

Promoting responsible purchasing in Nantes

Nantes Metropolis (France)

Background

Nantes Métropole (in French) in Western France is home to 619,000 inhabitants (299,700 inhabitants in the City of Nantes). Over the last 25 years, the 24 cities composing the metropolitan area have transferred an increasing number of competences to the metropolitan level, including transport, energy, water and waste management, and economic development. In order to increase efficiency, the decision was made to merge several teams from the City of Nantes and Nantes Metropolis, including public procurement, giving the area a total procurement budget of around €430 million per year (€120 million for the **City of Nantes** and €310 million for the rest of the area).



Nantes aims to be at the forefront of economic, social, environmental and democratic transitions by developing more responsible development models that involve all relevant stakeholders. This includes viewing public procurement as more than just a technical decision, and ensuring it is aligned with its political priorities. Nantes has undertaken numerous initiatives in the field of responsible procurement dating back to 2001. These initiatives were integrated into its strategic policy documents, such as the city's Sustainable Development Plan (adopted in 2004), its sustainable development Agenda 21 and its Climate Plan (adopted in 2009). Each of these initiatives has been developed in partnership with local economic networks in order to better ensure their acceptance, in particular among small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and to develop tools and criteria that are straightforward for companies, while contributing to a better environmental and social impact. Nantes Metropolis is also actively involved in the exchange of best practices on responsible procurement with other public actors at the regional, national and the European level.

Finally, Nantes has used the opportunity of new legislation at the national level to strengthen and reinforce its commitment to sustainable public procurement (SPP). The passing of national laws on Social and Solidarity Economy (July 2014) and Energy Transition for Green Growth (August 2015) are part of a wider aim to mobilise France's largest public purchasers to come into line with the **National Plan for SPP**, and to make these policies intelligible to economic actors and operators.

Development of approach

Since 2001, Nantes has identified and has been improving the potential of two important facets of responsible procurement. Firstly, procurers must act to help encourage the development of businesses and other actors in a responsible way. This is in support of and in line with public policy. Secondly, procurers must act as responsible buyers through leading by example on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and acting in line with what they expect and require from their providers.

Some of the first responsible procurement actions implemented in relation to the environmental aspects of the policy include the following:

- Organic food in school restaurants: By 2016, 12% of school food was organic and sourced from short supply chains
- Wood certified meeting [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) standards: By 2016, 100% of significant wood purchases, for internal use, were FSC certified
- Eco-friendly cleaning products
- Recycled or FSC certified paper
- Progressive elimination of [plant protection products](#) in favour of natural practices

Since 2010, both the metropolitan and City administrations have been working together with locally based stakeholders on developing criteria for CSR in public procurement procedures. These criteria - addressing social, environmental and economic issues - allow responsible companies to promote their overall performance when responding to a public procurement procedure. This mechanism is supported by a [CSR Platform](#), which brings together public and private actors across the metropolitan area to encourage, support and market responsible business practices. It also enables access for companies to a self-assessment tool for their economic, social and environmental performance.

In 2017, the [Responsible Purchasing Promotion Scheme](#) (RPPS) was adopted, at the metropolitan level, to strengthen the coherence of the various initiatives developed over the previous 15 years, and to reinforce links with the support offered by Nantes Metropolis to SMEs. The RPPS provides an internal guide for the implementation of further responsible public procurement actions, and presents the strategies of local authorities in the area to companies and other relevant actors. It also highlights practical methods and support available within the local area (that is, through the CSR Platform). In short, the Scheme sets out what has already been done, how this has been achieved, and what is planned next.

Furthermore, as part of the Scheme, public policy on energy and environmental transition has been considered through the lens of public procurement, and translated into procurement actions to support these policy goals. This has resulted in the development of 11 cross-cutting actions (in the format of 'action sheets') across three categories: new business models, social aspects, and environmental aspects. Actions for GPP include circular economy; energy transition, including energy and climate actions; environment, including actions for air, health, water, biodiversity and pollution; and organic products, focusing on short supply chains.

