases in the Municipality of Erlangen.

- Erlangen's experiences with recycled photocopying paper have led them to broaden these when producing printed flyers, brochures and other glossy publications. These are also printed on recycled paper.

- Actions for raising awareness have also been undertaken in local schools. The goal is to broaden the impact by reaching out to families with the message of the environmental benefits of purchasing recycled paper.

Contact person:
Verena Fiedler, Municipality of Erlangen, verena.fiedler@stadt.erlangen.de

For related information, please see European GPP criteria for Copying and Graphic Paper and the Technical Background Report.