

## **Strengthening transparency, capacities, and integrity through EU Public Procurement Directives**

The European public procurement hasn't realized its potential for market innovation, competition, and inclusion yet. If we want procurement to shape new markets and help achieve policy objectives, we need to move from procurement that's an administrative, reporting and compliance based chore to a flexible and user-friendly digital service that captures meaningful data by default, driving intelligence to make procurement better.

The current revision of procurement directives is a once a generation opportunity to simplify procurement shifting from analogue process to fully digital systems that can make procurement decisions smarter, including easier market research, data-driven risk management, agile contract implementation and market insights-driven policy monitoring.

Helga Berger, the European Court of Auditors member in charge of the audit of public procurement in the EU, has noted<sup>1</sup> that we have a decade of lost progress in public procurement competition in the EU. Countries have focused on compliance with rules rather than procurement performance. In a rapidly developing digital world, public procurement is stuck with analog thought models, impeding its potential to innovate and solve societal challenges in the 21st century.

Cosmetic fixes are unlikely to make much difference. The review of the Directives is a not-to-miss opportunity to put infrastructure in place that can unlock the potential of data and technology to power innovation, inclusion, and the green economy.

The eForms and the Public Procurement Data Space (PPDS) are welcome heralds of the pan-EU procurement data architecture. However, using available data and

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<sup>1</sup> [NEWS-SR-2023-28 | European Court of Auditors](#) (accessed 11 February 2025)

infrastructure, we still cannot answer basic questions about who bought what, from whom, for what price, or help public buyers make better decisions.

Available pan-EU data is only half good, as 49.8% of TED data has quality issues<sup>2</sup>. Even if it were good, it would only represent around 30% of European public procurement in scope<sup>3</sup>. Information vital for buyers, policymakers, citizens, businesses, and oversight authorities combating corruption is not publicly available or can be hard to find.

Without a data-driven, forward-looking approach across all Member States, everybody will continue to struggle: buyers won't pool their resources across borders, policymakers will be unsure of the problems, businesses will find it harder to find opportunities, while citizens will distrust their governments, and corruption may find easier avenues to succeed. Finally, access to (raw) data is also relevant for AI uptake in public procurement, allowing public buyers and businesses to draw business insights from the available information<sup>4</sup>.

Data alone won't power better procurement; people will. The EC has to rethink its professionalization efforts. Member states lack resources and administrative capacity, especially in innovation public procurement<sup>5</sup>. Procuring innovatively can lead to innovation in service delivery to maximize public value, stimulate innovation in supply, and promote greater competition. Currently, the innovation procurement policy frameworks are working at approximately only one-third of their potential power.<sup>6</sup>

These are the main issues of the current framework that should be addressed:

## **1. EU procurement rules did not foster competition and cross-border trade.**

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<sup>2</sup> [Data Quality Overview](#) (accessed 11 January 2025)

<sup>3</sup> <https://datlab.eu/blog/the-elephant-in-the-room/> (accessed 4 February 2025)

<sup>4</sup> Following the Commission communication on Artificial Intelligence for Europe (11 January 2025).

<sup>5</sup> [Synthesis report Policy Benchmarking in Innovation Procurement](#) (accessed 4 February, 2025)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

As the European Court of Auditors (ECA) has found, competition as measured by the share of direct awards and the economic operators competing for tenders has gone down<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the volume of direct cross-border public procurement is very low at 5% on average<sup>8</sup>. These figures are only partly revealing. For example, the available data limits policymakers' understanding of cross-border trade to direct trade, missing a more nuanced picture of indirect trade (through cross-border incorporation, for example). Data limitations, therefore, skew policy-making during every revision.

## **2. EU procurement rules did not reduce the risk of fraud and corruption.**

As stated in the ECA report, transparency in public procurement is crucial for monitoring, control, and accountability of decision-makers<sup>9</sup>. This will be particularly important when simplifying rules. A high rate of single bidding and a large proportion of below-EU threshold awards<sup>10</sup> increase the risk of illegal behavior<sup>11</sup>. National supervisory authorities such as competition authorities and courts of auditors, as well as the European Commission, cannot effectively track possible fraud and corruption without sufficient and reliable data. Public watchdogs such as journalists and NGOs cannot expose waste of public money.

## **3. The EU procurement rules and practices did not facilitate effective policy tracking.**

The current data environment does not help accurate policy evaluation. For example, we cannot track indirect cross-border exchanges<sup>12</sup> nor evaluate societal,

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<sup>7</sup> [Special report 28/2023: Public procurement in the EU | European Court of Auditors](#) (accessed 11 January 2025), p. 15ff.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 23. The 2021 study commissioned by the EU reported even lower figure of 4.1% for contracts below 200 million Euro and 5.5% for contracts above that value,, see European Commission: Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, *Study on the measurement of cross-border penetration in the EU public procurement market – Final report*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, p. 173, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2873/15626> (accessed 11 February 2025).

