

Environmentally and socially friendly cleaning services

Environment and Resources Authority (Malta)

Background

The [Environment and Resources Authority](#) (ERA) in Malta published a tender for green cleaning services in 2019. The ERA has around 220 employees and takes a leading role in advising the national government on environmental policy making at the national level, as well as in the context of international environmental negotiations.

Malta's [National Action Plan \(NAP\) for Green Public Procurement](#), for years 2019-2025, requires all contracting authorities to include Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria in tenders for cleaning products and services. That is, it is mandatory. The Maltese Government has since 2012 enforced mandatory GPP criteria for cleaning services. These are based on the [EU GPP Criteria](#) and are currently being updated in Malta as part of the upcoming NAP.



Procurement objectives

The ERA has been applying a combination of environmental and social criteria to reach GPP targets. The impact on the environment should be minimised and the quality of life for citizens improved since contracts require bidders to provide cleaning products with reduced use of toxic chemicals.

This particular tender (from 2019) also set out criteria to ensure good working conditions for the staff employed under the contract. The overall objective of the tender was to procure efficient and reliable environmentally friendly cleaning services at the premises of the ERA. The call for tenders was issued using an Open Procedure. A workshop was also held to give potential service providers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the government's e-Procurement platform.

Criteria used

Subject matter of the contract:

To provide an efficient and reliable environmentally friendly cleaning services at its premises for a period of 36 months. ERA reserves the option to extend the contract by a further twelve-month period, or part thereof, with the same rates, terms and conditions. Products include all-purpose cleaners, sanitary cleaners and window cleaners.

Technical specifications:

Green criteria

- Ecolabels (or equivalent) as a means for verification: Tenderers had to submit proof that the products used carried either a) the EU Ecolabel or (if the products did not carry the EU Ecolabel) b) additional information:
 - For each product offered, a list of all substances contained in a quantity that exceed 0.01% by weight of the final product, together with their Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) - Number 3 (where available) and any risk phrases with which they are classified;
 - The name and function of all biocides. For all biocides classified as R50/53 or R51/53 information on the Log Pow or BCF (bioconcentration factor) was mandatory;
 - The total quantity of elementary phosphorus;
 - The total quantity of phosphates per wash.
- All products must be delivered with clear dosage instructions; sprays containing propellants must not be used and the primary packaging parts shall be easily separable into mono-material parts.
- The tenderer had to meet the requirements established in the Detergents Regulation 48/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council through the submission of: (i) a list of cleaning products that shall be used, and (ii) compliance of said products with criteria as established by the National GPP criteria (Malta) and reproduced in the Terms of Reference, that is:
 - For all products: no ingredient (substance or preparation) shall be included in the product in a quantity that exceeds 0.01% by weight of the final product that is classified with any of the risk phrases, or combinations thereof, in accordance with Directive 67/548/EEC and its amendments or Directive 1999/45/EC and its amendments;
 - R31 biocides (contact with acids liberates toxic gas) are forbidden for all-purpose cleaners;
 - The following biocides are forbidden for all products: R40, 45 and 49 (carcinogenic), R42, 43 (sensitising) exceeding 0.1% by weight of the final product, R46, 60, 61, 62, 63 (toxic for reproduction), R50/53, 51/53 (toxic to aquatic organisms), R59 (dangerous to the ozone layer) and R68 (possible risk of irreversible effects);
 - The following ingredients must not be included in the product:
 - Phosphorus is forbidden for all-purpose and sanitary cleaners (up to 0.2g per functional unit) and for window cleaners;
 - Biocides (unless used as preservatives) are forbidden for all products;
 - Biocides which are classified as R50/53 or R51/53 in accordance with Directive 67/548/EEC and its amendments or Directive 1999/45/EC and its amendments, unless they are not potentially bio accumulative¹ for all products.

“..having mandatory criteria has helped in the implementation of GPP in Malta and in greening the market for cleaning products, especially considering that the national government is the biggest procurer in the country, spending 6,509,062 euro, in 2020, for cleaning products.”

