SWEDEN

Context

Sweden has a long experience in environmental protection. In Sweden, national, regional and local governments have significant state power and can be hot spots for using public procurement to reach ambitious environmental goals.

Objectives

The main Swedish government objective is to increase the amount of well-defined GPP criteria in both governmental framework agreements and in county council and local authority procurements. This has been done through a publicly available tool for GPP. Thanks to this tool, contracting authorities do not have to spend time and money to develop their own specific GPP criteria or maintain a high level of competence and knowledge regarding environmental and sustainability performance of various product groups.

Implementation process

In 1995, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency estimated that a majority of public procurements included environmental requirements. However, few requirements led to actual improvements of the environmental performance. In order to improve this and extend the market for sustainably produced goods and services, the Swedish government adopted a number of actions; one of which was to establish the Committee for Ecological Sustainable Procurement (1998-2001). This committee was given a broad assignment to promote GPP in Sweden and to influence the European Union to include green goals in the EU procurement directives. The main output of this committee was the national tool for GPP which contained GPP criteria for commonly procured goods and services. In 2003, the Swedish government decided to grant the management of this tool to the Swedish Environmental Management Council (SEMCo). The development and management of the GPP tool has been financed by the Swedish government since then.

In 2007, Sweden adopted an action plan to formalise the efforts to use public procurement as a green policy tool. The action plan contained goals for:

- an increased share of public procurements that take environmental and sustainability aspects into account
- greener framework agreements
- an increased number of local authorities, county councils and governmental authorities that procure using environmental criteria.

As green or environmentally preferable procurement only relate to one of the three pillars of sustainability, SEMCo decided to add the social dimension into the national GPP tool. This was mainly done by adding criteria that took into account the International Labour Organization’s core conventions and the United Nations’ human rights criteria to the already existing GPP criteria. SEMCo re-named its tool the Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) tool; see www.msr.se. This tool

---

1. Case study submitted by the Swedish Competition Authority.
2. The website will be available until 31 December 2014. From 1 January 2015, please visit www.kkv.se.
is available online and is organised as a database wizard where procurers can choose among sustainability criteria for various goods, services and work contracts. Criteria are set at three different ambition levels. The tool includes background information, verification notes, life-cycle cost calculations (LCC) for different energy-consuming products, training material, etc. The new strengthened public procurement support that is the responsibility of the Swedish Competition Authority is focused on all aspects of sustainability.

In addition, the Swedish web-based tool for contract management “Uppföljningsportalen” was developed by SEMCo and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions; see www.uppföljningsportalen.se. The tool allows contracting authorities and suppliers to verify that social requirements introduced in procurements are fulfilled. Contracting authorities and suppliers receive special login passwords in order to post information concerning their agreements. The information provided is part of the internal contractual follow-up and not public. Only audit reports are publicly available. The responsibility of the tool was transferred to the Swedish Competition Authority on 1 July 2014.

In 2013, the Swedish government launched an initiative aimed to strengthen public procurement as well as raise the profile of green and sustainable public procurement. The initiative consists of two parts: financial and organisational. From 2015, considerable additional funding will be allocated to the governmental support to public procurement, including GPP. The second part of the initiative is organisational. All actions and information services supporting procuring authorities have been merged under one organisation, the Swedish Competition Authority, since 1 July 2014. As a result, the responsibilities and activities linked to green and sustainable public procurement have been transferred from the Swedish Environmental Management Council (SEMCo) to the Swedish Competition Authority.

Implementing authorities and stakeholders

Local authorities, county councils, governmental agencies and publicly owned companies all use the national SPP tool. It is open and free of charge. Private purchasers and NGOs are also welcome to use the GPP criteria and other material available on SEMCo’s official website (available from 1 January 2015 on the official website of the Swedish Competition Authority). As a general rule, GPP is voluntary in Sweden. The Swedish Procurement Act states that contracting authorities should take environmental and social considerations into account in connection with public procurements, if the nature of the procurement enables this. Only certain governmental procurements are obliged to be carried out in accordance with specific environmental requirements, e.g. the procurement of government vehicles.

Impact and monitoring

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has monitored the implementation of GPP in Sweden. Questionnaires have been sent out periodically to the public sector and tender documents have been analysed. In 2004, the EPA began conducting surveys of the number of public contracts that, according to the procuring authority, include GPP criteria. Use of SEMCo’s procurement criteria has steadily increased. Only the use of GPP criteria in tender documents has been monitored; there is no study quantifying the environmental benefit from GPP/SPP.
Challenges and risks

Up to now, there has been more emphasis on the procurement procedures than on the pre-procurement phase and the auditing and evaluation of procurement contracts. Notwithstanding, sustainable procurement is very much about taking strategic decisions in order to meet all public sector needs in a sustainable way. This requires extensive planning, thorough needs assessment and careful preparations in the pre-procurement phase. Contract management, auditing and evaluation are equally important to check whether requirements are fulfilled by suppliers and the delivered goods and services meet the contract criteria. Many contracting authorities lack the human resources and/or competence and knowledge to perform those very important tasks, which can allow environmental/sustainability policies to go unfulfilled, national environmental goals to be missed and unfair competition. This, in turn, might discourage suppliers from developing sustainable goods and services in the future.

Another challenge is measuring actual environmental/sustainability benefits resulting from the application of GPP criteria. Setting criteria without the possibility of auditing and evaluating quantifiable environmental/sustainable benefits might be useless and even harmful for competition.

Key lessons learnt

- More assistance to contracting authorities in the pre-procurement phase is required, as well as careful contract management, auditing and evaluation in order to support suppliers, create confidence in the system and ensure that they learn from their mistakes.
• There is need for quantitative indicators to follow up on GPP/SPP nationally in order to measure the benefits of set criteria.

• In order for a useful, stringent and practical GPP/SPP system to be developed, the appointment of a responsible competent authority equipped with sufficient resources is important.

• Until now, the focus has been on supporting the public sector in shifting towards green procurement. In order to succeed in sustainable procurement, there is a need to raise awareness and competence among suppliers and their supply chains so as to meet public sector sustainability requirements. This will help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enter the public market, enhance companies’ local and global competitiveness and promote short- and long-term competition.