<sup>9</sup> [Special report 28/2023: Public procurement in the EU | European Court of Auditors](#), p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> See Europe Economics, *Evaluation of Public Procurement Directives*, Markt/2004/10/D, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Oosthoek, *Public Procurement in the European Union: Transparent and Fair?*, ERCAS Working Paper No. 65, [Public Procurement In The European Union: Transparent And Fair? – ERCAS](#) (accessed 11 January 2025).

<sup>12</sup> [Special report 28/2023: Public procurement in the EU | European Court of Auditors](#) (accessed 11 January 2025), p. 37.

environmental, or innovative aspects of public procurement, as the respective fields in eForms are not mandatory.

The governance provisions of the Directives and the Commission's Single Market Scoreboard or Public Procurement Data Space have not proposed a coherent view of public procurement at the EU, national, and regional levels and within different business sectors<sup>13</sup>. There is no requirement for a structured, coherent, and long-term approach to monitoring procurement that could lead to informed policy decisions. Data collection approaches are siloed along EU and Member State (and within) competence lines, as each policy-maker has different levels of influence on the collected data and for what purpose this data is to be used. The Commission seems narrowly worried about collecting the data 'it needs' rather than creating a data space to enable joined-up policy monitoring at all levels.

Let's demonstrate these shortcomings with an example. Krzysztof works at the Public Procurement Office in Poland and is drafting a report on Green Public Procurement uptake levels in Poland.

He starts with analyzing the dataset provided by the Polish e-procurement platform eZamowienia. He soon encounters a problem - the dataset cannot filter procurement that used green public procurement criteria; it only provides a filter of "strategic procurement" that merges green, socially responsible, and innovative procurement. Without a sophisticated keyword analysis (which is highly error-prone), Krzysztof cannot determine the exact use of green public procurement criteria with the dataset from eZamowienia.

He then turns to analyzing mandatory annual procurement reports by institutions structured similarly to eZamowienia reports, so he faces the same challenge again.

To complete the picture, Krzysztof analyses a separate dataset of the above-EU-threshold procurement, the reporting of which follows the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

eForms structure, which is different from the national reporting data structure, so he faces a challenge of comparability between datasets.

He soon realizes it is virtually impossible to determine the levels of Green Public Procurement uptake, an important key performance indicator of the Polish Public Purchasing Strategy. Diving deeper into GPP analysis is even less possible as there is no way to analyze sectoral, institutional, or geographic trends, impeding the Public Procurement Office's ability to fit any GPP support efforts for actual demand.

**4. The EU procurement rules did not take sufficient advantage of the innovation potential.**

Users of procurement information not only want to track individual tender and contract awards but also want to look at the big picture - trends, competition levels, quality of service, market opportunities, and the impacts of public spending. The current data landscape at the EU level does not allow for the application of new technologies, including artificial intelligence. We barely saw any AI application instances on the EU-27 level. The current data landscape hinders the experimentation of innovative data uses, including machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, automatic text generation, and other artificial intelligence (AI) approaches. On the contrary, there are many documented examples of the impossibility of using TED (or any other procurement) data for more sophisticated analysis, such as environmental impact measurement. The EU should capture and keep data to support innovation development, even if there is no specific plan to use the data in the short or medium term.

**5. The EU procurement rules did not effectively reduce the administrative burden.**

The introduction of the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) and eCertis was intended to reduce the administrative burden for companies participating in

public procurement procedures, not least for SMEs<sup>14</sup>. However, as ECA has found, the share of SME participation has not increased overall<sup>15</sup>, and the impact of ESPD on the reduction of administrative burden has yet to be demonstrated<sup>16</sup>. Meanwhile, the administrative burden is still perceived as high overall in public procurement<sup>17</sup>. Structured data systems can reduce administrative burden through an increase in automation.

## **6. The rules did not work for building capacity of procurers**

Even the best legal framework and technology set-up won't work without capable procurement professionals. The most common obstacles encountered by Member States are often related to resources and administrative capacity necessary to implement public procurement of innovative solutions, for example, a lack of awareness; insufficient methodological competence of public buyers; low risk tolerance in public spending; scarce or lack of funding dedicated to innovation in public bodies; resistance to change stemming from the organizational culture.<sup>18</sup>

# Strengthening the data architecture and making public procurement better

Better data and technology will lay a foundation for a more fundamental shift towards better procurement that stimulates innovation, competition, and sustainability. We propose to think about this process in two steps: first, put underlying data and technology infrastructure in place; second, transform procurement to work for people, the planet, and the economy.

