



LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY

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A Local Sustainability CASE STUDY

Last Update: October, 1996

City of Göteborg, Sweden

Environmental Demands on Purchasing

Abstract

Through environmental work aimed at concrete results, the city of Göteborg proves that a large city with complex structures and strong opposition can succeed in combining the objectives of sustainability with competitiveness. This approach has been put into practice through the introduction of environmental demands on all purchasing within the city. A process of developing a model for undertaking environmental assessments in procurement, and identifying specific environmental demands for application within the assessment, resulted in a procedure which is now systematically used in all purchasing within the city.

Objectives

The vision of the city of Göteborg is based on long term resource management and a quality of life for the inhabitants of the Göteborg region. On the way towards a community of eco-cycles, it is important to achieve changes in the pattern of energy consumption and use of materials while meeting human needs. Promoting the development of more environmentally adjusted and less resource intensive products through environmental demands on purchasing within the city of Göteborg is part of meeting this objective.

Project Status

The model for environmental demands in purchasing was developed in 1990, and has been in use in the City of Göteborg since. All suppliers who submit tenders to the city of Göteborg must provide an environmental declaration, and each procurement is subject to an environmental assessment.

Background Information

The city's annual purchase of goods and services totals at least SEK 5 billion. The Bohus County Council has integrated its purchasing activities with the public health services of Göteborg and consequently also with those of the city. With this large market there are, of course, considerable opportunities to influence purchasing in an environmentally friendly direction, by making demands for environmentally adapted products and services.

Project Summary #56 Göteborg, Sweden Origin: EURONET, 1996 Project Date: Ongoing		Municipal Profile -Population: 440,000 -Land Area: 455 km ² Environmental Activities: -A number of Agenda 21 activities are being undertaken in Göteborg Main Economic Activities -The City of Göteborg is one of Sweden's largest employers with a workforce of 60,000 persons
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Implementation

Strategy

In 1990 Göteborg City Council decided:

"When purchasing, the local authorities should choose products that are best for the working environment and the world around us."

The following guide-lines apply as general recommendations:

- Choose products that damage the environment as little as possible, both when they are manufactured and when they are used. The whole process from production via consumption to final destruction must be taken into consideration.
- Choose products that are not harmful to the consumers or users (take into account the employees' working environment).
- Choose products that are biologically degradable or can be reused.
- Choose products that do not consume energy resources and natural resources unnecessarily either when they are manufactured or when they are used.

There are also recommendations and bans on specific products. Products containing the following two chemicals may not be purchased by the City of Göteborg:

- Alkyphenoethoxylates
- Paradichlorobenzene

Products containing the following two chemicals may not be purchased if other alternatives exist:

- 1, 1, 1-trichloroethane
- Chlorofluorcarbons (freons) - the ban also applies to products where freons are used in the manufacturing process.

Local government committees, boards and companies must:

- Use environmentally friendly nonchlorine bleached paper. This covers office paper and printed matter as well as tissue paper.
- Gradually replace disposable articles with nondisposable articles.
- Strongly encourage the minimum use of harmful chemical products.

Activities

Following the Göteborg City Council decision in 1990, an environmental declaration of contest was drawn up by the City of Göteborg Procurement Company together with the Environmental Protection Office. A model was then developed for undertaking an environmental assessment in every procurement. This model took into account current legislation and political decisions. Dissemination of information and training were carried out step by step.

The next stage involved the development of specific environmental demands. After these had been finalised, the process of assessing each procurement against environmental criteria could begin. The results of each assessment are incorporated with other information given to concerned departments after each procurement has been undertaken. Training in environmentally-friendly purchasing is incorporated in the continuous staff development and training programme.

Partners

The City of Göteborg Procurement Company is a wholly owned municipal enterprise. The main task of the company is to coordinate the procurement of goods and services that are used by several municipal administrations and companies.

Employees of the City of Göteborg have been informed about the City Council decisions and educated in environmentally-aware purchasing in practice.

Financing and Resources Used

In 1990 when this project started, two people were employed on a full-time basis to develop the model for undertaking environmental assessments in procurement. Later, when the specific environmental demands were being developed, the staff was reduced to a part-time post. The assessments for each procurement are being undertaken within this human resource framework.

Results and Impacts

Today all suppliers who submit tenders to the City of Göteborg must provide an environmental declaration to prove the environmental status of their products or services. The Procurement Company currently has more than 300 agreements with different suppliers, and the environmental aspects have been taken into consideration in all these agreements.

Barriers and Conflicts

In 1990 when the environmental demands on purchasing were introduced, there was little understanding by the producers for the conditions set by the city of Göteborg. High development costs of environmentally adjusted products were used as an argument against the new policy. The city of Göteborg also experienced problems due to the fact that the producers were reluctant to publish complete contents descriptions for their products and to be open about their methods of production. There were, however, a few small and medium sized companies which realised the benefit of adapting their activities and products environmentally at an early stage. With hindsight, it has proved that these companies have gained significant market shares through this strategy.

In the beginning there was also some opposition from the users. Old familiar products had to be abandoned or changed and the range of products was reduced. New procedures for orders had to be introduced due to the fact that the number of deliveries was reduced and the possibilities for urgent purchases were reduced. Today it is evident that the new procedures have resulted in benefits both for the administration and for the environment.

Transferability

As purchasing within the city of Göteborg now is directed by the Law on Public Procurement (Lagen om Offentlig Upphandling), the city's procedures for purchasing and using environmental demands have been adapted to the new legislation. This means that the purchasing policy of the city of Göteborg fulfils the public procurement requirements of the EU.

Lessons Learned

With the benefit of the experience held today, it has become clear that more emphasis should have been put on information and training within the city's activities. Awareness and understanding of environmental work requires that the staff is informed and committed. Today initiatives for development projects come from committed staff more often than from the producers.

Further Information

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