



SHARING EXPERIENCE EUROPE
POLICY INNOVATION DESIGN

Case Studies in Design Policy & Programmes

This case study was developed as part of the SEE project. SEE is a network of eleven European partners sharing experience and stimulating debate on how to integrate design into innovation policies at regional, national and European levels.

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Sustainable Purchasing in Tuscany

Italy

This case study has a slightly different format to the others in the SEE Library, as it is drawn from the first SEE Policy Booklet: Integrating Design into Regional Innovation Policy (November 2009).



In the case of public procurement, the contribution of design can be two fold. In the first instance, design thinking (an analytical yet incremental process) can be applied to the government purchasing process in order to establish a more transparent, accessible and inclusive system, which capitalises on regional strengths and maximises utility. This method has been applied in Tuscany (Italy) where the local authorities have developed a manual called 'Green Public Procurement', which places greater value on sustainable innovation and design.

Following the 1992 Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference, the local administrations in Tuscany created a network to apply the sustainable development principles of 'Agenda21'. The Agenda21 network activated five working groups on several subjects linked to sustainability, including sustainable purchasing. This group has produced a manual called 'Green Public Procurement' for the diffusion of green purchasing practices in order for local authorities to promote sustainable innovation. This has become an important tool for local SMEs in responding to public sector calls, as the guide sets out a comprehensive list of criteria relating to sustainability and eco-design for assessing tenders. By privileging these added-value components, the manual has resulted in increased participation by local companies in the procurement process. For example, the Fattorini furniture company developed a collection of school furniture in accordance with the manual criteria for green purchasing, and has subsequently won tenders at the national level having developed an entire collection of eco-design furniture products for children.

Consequently, as a result of redesigning the system of government purchasing, the most tangible outcome is more local SMEs responding to tenders. In the second instance, this notion of privileging added-value components like design and sustainability over the cheapest solution results in a number of positive externalities for the government and regional economy. Firstly, the use of design improves the level of public services by introducing innovative solutions but also disseminates best practice to the private sector by stimulating public demand. As individuals become more familiar with well designed public services, processes and systems, the private sector will have to respond to popular demand for creative user-centred solutions. Better design buying in public procurement as well as designing a better public procurement process would result in services and infrastructures that are more user-centred, efficient, innovative and of better quality. In this way, the regional government in Tuscany is setting the bar for the effective application of sustainable design.

The 2006 Commission report Creating an Innovative Europe urged Member States' governments to 'use public procurement to drive demand for innovative goods, while at the same time improving the level of public services'.^[1] Following this rationale, it is critical to encourage the intelligent application of public procurement and

public services as disseminators of innovative practice. The figures for public procurement across Europe are considerable; for example, the document *Accelerating the SME economic engine: through transparent, simple and strategic procurement* states that in 2008 'public procurement, estimated at over £175 billion per annum, represents approximately 13 percent of UK Gross Domestic Product and is a substantial proportion of the economy'.^[2] In essence, public procurement can be a powerful mechanism for disseminating innovative practice. Design can enable governments to use public procurement to achieve innovation targets as well as to improve the procurement process and promote sustainability.

For more information on this case study and to view the manual 'L'ABC degli Acquisti Verdi Pubblici' (available in Italian) visit: ag21.comune.fi.it/retetoscana/strumenti/d_quaderni_rete.htm