

Creating space for the growing city! Transparency, efficiency and non-discrimination at Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH (BIM)

An interview with Leif-Holden Dimitriadis, Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH (BIM)



BIM is responsible for more than 5,000 state-owned properties. It has been commissioned by the state to handle the letting, management, optimisation and sale of real estate across the city. In the written interview on 'Contract award and transparency at Berliner Immobiliengesellschaft', Leif-Holden Dimitriadis explains the approach and structure of BIM, as well as his specific scope of work.

What does BIM actually do? How do its activities translate into figures?

BIM GmbH is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the State of Berlin. By order of the senate, we manage around 5,000 public buildings totalling 4.7 million square metres of net floor space. The buildings include administration offices, police and fire brigade departments, technical colleges, prisons and correctional facilities, cultural properties and others. We are responsible for the letting, management, constructional maintenance, property optimisation and qualification, as well as the acquisition and sale of state-owned property.

How is the BIM portfolio integrated in the good governance and administrative action of the State of Berlin?

As a subsidiary of the State of Berlin, BIM GmbH is the responsibility of the Senate Administration for Finance. We look after three different real estate assets on their behalf. SILB is a special real estate fund of the State of Berlin comprising the property types already described in answer to the first question. SODA is a special public service fund covering all properties that the State of Berlin seeks to secure for the future. Finally, THV are trust assets not required by the state. We advise politicians and the administration transparently on how and for what purpose the buildings are best used, and implement the political decisions accordingly.

What exactly is your role at BMI?

I work as a lawyer in the Procurement Division of BIM GmbH. In this role, I manage and support tenders while taking due account of public procurement law. I also support our public consumers in the preparation of tender specifications in accordance with procurement law and design sample contracts for building work, service and freelance services.

What are the most important procurement guidelines? Please give us some examples!

By law, the public contracting authority must observe six procurement guidelines: the principle of open competition, the requirement for transparency, the principle of equal treatment, consideration of SME interests, the principle of tenderer eligibility and the principle of sound financial management.

The project engineering issue might serve as an example for the principle of equal treatment. A project engineer is a company that has already been involved in the project before the contracting authority puts it out for tender; for instance, through preliminary work or consultancy services. In order to satisfy the principle of equal treatment, the contracting authority must then ensure that the competition is not distorted, and balance out the information advantage of the project engineer. It therefore makes the relevant insights and information accessible to all tenderers in the tender documents.

What role do medium-sized companies play in the tender process? Why should their interests be considered?

Strengthening SMEs is one of the key political objectives, and procurement law aims to support its realisation. Thanks to the reform of public procurement law in 2009 and the anchoring of the requirement to consider SME interests, much greater value is now placed on this procurement guideline. It has now become a principle that applies to all tenders of the public contracting authority. Contracts tendered in accordance with this guideline aim to minimise the structural disadvantages smaller enterprises have as compared to larger companies, contributing to equal opportunities and stronger competition.

How can the procurement process be designed even more transparent, efficient and financially sound? Can new technologies be utilised here?

For quite some time, most of our contracts have been tendered electronically. The resulting benefits are obvious. The procurement process is more transparent. Digital recording of each step in the award process and the tenders received also shows retrospectively whether the award procedure did satisfy the legal requirements. Moreover, uncertainties resulting from postal delivery of the tenders are eliminated.

This can certainly be enhanced further. Everyone talks about BIM (Building Information Modelling). However, only the future will show the extent to which this digital method is suitable for planning and executing the refurbishment and restoration of existing buildings.

What does the long-term plan for Berlin as an exemplary growing metropolis look like?

The transparent property policy implemented in Berlin since 2013 is geared towards long-term strategic urban development. In order to meet the city's future requirements, the sustainable property development is already a focus now. This also includes selling property to the bidder offering the best concept for subsequent use, rather than the highest bidder. Equal promotion of cultural, social economic and environmental interests is necessary to make a location more attractive and creating added value for the city – the rate of return for the city. Civil society is also involved to a greater extent. Various initiatives and round tables facilitate engagement of Berlin citizens.

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