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Exploiting purchasing power to help meet environmental goals

Green Procurement Guidelines make Hamburg a purchasing pioneer

The city purchases goods, products and services to the sum of around €250 million each year. In future, purchasing shall be based to an even greater extent on ecological criteria. The Parliamentary Paper on green procurement passed today by the Senate is a 150-page catalogue of criteria that defines ecological standards for purchasing products and awarding contracts – for goods such as printer paper, light bulbs, cleaning agents, wall paint and even company cars.

In future, environmental criteria will play an even greater role in the selection and awarding process. Examples of such criteria include life-cycle costs, reparability and recyclability, packaging, climate impact and resource consumption. In addition to price, these factors may now be taken into account as a binding element when awarding contracts. The new Environmental Guidelines also contain a negative list of products that the administration may no longer purchase or use in future. Such items include: coffee makers with aluminium capsules, mineral water in non-returnable bottles, disposable crockery and chlorinated cleaning agents.

As the Senator for the Environment **Jens Kerstan** explains: “Hamburg’s administration will take a leading role in Germany in the future when it comes to procuring goods and awarding contracts. From now on, mandatory environmental criteria such as raw material consumption, durability and transport distances will play an even more important role in purchasing decisions. It sends out an important signal to business and private individuals, encouraging them likewise to take greater account of the consequences of their purchasing decisions and to pay attention to each product’s history. With a purchasing power of several hundred millions of euros per annum, the city can help ensure that environmentally harmful products are purchased less frequently and that sustainable products achieve even greater acceptance in the market. Our objective is to increase the share of environmentally friendly products significantly in order to help combat climate change.”

Example 1: Wall paint may not contain biocides in future, and may not be classified higher than Water Hazard Class 1 (WGK 1, slightly hazardous to water). Substances that are classified as toxic, carcinogenic or toxic to reproduction may not be added to wall paint.

Example 2: The fleet of vehicles currently owned by Hamburg’s core administration comprises 315 cars low in pollutants and CO2 emissions, around 24 percent of which are electric vehicles. The Procurement Guidelines apply more stringent criteria in this respect. The aim is to achieve a share of 50 percent by 2020. The number of electric vehicles owned

by public enterprises should also have doubled by then.

Example 3: The **life cycle** of a product will be considered in future. The guidelines contain calculation sheets for many product groups, enabling a life cycle assessment to be made. Such assessments reveal that long-term savings can be made if products are durable, if parts can be replaced easily or if low maintenance costs are involved. This may be the case, for example, when energy savings can be made in buildings, vehicles, illuminants or computer centres. In such cases, energy-saving variants represent the cleverer purchasing decision in the long run, even if the purchase price is slightly higher in the first instance.

Example 4: Around 66 percent of the **copy paper** used by the administration in 2014 was recycled paper featuring the Blue Angel label. This equates to 136,560,500 sheets given a total consumption of 206,526,000 sheets. In future, the city intends to further increase the proportion of recycled paper used. By using recycled paper, Hamburg managed to reduce its carbon emissions by approximately 285 tons, in addition to saving around 51.9 million litres of water and some 10.65 million kWh of energy compared to the use of virgin fibre paper. The quantity of water saved meets the daily demand for drinking water of over 414,800 residents.

Senator for the Environment **Kerstan** went on to explain: “Green procurement also assists in **climate protection**: it encourages energy savings, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies, helping to reduce the harmful greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. Green products are usually more durable, and often require less energy during the production and use phases.”

Background

In Hamburg, environmentally compatible procurement is stipulated in § 3 b of the Hamburg Public Procurement Act (HmbVgG). This aspect has now been fleshed out in the “Green Procurement Guidelines of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg” (Environmental Guidelines), providing assistance. Today’s Senate resolution means that the guidelines are now mandatory. Public enterprises are recommended to apply them when awarding contracts.

The tax authorities are responsible for strategic purchasing in the City of Hamburg. In addition, there are four central offices for awarding contracts. Comprehensive controlling in this area is currently being established. The city’s annual procurement volume for the scope of the Environmental Guidelines is approximately €250 million. The Federal Republic of Germany has until April 2016 to transpose into national law new EU award guidelines for promoting sustainable procurement. By adopting these Environmental Guidelines, Hamburg has now already translated this into concrete action for the ecological aspects.

Point of contact for media enquiries:

Ministry for the Environment and Energy

Jan Dube

Media Spokesperson

Phone: +49 40 42840 8006

Email: jan.dube@bue.hamburg.de

www.hamburg.de/bue