

# Swedish PPE procurement in a pandemic

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June 2022



This project aimed to examine sustainability across the supply chain with regard to public sector procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) during the pandemic. How do Swedish procurement agencies work across different scales on sustainability issues? The research has been conducted with regards to Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals [SDGs].



## NATIONAL LEVEL

The National Agency for Public Procurement provided legal support for purchasing bodies and suppliers. Their main priority was getting PPE delivered on time, although with awareness of sustainability - especially SDG 8 and SDG 12. The key registers for Kammarkollegiet were distributing supplies evenly across the country and creating new framework agreements, including social codes as qualification criteria on top of existing contract clauses.

## REGIONAL LEVEL

The regions were well coordinated via Adda which took both social and environmental issues into account. They provided framework agreements and product risk analysis with high aspirations for sustainability, see SDG 8, 10, 12 and 13. A web shop was opened in order for municipalities and regions to buy PPE directly. Given the challenges of the pandemic, new suppliers without pre-qualifications were able to sell their product.



## MUNICIPAL LEVEL

The key priority was acquiring PPE. Challenges included interpreting conditions in framework agreements, follow-up competencies, and the SDG 2030 agenda. Many lacked resources and the priority was securing supply, hence the SDG 2030 agenda was initially displaced. Several municipalities started working more circular and prolonged delivery windows to mitigate time pressure on suppliers and factory workers, see SDG 8, 12, and 13.



## FOLLOW-UP

Factory audits were not possible during the pandemic. Instead, purchasing bodies had to rely on self-reports from suppliers and office audits. There were resourcing challenges and awareness that self-reporting has inbuilt weaknesses. Trust and cooperation was essential. Many suppliers evoked trade secrets when asked about supply chain challenges.

## FACTORY LEVEL

The key priority was securing orders. Suppliers started cooperating as larger factories outsourced production to smaller ones. Alongside, there was competition taking place amongst them. The suppliers also noted the urgency that middlemen gave to them. Concerns arose regarding the prevalence of forced labour, for example in Malaysia and SDG 8 was compromised. The use of plastic in medical gowns raised questions about environmental sustainability in Sri Lanka, see SDG 13.

## OTHER KEY FINDINGS

- No contracts have been terminated due to sustainability issues.
- Within Sweden, circular suppliers were actively sought as an outcome of the pandemic.
- Many suppliers evoke trade secrets when asked about their supply chain.
- Larger suppliers manage sustainability concerns effectively. SME's have varying records.
- A few months into the pandemic, business was conducted as usual.
- Delivery windows were prolonged in order not to put time pressure on suppliers and factory workers.

## IN SUMMARY

All purchasing bodies show commitment to both social and environmental sustainability. However, the key priority was securing stock in order to protect people and employees which meant that environmental sustainability wasn't the highest priority. Future aspirations include working more circular, influencing SME's and increasing supply chain transparency. Many wish for suppliers to truly highlight issues in their supply chains.



We would like to thank the Adlerbertska Foundation for making this project possible