

6 Decentralising green procurement - Pori, Finland



The courthouse of Pori, Finland

Often, green purchasing, even though supported by a municipal strategy, is not implemented in all municipal departments, either because it is limited to goods of a certain range of financial value, or because the idea has only been initiated in a few municipal departments and therefore is too hard to spread.

Pori is special in that from the very start of its sustainable development project, green purchasing activities were supposed to include all kinds of purchases.

6.1 Background

Pori is a Finnish city located on the Baltic Sea and has 77,000 inhabitants. In 1992, its Procurement Operation Department, in collaboration with the Environmental Protection Department, initiated Pori's Municipal Project for Sustainable Development. The objectives of the project were to chart the City's procurement practices and their environmental impact in order to direct them towards sustainable development.

Since then, the Municipal Departments of Education (food sector), Cleaning, Health Care, Offices, Maintenance and Repair Operations (vehicles) and Construction have developed concrete "Principles for Product Choice", resulting in the availability of up-to-date environmental information for 55 different product groups.

Pori's procurement activities yearly amount to 25 million Euro and include about 2,000 calls for tender. Decision making in the procurement process is based on price, quality, logistic and environmental criteria, the latter being given main emphasis. Tendering for municipal procurement is centralised, while the municipal departments and institutions do the purchases themselves.

The following paragraphs show the structure set up by Pori to systematically spread green purchasing activities in all municipal departments.

6.2 Creating an eco-procurement task team

Pori sustainable development task team

Founded in 1992, Pori's sustainable development working team initially gathered 6 people, who did not meet on a regular basis but only when necessary. Today, the team is composed of:

- 6 persons for the sectors cleaning (foreperson of the cleaning department), food (head of the meal services), construction (building contractor), municipal health care (the hygiene nurse), office work (secretary of archive) and "maintenance and repair operations" (head of the repair workshop) sectors. Those persons are responsible for buying goods and have an influence on the environmental impacts of procurement.
- 2 meeting-leaders: the heads of the environmental protection and the procurement departments
- A liaison person for environmental co-ordination (the eco-consultant).

As soon as the political representatives committed to green purchasing, each municipal department appointed a person as liaison to cooperate in a sustainable development working team, chaired both by the head of the environmental protection department and the head of the procurement office. This team took over the responsibility for environmentally friendly procurement to be put into effect and in its everyday work focused on monitoring the efficiency of environmentally friendly products and linking the activities developed in each municipal department.

6.3 Appointing an eco-consultant

The eco-consultant was given the double task of:

- Environmentally assessing procurement operations, which mainly consists of evaluating and comparing the environmental characteristics of the different answers to a call for tenders. In Pori, the tenderers are essentially asked to clarify their environmental management systems and environmental policies and to offer environmentally friendly and eco-labelled products. The environmental information of the product is provided on an informal basis.
- Communicating with municipal departments on environmental questions, which includes giving information and advice on green purchasing (thinking in terms of product life cycles, recycling and sorting of waste...) and on global environmental questions (main issues, current scientific progresses and political decisions...). The environmental information focuses on the extension of the product's life cycle and requires the purchaser to particularly pay attention to the product's durability, reparability, recyclability and disposal characteristics as well as package returnability and recyclability.



Tanja Lohiranta,
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Tanja Lohiranta is currently responsible for eco-consulting, a function which is part of the material office and was first assigned in Pori in 1994. She works "on the spot" in different municipal departments and states that it is efficient to communicate with the municipal employees via Pori's municipal electronic network "Team-Forum" and directly by personal emails to liaisons and employees.

6.4 Environmental contacts in the municipal administration

Environmental contacts act as a link between the eco-consultant and the municipal staff: they distribute the information provided by the eco-consultant and collect and communicate back to her/him the employees' feedback on the use of environmentally friendly products.

About 30 environmental contact people have been appointed in Pori's municipal administration linking the Environmental Department with:

- the Education, the Fire, the Leisure, the Health, the Social and the Technical Departments
- Pori's Energy, Port, Water Works and Sinfonietta
- the Colleges of Forestry, Service Sector and Technics
- Satakunta Polytechnic and Museum

6.5 Creating an internal reuse service

Greener purchasing not only being about procuring environmentally friendly products but also buying less in general, an internal reuse service for goods owned by the whole municipality was put in place. This service offers the following:

- All employees, no matter from which municipal department, can advertise if they have a product they do not use anymore to be given away to another department.

- Employees may advertise their needing a particular product supposed to have been purchased by the municipality already, but currently not in use.

The role of the eco-consultant within this reuse service is to update the “reuse list” and to act as a contact between the reuse service and the employees who sometimes directly contact him/her.

The reuse service is a way to avoid procuring expensive and new items and to extend the lifespan of products.

6.6 Harvesting the results of a multi-involvement green purchasing policy

Pori’s green purchasing strategy has induced many positive changes in the municipality’s procurement and working methods. One of the most important internal activities of this strategy has been changing the employees’ attitudes towards the use of eco-products, in providing them with appropriate information on environmentally acceptable procurement. Nowadays, the municipal employees in Pori have a very positive attitude towards green products and managed to well internalise environmental issues. This could only be achieved via a successful decentralisation of green purchasing activities.

Even if co-operation and interest prevailed, some municipal employees were reluctant to adopt the idea of green purchasing, for example in the maintenance and repair service. The information work and convincing done in Pori however managed to get all employees to take into account the environmental aspects of the products they are buying, using and disposing of. Read the next chapter for more information on motivation and training.

This success is partly due to the advantages (compared to more traditional training programmes and green purchasing tools) of the structure developed by Pori, which has the following characteristics:

- It systematises green purchasing by establishing a permanent and multi-sectored structure.
- Through the eco-consultant and the departments’ “environmental contact persons”, it provides municipal staff with free access to environmental information whenever they need it.
- It creates a framework for training activities in order to adapt them better to local needs.
- It involves all municipal departments in the greening of their purchases at an early stage.



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Transferability

The idea of integrating green purchasing in all municipal departments from the beginning implies that politicians and municipal staff already are convinced of its power, necessity and feasibility. In most European municipalities, this precondition is far from being fulfilled and therefore could make it difficult to transfer the structure developed by Pori as such.

If full greening of purchases is to be achieved, decentralisation is an indispensable step. The method developed by Pori should thus be kept in mind and implemented as soon as municipal green purchasing activities reach a suitable level for this advanced step.

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Find out more about Pori's eco-procurement work on the Web site of the Material Office of the City of Pori:

- In English at <http://www.pori.fi/hat/eng/eng.htm>
- In Finnish at <http://www.pori.fi/hat>

And by reading the publication: Environmentally acceptable procurement: Review of the situation 1996, Working party on the sustainable development of the city of Pori, Finland 1996.

Box 9: Further reading on the City of Pori's eco-procurement scheme