



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Word Count: 474

Tackling Climate Change through Sustainable Procurement

Zürich, 22 October 2009 - How can public authorities use their market power to make more effective use of public money? How does this help to tackle climate change? Representatives from more than 15 nations are discussing this today at the international Procura⁺ Seminar, organised by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and host city, Zürich.

The City of Zürich alone spends two billion Swiss Francs (1.32 million Euros) annually for the procurement of products and services – this ranges from toilet paper to public construction works. If such expenditures were executed in an environmentally friendly way in every European city, this would make a significant contribution to climate and environmental protection.

Zürich has a long tradition in green procurement

In order for public authorities to be able to follow through on green procurement, the political framework has to be right, emphasises City Councillor Robert Neukomm. With the goal of becoming a 2,000-Watt Society by 2050 – a vision which Zürich's citizens are strongly in favour of – Zürich's political stance on green procurement has been further strengthened. The City of Zürich has a long-standing record in green procurement (since the mid-1990s). Its green procurement actions are wide-ranging, from purchasing shirts for the local police service made from certified organic cotton to using "Züri-coffins" – coffins made from wood originating from sustainably managed forests (FSC certified). The construction of the new Triemly Hospital will be carried out according to the standards of the 2000-Watt Society.

Cities can send a strong signal to the market in favour of "green" products

In speaking about the EU's Agenda for sustainable procurement at the event in Zürich, Heide Rühle, Member of the European Parliament, stressed the importance of the public sector taking action. "The European procurement guidelines clearly allow for the consideration of ecological and social standards in the tendering process of public contracts as long as the rules of the internal market are abided by", emphasised Rühle. Leading on the European Topten Initiative, Eric Bush underlined that good ideas should not stop at national borders. The Topten online search tool, originally developed in Switzerland, is available for use in 17 countries and also assists public purchasers in their sustainability actions.

International campaign for sustainable procurement

"If cities leveraged their spending power and purchased environmentally friendly goods and services, this would make a significant contribution to climate-friendly markets", explains Mark Hidson, Director for Sustainable Procurement at ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. ICLEI, a world-wide network of cities and communities which advocate and are committed to sustainable development, also leads the international Sustainable Procurement Campaign, Procura⁺. The Campaign supports public authorities in making their purchasing practices more sustainable and aims to mainstream this practice across the public sector. The City of Zürich is a member of the Campaign and has been a member of ICLEI since 1993.

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For more information:

- Sustainable Procurement in the City of Zürich [in German]: <http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/umwelt>
- All information about the 2000-Watt Society [in French]: <http://www.societe2000watts.com/>
- Procura+ Sustainable Procurement Campaign: <http://www.procuraplus.org>
- ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability: <http://www.iclei.org>