Criteria for the sustainable procurement of Office Supplies

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This criteria document for the sustainable procurement of Office Supplies has been drawn up at the instructions of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment.
# Table of contents

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 4  
1.1 Definition of the product group ........................................................................................................ 4  

2 Sustainability in the procurement process ....................................................................................... 5  
2.1 Preparatory stage (points for consideration) .................................................................................. 5  
2.2 Specification stage (criteria) ............................................................................................................ 5  
2.2.1 Supplier qualifications .................................................................................................................. 6  
2.2.2 Schedule of requirements ............................................................................................................. 6  
2.2.3 Award criteria ................................................................................................................................ 8  
2.2.4 Contract ........................................................................................................................................ 8  
2.3 Utilisation stage (points for consideration) .................................................................................... 9
1 Introduction

The Dutch government would like to take concrete steps towards a sustainable society and wants to set a good example. If the public authorities pursue sustainable procurement, the sustainable products market will receive a substantial boost. The different government authorities have set objectives for themselves with regard to sustainable public procurement. To achieve the objectives, sustainability criteria have been developed for a large range of the Products, Services and Public Works that the authorities procure. These criteria are not regulations but are intended to provide a point of reference to procure sustainably.

This document focuses on the criteria for the Office Supplies product group, the elaboration of the criteria in specification texts and a more detailed assessment of the criteria, as well as a number of points for attention in the pre- and post-procurement stages. Additional background information and considerations regarding the content of the criteria can be found in the criteria document on the PIANOo (Dutch Public Procurement Expertise Centre) website, available in Dutch only.

1.1 Definition of the product group

The Office Supplies product group comprises storage and filing facilities, labels, self-adhesive notepads and writing utensils.

The selection of office items targeted by these criteria is based on a summary of the most often sold items by the organisation Quantore (distributor of Office Supplies to the professional Office Supplies trading sector). A decision was taken not to prepare separate criteria for writing pads. This is because the sustainability aspects related to writing pads are primarily focused on how the paper is used. A separate product group for paper was created however. The criteria for this product group will be reviewed over the course of this year. Once this review is complete an assessment will be carried out to determine how best to specify the criteria for writing pads.

During the preparatory stage of this document, its stakeholders suggested that the scope of this product group be expanded and that criteria be developed for staplers and computer supplies, for example. In view of the currently limited procurement of these products – based on the Quantore data – this idea was rejected for the time being.

For the benefit of the contracting authority, a number of CPV codes that might be of relevance to this product group have been included in this document. This selection is by no means exhaustive or complete. The contracting authority retains responsibility for compiling the correct set of CPV codes that matches the relevant tender.

The following CPV codes apply to this product group:

- 30192000-1 Office Supplies
- 30199500-5 Box files, letter trays, storage boxes and similar articles
2 Sustainability in the procurement process

The criteria in this document are divided amongst the various steps in the procurement process. More information about the steps in the public procurement process and the way in which sustainability can be included therein can be found on the PIANOo (Dutch Public Procurement Expertise Centre) website. It is recommended that you refer to this information before you get started with the criteria for this product group.

2.1 Preparatory stage (points for consideration)

Every purchase or call for tender starts with drawing up the inventory of the needs of the internal or external customer. Sustainability can be incorporated into this stage by considering whether the purchase is truly necessary and whether a more sustainable alternative might be available. Specific points for consideration regarding procurement for the Office Supplies product group are:

Economising

The purchase of Office Supplies can be minimised by economising. Economising can be realised by designing the administrative aspects of a business process differently. For example, the use of file folders and ring binders can be minimised through electronic filing, to the extent this is feasible in actual practice. (NOTE: electronic filing may not be adequate in all instances and a ‘paper-based’ filing system may for example be required for legal reasons.) Economising in the use of labels can for example be realised by sending documents electronically. It is impossible to demonstrate that increased digitisation in actual practice leads to a reduction in the need for Office Supplies.

2.2 Specification stage (criteria)

During the specification stage, the needs of the internal or external customer are translated into a tender document. This stage entails the formulation of:

- Criteria for supplier qualification. These could include grounds for exclusion, suitability requirements, i.e. requirements with regard to suppliers, and, in the case of restricted procedures, any selection criteria, i.e. wishes with regard to suppliers.

- A description of the minimum requirements pertaining to supply, service or task (the Schedule of Requirements).

- Award criteria, i.e. wishes regarding supplies, services and public works. These are only applicable when the tendering process is based on the principle of the Most Economically Advantageous Offer (‘Economisch Meest Voordelige Inschrijving’ or EMVI).

- The contract stipulating the contract provisions.

More information on the various types of criteria and the various tender options can be found in the Sustainable Public Procurement Manual. Innovation is also included in the award criteria, where relevant. Innovation is oriented towards the development and introduction of new ideas and products.

The criteria in this document have been formulated to support the purchaser in the Sustainable Public Procurement of Office Supplies. The criteria have been subjected to legal
review. However, every procurement and tender process is unique. For that reason, the drafting of a tender document remains the responsibility of the purchaser.

### 2.2.1 Supplier qualifications

No criteria have been formulated for this specific product group with regard to supplier qualification.

