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Green procurement saves cash money

Products low in energy and raw materials consumption score in ecological and economic terms

By now there are many positive examples which attest to the ecological and economic benefits of green procurement, a fact proven in a research project commissioned by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). Inclusion of criteria pertaining to environmental protection in the tendering process make it possible to relieve the strain on the environment significantly and to make considerable financial savings. "Green procurement is a vital instrument of environmental protection policy, and it saves cash money," said Dr. Thomas Holzmann, UBA's Vice President. A legal opinion drawn up as part of the research project asserts that there are no longer any legal grounds to dispute inclusion of environmental criteria in the tendering process of government agencies. In the past German legal experts tended to criticise "ecological award of contract by public authorities" as 'alien' to the award process.

The research project titled Nationale Umsetzung der neuen EU-Beschaffungs-Richtlinien [National implementation of new EU procurement directives] identified the potential for relieving the strain on the environment through the procurement of select products, e.g. multi-functional devices that can print, scan, and photocopy. Results show that by purchasing equipment that is low in consumption of raw materials and energy, the pollution associated with manufacture, use and disposal of these devices can be reduced considerably. For example, the global warming potential of a multi-functional device with the Blue Angel eco-label to print 1,000 pages is about half that of a conventional piece of equipment. Assuming a multi-functional device prints about 50,000 pages per year and has a service lifetime of five years, the device with the Blue Angel—as compared to one without it— saves roughly 1,150 kilogrammes in carbon dioxide equivalents.

When all the costs throughout the product life cycle are taken into account, it is the ecological products which often score higher in economic terms as well. A multi-functional device which meets the criteria of the Blue Angel, and with an assumed lifetime of five years and 50,000 printed pages per year, can produce some 830 euros in savings as compared to conventional devices. These savings derive from lower costs for electricity, toner, and of course paper, as

demand can be reduced through double-sided printing.

In order to make it easier for public authorities and municipalities to make ecologically-minded acquisitions, a number of tendering recommendations have been drawn up for items such as multi-functional devices, computers, irrigation systems, cleaning products, and cleaning services. These recommendations will be useful to departments responsible for awarding contracts to bidders in a manner that must be both transparent and non-discriminatory.

The legal opinion and final report on the National implementation of new EU procurement directives research project (in German) can be downloaded from:

<http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/3661.pdf> or

<http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/3666.pdf>.

A manual titled Umweltfreundliche Beschaffung - ökologische und wirtschaftliche Potenziale rechtlich zulässig nutzen [Green procurement - making legal use of ecological and economic potential] can be seen at <http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/3687.pdf>.

The tendering recommendations can be viewed at www.beschaffung-info.de.

Dessau-Roßlau, 16 January 2009