Social criteria

- Employees have a regular written contract: a copy of contract between bidder and an employee had to be provided.
- Wages paid by credit transfer: proof had to be provided, e.g. agreement with banks or written communication confirming this; employees are provided with a pay slip.

¹ In this context, a biocide is considered to be potentially bio accumulative if the Log Pow (log octanol/water partition coefficient) > or= to 3,0 (unless the experimentally determined BCF < or= 100).

- Proof needs to be submitted that the tenderer meets the legal requirements for the employment of disabled people.
- Health and Safety:
 - Regarding quality assurance systems employed by the contractor to ascertain a safe working environment, e.g. via provision of appropriate signage for wet floors, provision of necessary implements such as gloves, etc.
 - Regarding cleaning services from heights and for window cleaning: This is to include measures taken to ensure safety, for example, provision of harnesses, adequate equipment enabling reaching of windows located at high floors from a lower one, etc.

Award criteria

The contract was awarded to the tenderer submitting the offer with the Best Price/Quality Ratio identified by weighing technical quality against price on a 60/40 basis respectively.

Quality aspects included the following:

- Evidence that he/she is an Equal Opportunities employer in line with the Equality Mark or equivalent. NCPE certification or equivalent to be provided.
- Contractor provides an insurance cover.
- Contractor provides flexi-time.
- Contractor provides pay dates schedule.
- Valid collective agreement in place.
- Quality assurance systems employed by the contractor to ascertain a safe working environment, e.g. via provision of appropriate signage for wet floors, provision of necessary implements such as gloves, etc.

Results

The contract was awarded in April 2020 and will be in operation for three years. The contract value is approximately €100,000 per year. Seven bids were received, which is considered a normal result for cleaning tenders, as GPP is mandatorily implemented since 2012 and the market has well adapted to the demand.

During the evaluation phase, there was a mixture of both compliant and non-compliant bidders, thus noting that the technical specifications required at evaluation are ambitious yet attainable.

The resulting cleaning services contract currently in force (from this tender) uses only [EU Ecolabelled](#) cleaning products.

Environmental impacts

The main environmental impacts associated with cleaning are the production and use of chemicals, packaging and consumables (e.g. paper products), and the way in which waste and recycling are handled. Energy and water consumption, and in some cases the use of transport and fossil fuels, can also be important - and addressing these

² Text taken from The Procura+ Manual: A Guide to Implementing Sustainable Procurement (2016) available at https://procuraplus.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Manual/ManualProcura_online_version_new_logo.pdf

considerations will help to reduce costs. Staff training can improve the efficiency and ecological performance of cleaning services, and should form part of an environmental management system in this area. Use of concentrated products can help to reduce packaging and the associated transport - however staff training on appropriate dilution is essential².

The mandatory GPP status placed on the Cleaning Products Group within the Maltese NAP for GPP has resulted in numerous tenders being issued with more environmentally friendly cleaning products, which reduces numerous hazardous effects. Furthermore, having mandatory criteria has helped in the implementation of GPP in Malta and in greening the market for cleaning products, especially considering that the national government is the biggest procurer in the country, spending 6,509,062 euro, in 2020, for cleaning products. In 2020, 95% of the tenders for cleaning issued were GPP compliant.

Lessons learned

As of 2022, the GPP Office within the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning will put into effect the 2nd NAP for GPP (for years 2022-2027). One measure, which is already being worked on for the second NAP, is a Post-Procurement Audit, whereby numerous awarded tenders will be audited to determine if contracts comply with their requirements. This will be extremely helpful for providing a better understanding of how GPP is implemented at an operational level.

Another aspect to be taken into consideration is training on GPP for procurement officials. Managers and other procurement staff are trained on implementing GPP. This results in more qualitative tender procedures. In terms of this specific tender, one evaluator received training.

Contact person:

Kristian Sultana, Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Directorate for the Environment and Climate Change, Malta; Email: kristian.sultana@gov.mt

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