

Press release

For immediate release

Cities lead the charge for change to sustainable procurement through market engagement

Brussels, Belgium, 30 June 2011 - “Public procurement rules as they stand are too complicated and not flexible enough to reach our goals” according to MEP Heide Rühle. Rühle said that she welcomes the current revision process scheduled to be concluded in the coming months when speaking at the Smart Procurement - Reducing Costs and Saving Energy Conference.

The event took place in the Basque Country Representation Office in Brussels on 29 June with leading European cities in the field of sustainable procurement meeting with representatives from DG Environment, DG Enterprise and DG Energy. Participants had the opportunity to explore the role and potential of sustainable procurement as a driver of energy efficient innovation in the European Union. As strong advocates for achieving clearer wording on what is possible when spending public money in a more sustainable manner, the main message from the European Parliament and Commission is that the public sector can be a driving force for greening the market.

Many cities are making waves across Europe and the procurement tools developed through the European SMART SPP project “innovation through procurement”, are being used in cities such as Cascais (Portugal), Kolding (in Denmark), Barcelona (Spain) and Bromley (United Kingdom). These tools enable purchasers to calculate the real cost of products during their life span, and provide step-by-step guidance on how public bodies can get the best value out of their procurement actions. The tools were officially launched at the conference and training sessions on them were given in the hope that many other cities will follow in the footsteps of the pioneers mentioned above.

It is vital that the global impact of public sector consumption on goods and services are considered. For example, if all IT purchases in Europe followed the example of the Copenhagen City Council and the Swedish Administrative Development Agency, energy consumption would be cut by around 30TWh, roughly the equivalent of four nuclear reactors. Currently public buyers seem to be missing out on already existing supplies of “greener” products on the market with many buyers opting for the lowest purchase price criterion.

It’s clear that sustainable procurement can yield impressive results, such as in the Basque Country where the furniture market has changed completely. Speaking at the conference, Ander Elorriaga, Environmental Management Corporation for the Basque Country said, “These companies are leaders in the Spanish market, and also partly the French market because of how we have engaged with the market for our sustainable procurement actions”.

Experience demonstrates that these types of pre-procurement and early market engagement approaches can prove instrumental to achieving success and the SMART SPP project provides the tools and framework to help forward-thinking cities to reap the rewards of their commitment to sustainable procurement.

Word count: 455

Background:

SMART SPP is a European project that promotes the introduction of new, innovative low carbon emission technologies and integrated solutions onto the European market. The project is supported by the Intelligent Energy Europe funding programme. The new tools and guidance are available in English, Portuguese, Spanish and Danish www.smart-spp.eu/guidance.

More information:

Website: www.smart-spp.eu/conference

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An initiative of: **Procura⁺**  Supported by:
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Procurement
Campaign



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