

Supplying sustainable garments for health professionals

Odense Municipality (Denmark)

Background

The Municipality of Odense, with a population of 190,000, is Denmark's fourth largest municipality. It is committed to sustainable development, which it has made a cross-cutting goal across its administrations and areas of policy. The common goal is to ensure that the city is an attractive place to live not only for the present but also for future generations.

For Odense, it is clear that this means their own activities must also be sustainable, and in the city's Elderly and Disability Administration, this has meant working sustainability into all areas of operation. For instance, care givers use electric cars to visit clients, care centres serve organic food, and health workers are provided clothes via a sustainable clothing service, which is the focus of this case study.

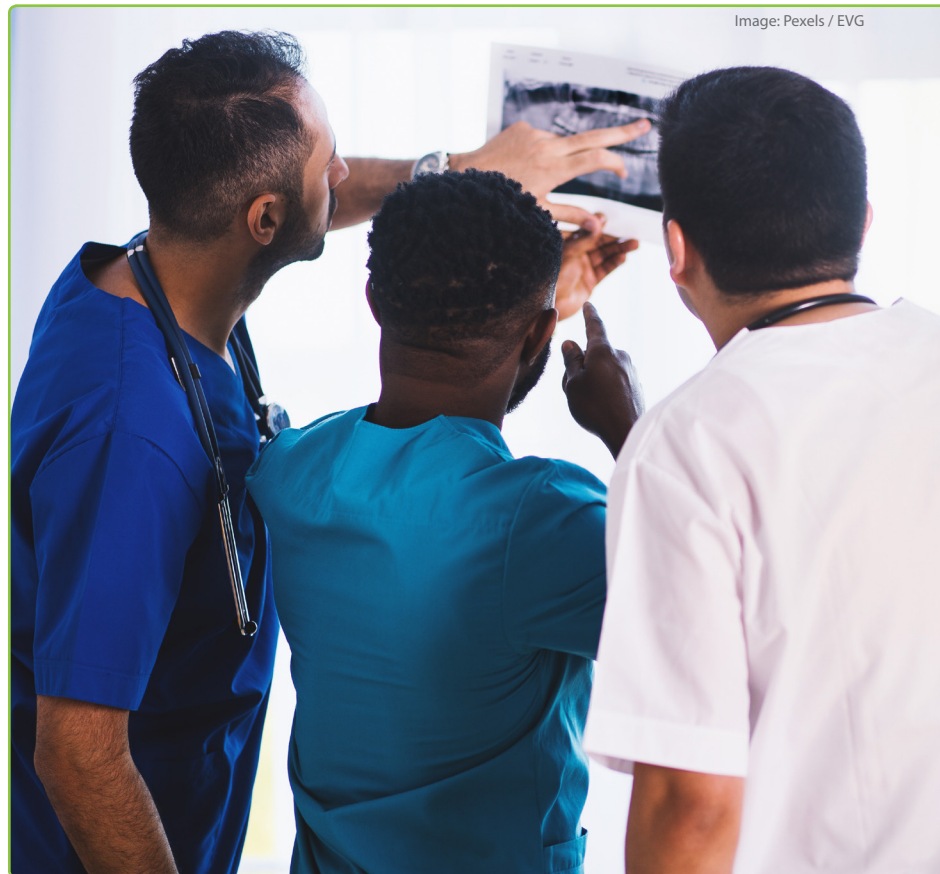
Odense is also a member of the [Danish Partnership on Green Public Procurement \(POGI\)](#) - a voluntary partnership of front running municipalities and other public organisations committed to accelerating green public procurement (GPP). Members of the POGI commit to putting green criteria into action for 11 different product groups, including the transportation of food and transportation of textiles.

Procurement objectives

In 2015, Odense published a call for tender which sought to include all elements of clothing provision to health professionals within one contract: leasing, collection, washing, and return of clothes to various points in the Odense Municipality. In addition, the supplier was to become responsible for the logistics of the service, and the operation of a resource management system, which makes it easier to control inventory on an ongoing basis.

The goal of this Framework Agreement was to achieve a high quality service, which streamlined and simplified the entire process around the provision of clothing for approximately 2,200 permanent and temporary healthcare workers of the Elderly and Disability Administration, located across 39 different addresses in the city. The agreement was to be serviced by a single company over a six-year period.

Garments required include trousers, smocks, jackets and rainwear (for staff performing home visits, especially by bike), and headgear (for those staff wishing to wear this for cultural, religious and other reasons). Garments must be available in all sizes, including maternity sizes.



Criteria used

Subject matter of the contract:

Framework Agreement on washing and leasing clothing for health professionals.

Selection criteria:

Tenderers were required to supply a reference list of similar deliveries performed over the past three years, with the description of the setting and what was supplied. A minimum of three references was required.

Technical specifications:

The Municipality of Odense's purchase of washing and leasing services is subject to the POGI objectives for textiles, including: purchase and use of low-toxicity textile products, preferably products and fibres with limited environmental impact during manufacture, and made from fibres grown with minimal use of pesticides, and; minimise the environmental impact of use, maintenance and disposal of textile products.

