

Introducing green criteria for contracting cleaning services in Romania

National Environmental Guard (Romania)

Background

The [National Environmental Guard](#) (GNM) is responsible for environmental protection in Romania. The GNM is one of several authorities within Romania's [Ministry of the Environment](#), which is supporting the uptake of GPP in the country.

Since 2016, the Ministry of the Environment has partnered in [GPPbest](#) - an [EU LIFE funded project](#), which seeks to encourage the exchange of good practice and develop tools for GPP in Romania and Italy.

GNM's first green purchase was arranged in a challenging national GPP context. Romania is one of the few EU countries which does not have a national action plan on GPP in place. However, one is currently being developed by the Ministry of Environment, with the support of the [Fondazione Ecosistemi](#) and the National Authority of Public Procurement, and should be adopted by mid-2018. The strategic plan will stipulate mandatory GPP targets for public purchasers and will describe a set of actions to be carried out at the national level to help promote and implement GPP.

Procurement objectives

Given its role as an environmental protection agency, the GNM considers it especially important that its procurement processes also respect and preserve natural resources. As such, in 2017, the GNM decided to 'green' its tender for cleaning services (for its 35 offices) by introducing specific requirements for environmentally friendly cleaning products, toilet paper and paper towels.

Green considerations were introduced as minimum technical specifications. These were derived from the [EU Ecolabel](#) and the Romanian GPP Guide (currently in its last phase of institutional approval by the National Authority of Procurement), which includes recommended GPP criteria for six categories of products and services considered a priority at national level.

Criteria used

Technical specifications:

The technical offer must comply with the following standards: quality control system ([ISO 9001](#) or equivalent); environmental management ([ISO 14001](#) or equivalent); and information security ([ISO 27001](#) or equivalent).

Daily, weekly and monthly activities were described as part of the technical specifications. A pre-impregnated (that is, soaking) cleaning system/method was specified to carry out the contracted service. This method consists of



impregnating a sufficient number of clean mops (to cover the entire surface to be cleaned) in a bucket with detergent before cleaning begins. After washing the surfaces, dirty mops are to be collected in a bag and washed with detergent at the end of the service, so that the cycle can be repeated the following day with clean mops.

Samples and technical data sheets for all products needed to carry out the service were required. Regarding toilet paper and paper towels, products carrying the [EU Ecolabel](#) (according to the [European Regulation \(EC\) 66/2010 on the EU Ecolabel](#) and transposed in Romania by Government Decision No.661/2011), or equivalent, were requested.

Detergents carrying the EU Ecolabel (according to the European Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 and HGR No 661/2011 of Romania) or equivalent were required for the following purposes:

- Detergent for polishing and sanitary items
- Detergent for flooring (sandstone, natural stone, PVC and parquet) and faience
- Detergents for windows and mirrors

Award criteria:

The contract was awarded on the basis of lowest price.

Results

One bid was received that was fully compliant with the tender requirements.

The final contract price was 339,500 LEI (approximately €72,840). The contractual period was from 1 May 2017 to end of December 2017. During the execution of this contract, the supplier demonstrated its ability to completely satisfy the requirements set out by the technical specifications. The winning contractor provided the cleaning service using products carrying the [EU Ecolabel](#).

The insertion of green criteria had a positive institutional effect, as it encouraged GNM to develop a systematic process for conducting GPP. GNM's Director of Public Procurement and Logistics is currently developing a Public Procurement Plan that will include specific targets for GPP in line with the national ones, under development as part of the GPP National Action Plan. GNM's plan will be based on a series of market consultation actions aimed at prioritising the products and services which should be purchased through a green procurement process. Product/service specific environmental criteria will then be defined based on the existing [EU GPP criteria](#). GNM will disseminate their experiences to other counties and public bodies in Romania in order to help support and 'spread the word' about adopting green purchasing practices. For 2018, GNM has proposed that 100% of its cleaning services be ecological, with products carrying the [EU Ecolabel](#) being encouraged.

Environmental impacts

The procurement of office cleaning products and services has various environmental and health impacts connected to the chemical and other hazardous ingredients of the products. Environmental impacts include eutrophication of the water, excessive water consumption from intensive cleaning processes, packaging waste.

The pre-impregnation working method - compared to the traditional bucket and rinsing system - ensures a higher level of hygiene, reduces water consumption by about 75%, results in lower consumption of detergents, and leads to a reduced amount of wastewater discharged in the sewerage networks.

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Lessons learned

- In the delivery of the contract, specific attention was paid to respecting the environmental criteria, as this tender was the first GPP procedure of the GNM. The employees of GNM already identified differences regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the ecological products, as well as of the new cleaning techniques required from the new contract. For instance, improvements have been noted in the service now being odourless and in the reduction of allergies and other discomforts among office workers.
- For upcoming GPP tenders, GNM plans to conduct a market consultation process (prior to publishing a tender) in order to inform/prepare the market and facilitate the participation of more suppliers. It advises other authorities conducting similar purchases to take a similar approach to market engagement.
- Other “dos” include the adaptation of environmental criteria to the subject matter of the contract, and especially to the activity of the institution, as well as the request for guarantees/proofs concerning the fulfilment of environmental criteria.
- However, GNM advises contracting authorities to avoid launching GPP tenders without having a real basis for action resulting from market consultation and engagement processes. It is also recommended that GPP tenders be realised following an internal consultation process concerning the green criteria to be used, thus ensuring staff buy-in to the GPP approach. As GPP is usually a process which engages a palette of internal departments and persons, besides those in procurement, staff familiarisation and engagement in green purchasing should be key institutional objectives
- Finally, an important lesson learned is the need for peer-to-peer consultation and information exchanges with technicians and other contracting authorities, especially when the public purchaser has not had any previous experience in running a GPP procedure.

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