



## **Monitoring environmental requirements in public contracts**

Region Stockholm has for many years monitored compliance with environmental requirements in centralized

agreements. The results from autumn 2018 and spring 2019 are now compiled.

- For many of the agreements, all the environmental requirements for products were met. This shows a maturity of the sectors involved and an understanding of the environmental requirements set by Region Stockholm. But there were also clear deviations, summarizes Elsa Härdelin, strategist in sustainable consumption.

During the monitoring both the structured environmental activities of the suppliers and the specific requirements on products or services were reviewed.

During autumn 2018 and spring 2019, 78 suppliers were audited in 16 agreements. Of these agreements, 13 are related to products and 3 to services. The agreements include laboratory products, blood sampling articles, urology products, endoscopy articles, laparoscopy articles, suture products, herniated plugs and nets, hemostatics, workwear for ambulance personnel, dressing items, compression goods, wound treatment with vacuum, paper and plastic products, pharmaceutical supplies, heavy transport and moving services.

### **Examples of environmental requirements**

Examples of environmental requirements on products are limits on the use of PVC, phthalates, antimicrobials, flame retardants, fluorinated compounds and allergenic substances. Requirements on the use of pulp from sustainable forestry were also included.

- In some cases, we had to make exceptions from the requirements regarding PVC or phthalates in products due to medical reasons. If so, we also made sure that the suppliers worked to phase out these substances, says Elsa Härdelin.

When it comes to services, environmental requirements such as training in ecodriving, vehicle classes and the proportion of renewable fuels were monitored.

### **The importance of an active dialogue**

The monitoring of agreements show that all suppliers have structured environmental activities in place. For many agreements, all environmental requirements for products were also met.

One agreement stood out among the others: laparoscopy articles, articles used in keyhole surgery. For this agreement, only 3 out of 14 suppliers met all environmental requirements for products. The rest of the suppliers in the agreement had deviations in the content of PVC, antimicrobial substances and nickel content in stainless steel.

- The results indicate the importance of having an active dialogue with the industry before procurement so that there is an acceptance by the suppliers for

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the environmental requirements that are set. The dialogue also helps us to set requirements that are reasonable from a medical perspective. It is also important to follow up the agreements again in a few years, says Elsa Härdelin.

### **Management of deviations**

If there have been deviations in the agreements, Region Stockholm initiates a dialogue with the suppliers. In cases where the deviations are not rectified, sanctions provided for in the agreements enter into force.

- In some cases, the products have been removed from the agreement. When removal of products has not been possible for medical reasons, there has been a price reduction or a penalty fee of 15 percent, says Elsa Härdelin.

### **An instrument for development**

The environmental requirements of Region Stockholm are most often on a higher level than the law stipulates. For example, more advanced requirements are set compared to the EU chemical legislation REACH, since there may be risks concerning substances that are not yet regulated. For suppliers, it can be a challenge to understand what is required in procurement, says Elsa Härdelin.

- The effect might be that the suppliers will have difficulties providing us with appropriate verifications. At the same time, we are often told that Region Stockholm is a frontrunner regarding sustainability requirements. We are a big player and therefore have a great opportunity to make an impact.

The knowledge collected during the environmental monitoring is used by Elsa Härdelin and her colleagues in future procurements. In particular, the knowledge is useful in the development of contract areas where there previously has been deviations from the requirements.

- In contract areas where we can't use mandatory requirements we will have to work with the suppliers in other ways. For example, we might use contract requirements stipulating the products should be free of PVC within a certain timeframe or use award criteria in procurement for suppliers with PVC-free products. We always gather our collected knowledge to be able to set better requirements in coming procurements.

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