### 2.2.2 Schedule of requirements

#### Minimum requirements

**Storage and facilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum requirement no. 1</th>
<th>The following requirements pertain to the storage and filing facilities to be delivered (and the materials used to manufacture them):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The material must not consist of polyvinylchloride (PVC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The material must <strong>not</strong> contain any of the following materials:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- colouring agents;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- optical whiteners;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- inks;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- surface finishing materials;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- glues and coatings,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- that are classified as hazardous to health with the following R phrases: R40, R45, R46, R61 and R63 and/or are classified as hazardous to the environment with the R phrases R50, R51, R52 and R53 in accordance with the 99/45/EC Directive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. To the extent that the substances identified under Point 2 are not classified as described under Point 2, they may only be incorporated provided they do not contain any arsenic, chromium (VI), lead or zinc in concentrations that exceed the detection limit*. Colouring agents must not contain more than 100 mg of copper/kg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The glues used to manufacture the product (excluding any labels) must not contain more than 1% in volatile organic substances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. (Applies to paper and cardboard): At least 90% (w/w) of the fibrous materials used must be derived from used paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. (Applies to paper and cardboard): <strong>None</strong> of the following complex formers may be used during the production of the material: EDTA, DTPA and APEO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. (Applies to paper and cardboard): <strong>No</strong> glyoxal must have been added to the material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. (Applies to paper and cardboard): The material must <strong>not</strong> have been bleached using elemental chlorine, unless an elemental chlorine-free (ECF) procedure was used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Notes for purchaser

Sufficient storage and filing materials are available on the European market that can meet all of these criteria.

*Re Point 3: A detection limit is the lowest concentration of a component in a sample whose presence can still be quantitatively established with a certain level of reliability. In fact the requirement aims to entirely exclude the use of the specified heavy metals from the colouring agents, inks and pigments used. Due to trace elements, it is however impossible to obtain zero measurements.

## Labels and self-adhesive memo pads

| Minimum requirement no. 2 | The following requirements pertain to the labels and self-adhesive memo pads to be supplied (and the materials used to manufacture them):
| --- | --- |
| 1.  | The material must **not** contain any of the following materials:
|    | a. colouring agents;
|    | b. optical whiteners;
|    | c. inks;
|    | d. surface finishing materials;
|    | e. glues and coatings,
|    | f. that are classified as hazardous to health with the following R phrases: R40, R45, R46, R61 and R63 and/or are classified as hazardous to the environment with the R phrases R50, R51, R52 and R53 in accordance with the 99/45/EC Directive. |
| 2.  | To the extent that the substances identified under Point 1 are not classified as described under Point 1, they may only be incorporated provided they do not contain any arsenic, chromium (VI), lead or zinc in concentrations that exceed the detection limit*. Colouring agents must not contain more than 100 mg of copper/kg. |
| 3.  | The organic solvent content of the glue used and of any silicones/release coatings at the time of application must **not exceed** 0.1% (w/w). |
| 4.  | (Applies to paper and cardboard): The material must **not** have been bleached using elemental chlorine. Bleaching is permitted if an elemental chlorine-free (ECF) procedure is used. |

## Notes for purchaser

There are a sufficient number of labels and self-adhesive memo pads available on the European market that meet all of these criteria.

*Re Point 2: A detection limit is the lowest concentration of a component in a sample whose presence can still be quantitatively established with a certain level of reliability. In fact the requirement aims to entirely exclude the use of the specified heavy metals from the colouring agents, inks and pigments used. Due to trace elements, it is however impossible to obtain zero measurements.
### Writing utensils

| Minimum requirement no. 3 | The following requirements pertain to the writing utensils to be supplied (and the materials used to manufacture them):
| | 1. The material must not consist of polyvinylchloride (PVC).
| | 2. The writing utensils must **not** contain any colouring agents and other additives that are classified as hazardous to health with the R phrases: R40, R45, R46, R61 and R63 and/or as hazardous to the environment with the R phrases R50, R51, R52 and R53 in accordance with the 99/45/EC Directive.
| | 3. The permissible concentrations of the heavy metals listed below in the raw materials used to produce the plastic holders are for:
| | - chromium: lower than 50 mg/kg;
| | - copper: lower than 500 mg/kg;
| | - lead: lower than 500 mg/kg;
| | - zinc: lower than 2000/kg.
| | 4. Water-based inks must be used for fountain pens, fineliners and roller ink pens.
| Notes for purchaser | Sufficient writing utensils are available on the European market that can meet all of these criteria. |

### 2.2.3 Award criteria

#### Award criteria

**Labels and self-adhesive memo pads**

| Award criterion no.1 | (XXX) points are awarded for this section if the labels and self-adhesive memo pads to be supplied consist of 100% recycled paper fibres. |
| Notes for purchaser | Currently there are not very many labels and self-adhesive memo pads made of recycled materials available in the marketplace. This is why this criterion was not included as a requirement. On the other hand, by assigning an additional score, suppliers may be encouraged to make an environmentally friendly proposal in this case as well. |

### 2.2.4 Contract

#### Social aspects

- Social conditions have been drawn up to promote international working standards and human rights in the international production supply chain with the intention of applying them to tenders in addition to the European threshold values. See the [PIANOo website](#) about social conditions.
- Points of reference have been drawn up for the promotion of
labour force participation for those people who do not have ready access to the labour market (Social Return). See the PIANO website about Social Return.

| Notes for purchaser | Sustainability also has a social perspective in addition to the environmental one. The social aspect has been elaborated in a few generic instruments for sustainable public procurement and, therefore, it has not been included in this product group-specific document. The agreements about applying these instruments differ per government sector. |

### 2.3 Utilisation stage (points for consideration)

Once the procurement stage has been concluded and a product or service has been purchased, there are opportunities for using the product in a sustainable manner. Specific points for consideration for this product group are:

Economising during the utilisation stage is also an area for attention. Also see Section 3.1. By designing the administrative aspects of a business process differently, for example, by using electronic filing and transmitting documents electronically, it is possible to limit the use of file folders and ring binders and labels.