

FRANCE¹

Background

The Union des groupements d'achats publics (UGAP, Union of Public Purchasing Groups) is a central purchasing body which buys products and services under the French *Code des marchés publics* (Public Procurement Code), which is based on EU public procurement Directive 2004/18/EC. The UGAP then sells these products and services to the government and government agencies, regional authorities and hospitals. Its purchasing categories include vehicles, IT, furniture and equipment, medical supplies, maintenance and technical services and facility management services.

As a public agency, the UGAP first included sustainable development in its tenders in 2003 and strengthened it when the *Code des marchés publics* was revised in 2006. The UGAP is in charge of helping buyers integrate environmental and social criteria and clauses into their procedures.

Purpose

As UGAP customers (i.e. the public entities that buy its products) need to know how much of their UGAP purchasing is sustainable, the UGAP needs to be able to provide them with this information. As there are different possible levels of detail, the information provided needs to be broken down. Customers with their own green purchasing policies will be able to aggregate the information provided by the UGAP relative to their orders and measure how green their purchases are.

Implementation and process

Setting up an information reporting system first required the development of a system to codify sustainable development factors integrated in purchases.

The coding system uses three letters:

- Letter (1) indicates the buyer's requirements as set out in the specifications, for example social integration clauses; contract exclusively reserved for certain sectors; environmental technical specifications.
- Letter (2) indicates the type of evaluation (environmental, social or sustainable) on which the subject scored more than 80%. It also indicates failure to reach 80%, and, if applicable, that no evaluation was carried out.
- Letter (3) indicates additional information on the product: eco-label, green logo, production at a site having an environmental and health and safety management system, green product, e.g. electric car or energy performance certificate.

The first two letters relate to market information; the third provides information about each item in the order.

After the coding system was created, it was presented to the buyers for feedback, to rally support for the project and to explain how to codify orders. To simplify this process, a key was produced for the code characters. The system for creating orders does not allow buyers to complete a new order

1. Case study submitted by the French central purchasing body UGAP (Union des groupements d'achats publics).

unless they fill in the sustainable development fields. The buyers must therefore have daily information updates for their database entries. At the end of this first step, the database was fully coded.

After the completion of coding, the UGAP defined the purchasing categories:

- Sustainable purchases: Goods and services that incorporate significant social and environmental factors.
- Somewhat sustainable purchases: This category includes goods and services with social or environmental factors. These can meet two of the three codes.
- Purchases that include sustainable content: This category covers goods and services that have one of the three possible codes.
- Purchases without significant sustainable content: Goods and services in this category have no environmental or social content that is sufficiently significant to be considered as meeting any sustainability objectives.
- Non-coded purchases: Goods and services such as software, for which it is impossible to include sustainability content or goods and services which have been incorrectly coded.

Using these five UGAP categories, purchases can be ranked by degree of sustainability. The reporting document gives an order value in euros and the number of items for each category.

Users can apply filters for more precise searches. The first filter corresponds to the type of customer (ministry, hospital, etc.) and the second to purchasing (product and service) categories.

This tool also presents more precise figures on the second page. For each combination of three characters there is an order volume in euros, the number of orders and a definition of the codified content.

Key lessons learnt

The UGAP is currently rolling this reporting tool. The next improvements to the system will be the automatic generation of data by customer registration number. The UGAP plans to expand the tool to generate information on purchases per different kinds of companies: micro-businesses, SMEs, mid-caps and large companies.