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<sup>14</sup> See Recitals 84 and 87 of Directive 2014/24/EU

<sup>15</sup> [Special report 28/2023: Public procurement in the EU | European Court of Auditors](#) (accessed 11 January 2025), p. 28f.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 26

<sup>18</sup> [Synthesis report Policy Benchmarking in Innovation Procurement](#) (accessed 4 February, 2025)

## **1. Simplification through getting data & technology fundamentals in place**

A revision of the procurement legal framework at the EU level will remain incomplete if it does not comprehensively address the need for reliable structured data to drive simplification. Procurement information collection has to move from a rigid notice-driven reporting to a digital service that captures and (re)uses data as part of routine use.

Crucially, the legal framework should aim to reduce administrative burden wherever possible by thinking holistically across different regulatory areas and databases. To this effect, we propose:

### **1a. Consistent use of the only-once principle**

The reviewers of the Directives should think digitally about implementing the only-once principle. Many relevant documents are already in electronic databases<sup>19</sup>. These databases should be further interconnected with each other and with national e-procurement systems to simplify the work for the companies in submitting these documents.

Importantly, the national databases should be free of charge, which the procurement Directives should, if necessary, mandate by adapting Article 59(5) of Directive 2014/24/EU. The Commission should also consider the language barrier and propose solutions for language translation rules.

Through these measures, two significant barriers to the participation of companies, particularly SMEs, would be partially tackled: the perception that public procurement imposes onerous exchange of reams of paper and the associated

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<sup>19</sup> (such as the [Business Register Interconnection System \(BRIS\)](#) (accessed 11 February 2025)); in its report on the ESPD from 2017, the European Commission also pointed to other systems relevant in this context, see <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0242> – Conclusions (accessed 11 February 2025). See also [Regulation - EU - 2024/903 - EN - EUR-Lex](#) (accessed 11 February 2025) on public sector interoperability

costs of collecting documents. This would also support the ambition of the Single Digital Gateway<sup>20</sup>.

The current Directives already consider the necessity to streamline information to simplify the check of documents, but the current only-once principle seems to imagine an additional repository of documents to be managed by the contracting authority, with the attendant data protection issues.

New legislation can go further by, for example, improving requirements for eCertis system to make it a reliable for tenderers to use,<sup>21</sup> or by departing from the “paper-based” thinking regarding the European Single Procurement Document,<sup>22</sup> a 13-page document that is reported to have increased complexity for tenderers<sup>23</sup>, failing to achieve its original objectives.<sup>24</sup>

## **1b. Strengthen access to procurement documents.**

Article 53 of Directive 2014/24/EU should be enforced. It concerns the electronic availability of procurement documents that contracting authorities shall offer unrestricted and full direct free of charge access to, also requiring that the text of the notice or the invitation to confirm interest shall specify the internet address to access procurement documents.

Unrestricted access to procurement documents is helpful for buyers to find best practice examples or for competition authorities to research red flags, and else. Researchers may also, in line with the AI strategy of the European Union<sup>25</sup>, use procurement documents for machine learning purposes to assist stakeholders in their goals.

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<sup>20</sup> Art. 14 of [Regulation - 2018/1724 - EN - EUR-Lex](#) (accessed 11 February 2025)

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Article 60 and Annex XII of Directive 2014/24/EU

<sup>22</sup> [Implementing regulation - 2016/7 - EN - EUR-Lex](#) (accessed 11 February 2025)

<sup>23</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, *Report on the ESPD survey*, Publications Office, 2020, p. 8/9, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2873/697154> (accessed 11 February 2025)

<sup>24</sup> [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2969066](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2969066) (last accessed 4 February 2025)

<sup>25</sup> The Communication from the Commission on Artificial Intelligence for Europe, COM/2018/237 final, [EUR-Lex - 52018DC0237 - EN - EUR-Lex](#) assesses, among other things, that more data should be made available for machine learning (accessed on 12 February 2025)



Article 53 should also make clear that a login to access the data should not be required. Additionally, the Commission could provide guidance on what common methods or free software for document publication are available, and on archiving documents. It should also be made clear that procurement documents of all stages of the procurement procedure should be uploaded, meaning that in procedures other than the open procedure, the procurement documents of the latter stages should also be made available publicly according to the rules of Article 53. Finally, rules should be introduced on the minimum duration of the availability of such procurement documents to allow for sufficient time for them to be collected, as there is a public interest in their open availability. Taking inspiration from Article 84(2), the minimum duration of such availability should be at least three years from the contract's award date.