The 11 actions clearly outline the areas of public policy being targeted and the achievements to date. They also set the strategic direction and operational targets for incorporating policy goals into procurement, and set performance targets to be achieved by 2020. For example, the circular economy action sheet first sets out and reminds the reader about related policy framework (e.g. policy on Waste prevention and Management), provides information about the strategic direction (e.g. eco-design), and presents operational targets. The latter includes the following (among others): 100% recycled paper and reduction in paper consumption; materials waste recovery in building and road construction contracts (recovery of 70%: reuse, recovery or material recovery); recovery and recycling of lamps as part of street lighting contracts; and recovery of organic waste in the catering contract for the central kitchen.

Implementation of approach

The RPPS was designed to ensure the development, implementation and monitoring of action undertaken through public procurement. Resources allocated to the scheme include one full-time member of staff dedicated to sustainable/responsible public procurement, one post for environmental clauses and five posts dedicated to social clauses.

At the political level, all relevant elected members of the Metropolitan Council of Nantes Metropolis are informed about upcoming investments in order to collectively decide on the environmental and social clauses that are to be preferred for each of them. These members also regularly evaluate the impact of the RPPS.

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At the technical level, the public procurement team works jointly with a network of CSR ambassadors in each directorate to support the operational directorates in integrating social and environmental clauses into their purchasing and to evaluate the quality of the offers in this field.

Finally, the CSR committee is the 'political authority' which is responsible for setting, improving, reviewing and assessing the general guidelines of the RPPS. Each specific target or issue related to SPP – energy, circular economy, social inclusion, etc. - is monitored by a specific project officer within the directorate in charge of the public policy concerned. The public procurement department coordinates the whole project.

Outcomes

Thanks to its long term 15-year commitment to SPP, Nantes has already made improvements to its contracting in many key sectors. This includes the purchase of eco-friendly supplies (cleaning products, wood, paper, furniture, organic food, etc.) or high energy performance products (vehicles, computers etc.). Nantes has also introduced contract clauses specifically targeting lower CO₂ emissions from road works, street lighting, and waste collection contracts.

For example, since 2013, within Nantes Metropolis it is no longer possible to procure non-recycled paper, except on receipts. This includes headed paper and envelopes with logos, which are made from 100% recycled paper fibres ([European Ecolabel](#), [Blue Angel](#) or [Nordic Swan](#) certified). The measure had a fast effect: in early 2012, there was up to 13% recycled paper purchased, whilst at the end of 2013, only 1% of non-recycled paper remains. Another example is that 90% of cotton t-shirts and sweatshirts worn by governmental officials in Nantes are from organic and fair trade sources.

Social clauses also include the use of 'integration clauses' into works and cleaning services contracts; CSR clauses in cleaning and printing contracts; and use of adapted/protected organisations through reserved contracts (laundry, building, park maintenance services, etc.).

Progress towards the specific targets outlined in the RPPS action sheets will be assessed in the last term of 2018. Nantes is in the process of building tools for assessment and evaluation of the impact of the actions, which include CO₂ or energy savings, with the first results expected in 2018.

Lessons learned

It is essential to identify priorities, define a perimeter and create a framework of actions which take into account two criteria - feasibility and measurability. At the same time, following the lead already set by those motivated and engaged in sustainable procurement approaches provides a valuable lever for wider action.

Internal organisation and the need for dedicated resources can be a brake on implementation, and it is essential that the ambition of the strategy is adjusted to reflect available resources. One method to achieve this is through the annual measurement of the impact of actions implemented, in order to enable that progress is tracked and any necessary readjustments made.

Verifying and defining the requirements or criteria included into public procurement policy is of central importance to the success of responsible procurement, and requires the identification of dedicated resources and the implementation of appropriate verification tools.

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