



Rome • 12-13 September 2024  
Palazzo Salviati • Centro Alti Studi della Difesa  
Piazza della Rovere

# A VISION FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN THE EU

*This is a summary statement of collective ambition for the future of EU procurement from 100 leading procurement professionals from 26 European countries who came together at the Next Generation Procurement Conference in Rome on 12-13 September 2024, organized by Italy's National Anti-Corruption Authority (ANAC), Open Contracting Partnership, and Albania's Public Procurement Commission.*

The next few years can be transformational for public procurement across the European Union. Not only is the new Commission considering revising its public procurement directives, but 2024 also sees the widespread adoption of the EU's new procurement eForms and the start of its Public Procurement Data Space. The Commission is reviewing its Open Data Directive and exploring including public procurement in the list of high-value datasets. Many member states are leading on innovations that can be scaled across the Union.

The time for action is now. The European Court of Auditors' report on competition for public tenders finds that fewer companies are competing and direct awards have increased, despite the 2014 Directives meant to make public procurement more attractive. Too many procurement decisions are based on the lowest costs and not the best value for European citizens.

As we gathered in Rome, we reflected that good procurement is not only a question of regulation and reporting; it is about rethinking procurement as a process to create social value in delivering durable, sustainable, and inclusive assets for people, territories, and communities. Better data, digitalization, new technologies, and new, open ways of collaborating with citizens and businesses to monitor procurement and improve processes give us unprecedented insights into how to make procurement more efficient, user-friendly, inclusive, and socially impactful.

We also recognise the vital role that the availability of well-structured, high-quality, timely, and accessible data will play in tracking these outcomes and making the best use of limited public resources, especially as procurement is a high-risk area for corruption. Europe's Anti-Corruption Directive should strengthen the demand for good procurement data across Europe.

As a community of governments, public procurement professionals, universities, CSOs, and private companies, we recognize the unique momentum to transform public procurement in Europe into a strategic, data-driven digital service aimed at creating value for citizens, territories, and communities: it must be sustainable value.

We agreed to work collaboratively both on the national level and with the EU institutions to promote a genuine public procurement transformation that is:

- **Sustainable, inclusive and socially responsible:** Public spending should be based around these core values, not lowest cost, to deliver economic innovation and improve people's quality of life. We need to think across the whole cycle of planning and delivering contracts, especially on their planning and implementation where social and environmental impacts can be maximised.
- **User-friendly, efficient and effective:** We need to move procurement in Europe from paper-based processes that follow the logic of legal compliance to user-friendly, human-centred digital processes designed on a "tell me once" principle to decrease friction and stimulate participation and competition.
- **Data-driven:** Procurement systems should be open-by-design, automatically publishing real-time, high-quality, well-structured, and standardized open data on the whole procurement process, both above and below EU thresholds; this will enable all stakeholders, including citizens and businesses, to get a full picture of procurement opportunities and impacts, and support the introduction of new technologies, including solutions based on AI, machine learning, or smart contracts. Better data is also key to measuring the social and environmental impact from public spending and support, making it more strategic and mission-driven.
- **Integrated across Europe:** Country databases and platforms should be integrated, and data harmonised around open standards to facilitate the exchange of information and boost our single market. National procurement systems should follow the "reuse first" principle by using existing tools, such as the EU building blocks (eForms, Single Public Procurement Document, e-Invoices, etc.) and other tools, especially the Public Procurement Data Space.
- **Strengthened oversight:** Independent, transparent oversight authorities are key to ensuring trust and fair play in procurement. High-quality and standardised open data empowers oversight institutions and non-government actors to control and monitor the procurement process by detecting red flags to prevent corruption. Effective feedback loops increase participation and build trust.
- **In professional and capable hands:** Ultimately, good procurement depends on the capacity and values of procurement professionals. We need to elevate procurement as a function in government and provide legal, technical, digital and collaborative capacity-building to make good-sounding procurement policies work in practice.

We are excited to get to work in our governments, regions and communities to bring these principles for better procurement across Europe to life.