### **1c. eForms should be strengthened and expanded**

eForms should become a building block for all procurement data infrastructure across the EU, and importantly, within national procurement systems. It should move from being an additional reporting burden to a default data structure of procurement databases that collects data through a routine use of e-procurement systems. This can significantly simplify procurement and reduce the administrative burden.

Standardized data makes it easier for companies to find tenders and for data reusers to bring business opportunities into market visibility<sup>26</sup>, encouraging companies to participate in tenders and providing better value for money to contracting authorities.

Also, increased transparency informs the general public of where the money is going and allows for the tracking of potential misuse of public funds. It strengthens confidence in public spending, the quality of public debate, and democracy.

Finally, with the introduction of optional fields tracking so-called strategic (green, social, innovative) procurement, policymakers have at least a basic indication of

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<sup>26</sup> For example through national databases, such as <https://www.ausschreibung.at/>

how public procurement contributes to the pursuit of strategic goals, as introduced by the 2014 Directives<sup>27</sup> and much enhanced by the introduction of the so-called “Sectoral Files” associated in particular with the European Green Deal.<sup>28</sup>

The development and sound management of eForms are therefore essential both to reach the goals of European public procurement and to monitor if and to what extent they have been reached. This allows policymakers at the European and national levels to make informed, data-based decisions while capturing if policy changes achieve the intended impact.

Around 80% of the value of public procurement in the EU is spent below the threshold<sup>29</sup>. To realize the fuller potential of eForms, the procurement information reporting threshold (contract notices and contract award notices) should be reduced. This would strengthen the internal market by spreading information about minor contracts, which are also particularly interesting to SMEs, more broadly across the increasingly more integrated EU economy, where SME now may be more interested to participate particularly in smaller procedures across the border. It would also provide a more complete picture for the public and national policymakers of overall spending and help buyers by improving their business analytics, easing their reporting requirements, and helping them to provide immediate feedback to any auditors or internal revision or in response to parliamentary or public inquiries. Finally, such an approach would also help the European Commission with the overall monitoring of potential problems in the functioning of the internal market.<sup>30</sup>

eForms fields should no longer be determined by the Annexes to the procurement Directives or by particular sectoral files such as the Energy Efficiency Directive<sup>31</sup>. While the content of the eForms fields should generally be as stable as possible, it

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<sup>27</sup> See for example Recitals 47, 95, 96 and 97 of Directive 2014/24/EU

<sup>28</sup> Such as for example [Regulation - EU - 2024/1735 - EN - EUR-Lex](#) (accessed 12 February 2025)

<sup>29</sup> Europe Economics, Evaluation of Public Procurement Directives, Markt/2004/10/D, p. 19, and OECD (2010), “Public Procurement in EU Member States - The Regulation of Contract Below the EU Thresholds and in Areas not Covered by the Detailed Rules of the EU Directives”, SIGMA Papers, No. 45, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5km91p7s1mxv-en>, p. 12 (accessed 12 February 2025).

<sup>30</sup> See Recital 121 of Directive 2014/24/EU on monitoring by the European Commission in General.

<sup>31</sup> Article 7(5) of Directive (EU) 2023/1791 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2023 on energy efficiency and amending Regulation (EU) 2023/955 (recast), [Directive - 2023/1791 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

should not be constrained so much as to not be changeable due to new policy needs. However, to be clear, this process needs to be inclusive and considered – for any added field, it should be clear if it needs to be collected, in what form it should be collected, and if there are potential other data sources that may already exist for the collection of such data. In particular, the existence of other data sources, such as e-invoices and e-ordering information should be reviewed to avoid a duplication of the collection of data. Collecting data should also always be purpose-oriented to avoid unjustified administrative burdens and harm to the overall acceptance of eForms - in other words, policymakers should always know beforehand what data is needed for which specific purposes and audiences, and assess its overall impact, including the financial impact of a change of eForms. These aims could be enforced by introducing them as conditions for the European Commission and the Advisory Committee on Public Procurement to consider when adopting or amending an implementing act on eForms according to Article 89 of Directive 2014/24/EU<sup>32</sup>.

eForms should grow in mandatory fields: in particular, the fields of strategic procurement should be expanded, amended, and made mandatory. Given the strategic goals of public procurement, there is a clear need to monitor the extent and success – or lack thereof – of such procurement to make more informed policy decisions, track both positive and negative developments, and learn about best practice examples.

