

CASE STUDIES

City of Florence, Italy

Responsible Timber Procurement: School furniture experience

Contextual Background:

The City of Florence is member of the 'Coordinamento Agende 21 Locali Italiane (Italian Local Agenda 21 Association)¹, an association established in 1999 to spread Local Agenda 21 and promote sustainable development models. Recently, the city administration adopted a Procurement Regulation requiring the incorporation of principles of sustainable development, social equity, health protection, environment and security in public tenders².

In 2005, following the example of the Region of Tuscany and the Province of Florence, the City joined the Greenpeace project 'Cittá amiche delle foreste' (Forest friendly cities) in response to its wish to decrease the city's environmental impact by contributing to the rational management and sustainable use of forest resources³.

Moreover the City decided to start sensitising civil society and students in particular, about the importance of reusing, recycling and using ecological certifications.

All the previous decisions were taken considering that:

- Italy has committed to reducing forests destruction by signing the Convention on biodiversity;
- in the EU and G8 Italy is one of the largest timber importers;
- public purchases represent the 14% of the entire market for products such as paper and timber.



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The city of Florence is also carrying out an urban forestation policy, a project established within the Action Plan for Sustainable Energy, promoted by the Covenant of Mayors⁴.

From 2010 onwards, in compliance with its Local Agenda 21 commitments, the City of Florence issued several green procurement (GPP) tenders related to indoor furniture such as a recent one on the supply of 'furnishing elements' related to a new library in December 2011. The Province of Florence has also participated in a workgroup that has produced a handbook on the purchase of ethical-environmental sustainable goods and services⁵. It has also participated in workgroups on GPP organised by Agenda 21 Tuscany network and by the Coordination of Italian local Agenda 21.

¹ See online at: <http://www.a21italy.it> - The Coordinamento Agende 21 Locali Italiane is a consolidated network that currently consists of 422 members (280 municipalities, 42 Provinces, 11 Regions, 30 local authorities' consortia, mountain communities and natural areas and 61 supporters).

² In particular this includes articles on environmental and social clauses (Art. 15), cooperative agreements with the type B (Art. 16), reserved contracts (Art. 17), voluntary and third sector (Art. 60).

³ http://press.comune.fi.it/hcm/hcm5353-1_2_6679-%ABAnche+Firenze+nel+circuito+internazionale+di+citt.html?cm_id_details=44114&id_padre=4473

⁴ The Covenant of Mayors is a European Commission initiative that gives cities the power to tackle climate change related issues through the implementation of local sustainable energetic policies.

⁵ See online at: http://www.provincia.fi.it/fileadmin/assets/Ambiente/Opuscolo%20Informativo%20GPP_Firenze.pdf

Tender implementation:

The tender described below is strictly related to this leading sustainable policy role of the municipal administration of Florence within the Local Agenda 21 framework.

Subject-matter: “Supply contract for school furniture according to ecological and ethical principles, divided in two lots for primary school and nursery school furniture.”

Timber products involved: wardrobes, clothes hanger, desk and chairs, benches

Publication date: December 2010

Value of tender: n.1 lot 83.000 EUR / n.2 lot 66.000 EUR

Technical criteria used:

- The supplier must provide evidence of the certification that all timber and wood-derived products derive from sustainable forest management.
- Proof of compliance: Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) or equivalent means of proof that have to be superior or at least equal.
- The supplier must specify for each element how many and which components have the certification.

Problems encountered:

The proof of compliance requirement led to a reduced number of companies bidding for the tender, although there was sufficient competition to award the contract.

There have been complaints about the use of environmental criteria in tenders by economic operators. Moreover, the City of Florence, by establishing such demanding environmental criteria, had decided to take on a commitment which it had difficulty to comply with in successive tenders.



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Results achieved:

The contract was awarded to two suppliers, one for each lot.

Participation: 3 companies participated in each tender.

Further information:

City of Florence - Central Purchasing Service

Contact person: Gianfrancesco Pergolizzi

Tel. +39 055 2768733

gianfrancesco.pergolizzi@comune.fi.it

Mailing address:

Piazzale delle Cascine 12

50144 Firenze

Italia

Website: www.comune.fi.it