

## Procuring quality cleaning services which meet sustainability requirements

Consortium of University Services of Catalonia (Spain)

### Background

The [Consortium of University Services of Catalonia](#) (CSCU) is a group formed by 10 universities, which share academic and management services in order to create economies of scale, and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services.

In 2014, the [Polytechnic University of Catalonia](#) (UPC) piloted a new approach to procuring cleaning services with an increased focus on quality and performance. The UPC presented the results of this approach to the rest of the group, and at the end of 2015, three members of the group - the UPC along with the Foundation for the [Open University of Catalonia](#) (UOC) and the [Scientific Park of Barcelona](#) (PCB) - announced their intentions to jointly purchase cleaning services.



### Procurement objectives

The new approach adopted by the CSUC members aimed to transform the procurement of cleaning services from a model based on the number of hours spent cleaning, to a 'service' model, based on quality and performance. The tender was based on an initial audit of needs, which measured all spaces, using average productivity ratios, occupancy rates, frequency of use, etc. The detailed results provided CSCU with a realistic estimation of the budget needed for personnel, machinery, products and industry margin.

The purchasing group also wanted to introduce environmental and health criteria into the tender, and in order to assess the appropriate level for these criteria, they consulted expert companies and consultants, the [EU GPP Criteria](#), and then developed a number of mandatory requirements that bidders would have to meet.

A call for tender was published at the end of 2015, which was split into six lots. Lots 1, 2, and 3 related to cleaning services at different UOC buildings and campus areas. Lot 4 related to the UPC campus, and lots 5 and 6 for PCB buildings.

### Criteria used

#### Subject matter of the contract:

Building cleaning services and real estate management services. Contracting cleaning services, ordinary disinfection and selective collection of waste from the campuses, centres and buildings of the following universities: UOC, UPC

and PCB. 'Extraordinary services' are also included (for example, caused by flooding, institutional events), depending on the Lot.

### Technical specifications:

A range of environmental requirements were included as technical specifications, such as the following:

- Toilet paper and hand towels made from 100% recycled material: bidders had to present the products technical data sheet and a statement of compliance with a Type 1 ecolabel or equivalent.
- Rubbish bags made from a minimum 80% recycled material: bidders had to present either a declaration by the manufacturer (with specific reference to % of recycled material and compliance with the requirements of resistance) accompanied by the product file, a certificate for an ecolabel that includes this requirement, or other equivalent documentation with specific reference to use of recycled material.
- Environmentally friendly cleaning products: products had to comply with a Type1 ecolabel ([EU Ecolabel](#), [Nordic Swan](#) or other) or other equivalent documentary evidence with a specific reference to chemical ingredients and compliance with environmental requirements. All products had to have an instruction sheet on dosage, application and precautions in handling and storage, and product containers had to be free from PVC (polyvinyl chloride) and other chlorinated plastics. In addition, the use of bleach was banned in all but specific circumstances, and the use of sprays with propellant gases and air fresheners were also prohibited.
- Machinery: all machines had to comply with [CE Marking](#) requirements, and comply with limits to the maximum decibel range.
- Collection of waste: reduction of quantity, improve quality of collection service and frequency, and optimise collection service and staff training.

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A number of social criteria were also included addressing:

- Ergonomics and welfare of cleaning staff: New cleaning techniques, equipment, materials, which have a direct impact on the welfare and improvement in the short and long term of the workers.
- Training of cleaning staff
- Lots 1 and 3 were reserved for Special Employment Centres

### Contract performance clauses:

The performance of the service is monitored through monthly audits. Failure to meet the required level of quality results in penalties.

The successful bidder was also required to annually report the consumption of cleaning products.

The contract also aimed to reduce the amount of waste generated and improve the collection quality over the contract period. This involved optimising the service, providing staff training, and monitoring. It was required that the number of individual waste bins was also progressively reduced over the course of the contract.

## Results

The estimated value of the contract was € 32,397,755 (excluding value added tax) over two years. The deadline for submissions was 26 January 2016. In total, 21 companies submitted tenders, and 13 were excluded for not meeting the requirements. The latter were not due to sustainability requirements.

In terms of costs, labour costs were found to make up for more than 95% of the costs of the service, thus the impact of the products was relatively small. A cost comparison of the previous approach and the new approach found the new approach to be less expensive - taking into account the use of concentrated products, dosage systems, etc.

The UPC commenced with the contracts in January 2016, and the UOC and PCB followed in June 2016. For five out of the six lots, contracts were signed for two years, and for the sixth lot a four year contract was concluded.

## Environmental impacts

The key life-cycle impacts of a cleaning service relate to energy consumed in providing the service (due to the technification of the service, which makes it more energy intensive), along with the impacts of human health, ecotoxicity, eutrophication, water consumption and waste consumption.

By focusing on improving the productivity of the service while maintaining quality, the CSUC has devised a model for cleaning services which promotes constant optimisation. By combining this with requirements that cleaning products meet environmental specifications set by Type 1 ecolabels, that the most toxic substances are banned, and that other materials used (such as paper and bags) use recycled materials, this procurement addressed all the stages of a cleaning services life-cycle impact.

## Lessons learned

- By participating in a joint procurement to put a new methodology for procuring cleaning services in place, the authorities were able to exchange information, find solutions to problems, and share their experiences.
- The change of model has resulted in optimisation of routes, procedures and systems of cleaning, and has driven continuous effort to improve productivity and efficiency.
- Behaviour change can be challenging, and requires monitoring. At first, cleaning staff in some locations were reluctant to change to a new model or were not supervised properly. Quality audits are therefore necessary, and penalties should be imposed when service providers fail to provide the minimum service levels. The change in model also implies a change in supervision techniques, and training internal staff of the universities was also important.

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Tender documents are available for download from the following page:

[https://contractaciopublica.gencat.cat/ecofin\\_pscp/AppJava/notice.pscp?reqCode=viewCn&idDoc=14009198](https://contractaciopublica.gencat.cat/ecofin_pscp/AppJava/notice.pscp?reqCode=viewCn&idDoc=14009198)

For related information, please see European GPP criteria for [Cleaning Products and Services](#) and the [Technical Background Report](#).