Clothes should be made from low-toxicity textile products, preferably products and fibres with limited environmental impact during manufacture, and made from fibres grown with minimal use of pesticides. The supplier should also minimise the environmental impact of the use, maintenance and disposal of textile products. The garments must comply with the requirements of [Oeko-Tex 100](#) or equivalent. The laundry service must be [Nordic Swan](#) ecolabelled, or equivalent. The contracting authority may require documentation for certification, and verification that the selected clothing meets the requirements in the form of tests from an independent test laboratory.

The tenderer must, throughout the contract period, be certified according to [ISO 14001](#) (environmental management) or equivalent and the [OHSAS 18001](#) working environmental management standard, or equivalent, in order to support Odense Municipality's compliance with the POGI targets.

For the sake of the environment and Odense Municipality's employees and citizens, the tenderer must strive to ensure that both clothing and packaging do not contain harmful substances. In particular, the clothing and packaging must be free from PVC and harmful phthalates classed as carcinogenic, harmful to genetic material or harmful to fertility according to [Regulation \(EC\) No 1272/2008](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures.

The laundry service must use a laundry detergent that is labelled with or that meets the criteria for the Nordic Swan, the [EU Ecolabel](#) or equivalent.

Award criteria:

The framework contract was awarded to the bidder providing the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT), based on the following award criteria (and weightings):

- Price (40%)
- Service (25%)
- Sustainability (20%)
- Quality (15%)

Price referred to the total net price for rent and washing per garment per week.

The service award criterion related to the resource management system, which should be described by the tenderer, with a focus on how it will ensure that employees always have clean clothes, how it will minimise management and workflows for employees, and how it will avoid shrinkage of clothes.

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The sustainability criterion relates to the product's full life cycle. The tenderer must describe the following:

- Production of raw materials; production of textiles; and production of garments; including:
 - the extent to which wastewater is cleaned
 - measures taken to reduce environmental impacts (consumption of oil, water, pesticides, fertilizers and use of renewable energy)
 - steps to minimise CO₂ emissions (such as minimising transport)
- Disposal of garments, including:
 - the extent to which the product is recycled
 - measures taken to reduce environmental aspects during disposal
 - steps to minimise CO₂ emissions (such as minimising transport)



Contract performance clauses:

The supplier is obliged to repair garments and is responsible for replacing damaged and worn-out clothing parts. The contracting authority has the final say on whether an item of clothing is worn or requires replacement.

With regards to transportation required in the delivery of this contract, the contractor is expected to organise delivery and collection of garments in an environmentally sound manner.

A social clause also obliges the supplier to ensure employment of at least two unemployed/employees from special groups, or employees on special terms. At the request of the municipality, the supplier must document that the requirement has been met. Employees from specific groups are defined as workers who have been unemployed for more than nine months in the last 12 months and who a) cannot achieve employment on normal pay and working conditions, b) have limitations on work ability, or c) have been affected by changes in conditions - for example illness, unemployment or cessation of cohabitation - which cause the person concerned to not have the opportunity to provide what is necessary for their family's support. An employee on special terms is defined as a person under the age of 65 with permanent restrictions on work ability, that cannot achieve or maintain employment on normal terms in the labour market, and for whom opportunities for rehabilitation on normal terms have been exhausted.

Results

Odense received three bids from suppliers of clothing services, and while it was not difficult for the suppliers to meet the requirements, Odense did observe differences in the levels of 'sustainability' and 'quality' which the different bidders could offer, with some suppliers being much further ahead.

The contract was awarded in 2016 and will expire in 2022. The total value of the contract is around 3.3 million euro (25 million DKK). Based on comparison with the previous contract, and according to the estimated savings which will be achieved from the new method of managing clothes, this service is saving Odense Municipality approximately 1.2 million euro (nine million DKK) in efficiency improvements throughout the contract period.

Environmental impacts

Textile products generate environmental impacts across their whole life cycle, from fibre sourcing and manufacturing, through to use and end-of-life. During the use phase, the main impacts are related to energy use and water

consumption when washing and drying, as well as the ecotoxicity impacts from detergents. Comparative studies of industrial and domestic washing and drying suggest that industrial laundries tend to be more efficient than domestic washing and drying and therefore have the potential to reduce use phase impacts - particularly if such services are sustainably procured.

In addition, an environmental improvement offered by the successful bidder was related to the recycling of discarded work clothes for new products. Textiles which are no longer suitable for clothing are now being recycled to produce 'OdensePoser' textile shopping bags, made by people employed on social clauses, to promote sustainability within Odense.

Lessons learned

This was the first procurement of its kind in Odense, and since then, it has been possible to detect an improvement across suppliers in terms of sustainability, service and quality in similar procurement exercises. Odense is confident that industry is not only ready to respond to higher environmental requirements in the procurement of clothing services, and is also willing to suggest further improvements that go beyond the standards set by procurement.

Contact person:

Nicoline Mark Hofman, Odense Kommune, NMHOF@odense.dk

For related information, please see European GPP criteria for [Textiles Products and Services](#) and the [Technical Background Report](#).