



Response

European Commission's call for evidence - revision of public procurement directives

Science Europe (SE) represents 40 major public organisations that fund and/or perform excellent, ground-breaking research in Europe. As bodies governed by public law, the directives on public procurement are of direct relevance to our members' operations.

This response addresses one specific aspect of public procurement: green and circular public procurement, linked to SE's strategic priority of "Strengthening the role and contribution of science in tackling societal challenges", and the goal, stated in our Framework for the Environmental Sustainability of Research Organisations, to "promote environmental sustainability of research and research-related activities on the systemic level in Europe."

As mentioned in the call for evidence, a revision of the directives on public procurement is an opportunity for the EU to promote its policy goals and objectives. The directives already state as one of their objectives "making the EU a more green, social and innovative economy." Currently, according to European Commission's statistics, "55% of procurement procedures use lowest price as the only award criterion for public contracts." Public procurement procedures that use environmental criteria would promote the procurement of sustainable services, works, and supplies – supporting the progression to sustainable practices as a key public policy objective.

In the case of research and research-related activities, public procurement can be used to advance environmental sustainability in research organisations' operations. The Framework for the Environmental Sustainability of Research Organisations (2024) supports the use of green public procurement in research organisations. One of the suggested medium-term actions for research organisations is to "Include environmental criteria in the management practices of research organisations. In particular, promote sustainable procurement practices, circular and sharing economy of equipment and services linked to research and research-related activities, energy savings and use of renewable energy sources."

In addition to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal, green public procurement can have positive co-benefits for research organisations, such as:

- Financial savings, e.g. linked to energy savings or shared facility models,
- Increased resilience, e.g. to supply chain risks in cases of circular procurement,
- Reputational benefits.

On the systemic level, use of green public procurement practices can also increase awareness in the respective supply chains.

Examples from several SE member organisations demonstrate successful implementation of green and circular procurement practices in research organisations (Survey Report: Appraising Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Research Organisations, 2024).

Based on the above, we support mandatory consideration of environmental criteria in public procurement whenever feasible (also considering cost efficiency and current sectoral conditions), as well as the use of circular public procurement. Life-cycle costing, considering quality of performance and planned obsolescence, are tools that enable contracting authorities to determine the true cost of procured services, works and supplies over their lifetime (including their effects on the environment), and promote economic savings alongside greater environmental sustainability. For instance, environmentally responsible procurement practices can contribute positively to environmental protection and human well-being, reduce the need for adaptation measures, and may offer greater cost efficiency over the entire product life cycle. Environmental sustainability must also be considered in innovation partnerships.

The impact of sustainable procurement practices should be thoroughly evaluated and communicated, considering the full life-cycle cost of products and services.

Technical assistance and capacity-building measures for setting up sustainable procurement procedures must be provided as necessary.

Attachments:

[Framework for the Environmental Sustainability of Research Organisations](#)

[Survey Report: Appraising Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Research Organisations](#)