Another extension of the application of eForms that is needed in the revision of the procurement Directives is the requirement to notify the call-offs from framework agreements through eForms by removing the current exemption in Article 50(2) of Directive 2014/24/EU. The current exemption of call-offs from the notification requirement leaves a massive gap in the overall picture of what is really being spent, as the notification of a contract award notice just of the conclusion of the framework agreement does not give any indication to which extent the framework agreement was used, with which supplier, when and by which contracting authority. It also makes monitoring other aspects harder: for example, the

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<sup>32</sup> Incorporating the relevant points from the Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on Better Law-Making, [EUR-Lex - 32016Q0512\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex](#), in particular on the Impact Assessment

notification of the conclusion of the framework agreement for the purchase of zero-emission cars cannot sensibly be linked to the fields on the Clean Vehicles Directive<sup>33</sup>, making the data incomplete for the monitoring required by the Clean Vehicles Directive. Monitoring call-offs through standardized data also allows contracting authorities to monitor the available volumes in a framework agreement, particularly when they may not be the managing contracting authority (such as when a central purchasing body is conducting the procurement). It also allows companies to see when a framework agreement might be nearly exhausted, indicating that a new procurement procedure may be upcoming.

Another essential extension to eForms providing additional transparency is to make the notification of the contract completion notice mandatory by adding such a requirement in a new Article in the procurement Directives. This notice already exists in the eForms Implementing Regulation and the corresponding Software Development Kit as an optional notice. Making it mandatory would improve transparency on actual spending when comparing the completion notice to the contract award notice(s), allowing a better overview of actual spending and potential modifications to awarded contracts.

In pursuance of the goals listed above, it should also be considered to designate procurement data as a high-value dataset according to the Open Data Directive.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, one consideration that should be explored to increase the quality of the available data would be to decouple the evolution of CPV classifications from CPV Regulations to maximize fluidity, particularly given the rapid and increasing pace of change of new technologies.<sup>35</sup> A new and clarified classification of what can be procured, particularly one considering new technologies, would positively affect the overall quality of monitoring through eForms.

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<sup>33</sup> See Article 10(3) of Directive 2009/33/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of clean road transport vehicles in support of low-emission mobility, [EUR-Lex - 02009L0033-20240520 - EN - EUR-Lex](#), as well as BT-717 and the following BG and BT on the Clean Vehicles Directive in the Annex to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1780 of 23 September 2019 establishing standard forms for the publication of notices in the field of public procurement and repealing Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1986, [EUR-Lex - 02019R1780-20241101 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>34</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information, [Directive - 2019/1024 - EN - psi directive - EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>35</sup> [International AI Safety Report 2025](#), p. 11 (accessed 12 February 2025)

## **2. Transform procurement to work for people, the planet, and the economy**

### **2a. Empowering procurement professionals**

No amount of good data may help to improve public procurement where the people conducting it cannot make good use of it. It is, therefore, vital to elevate procurement officials in their function and provide dedicated training and avenues for collaboration and capacity-building.

Building on existing professionalization efforts, the Commission should propose ways for continuous public procurers' professional development to keep pace with fast technology and market developments. The ecosystem of professionalization needs a rethink focusing on developing networks between centers of excellence and encouraging knowledge to reach all 250 thousand contracting authorities across the EU. A crucial element is up-to-date knowledge and data on the procurement workforce, informing possible professionalization interventions.

At the core of professionalization efforts should be structured, high-quality, verifiable data, and new analysis and business intelligence technologies to support procurement functions. The effort should ease the burden on procurement professionals to engage with markets, conduct market research, control risks, and monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of procurement procedures.

### **2b. Procurement for people & planet**

Public procurement should be green, inclusive, and socially responsible. It should leave space for innovative solutions and provide the best value for money, improving competition in the EU within Member States and across borders.

The procurement Directives should introduce ambitious goals while maintaining flexibility for buyers. Having precise target figures across various policy areas helps

buyers align their targets and promote uptake levels. Sectoral legislation targets proved this to be an effective strategy.

The directive review should improve strategic procurement monitoring to inform future policy decisions by being more precise in the Directives on what the Commission should report on while keeping in mind that companies, contracting authorities as well as the Commission should not be forced to collect it through extra reporting exercises in keeping with the Commission's promise to reduce admin burden by 25%<sup>36</sup>; PPDS can play a role in particular concerning continuous/long-term monitoring. Making strategic procurement fields mandatory for eForms would contribute to this objective.

Consider product requirements in sectoral legislation [this was something that was discussed before the flood of sectoral files, that it is maybe not up to procurement to determine how to buy green, but it would be better to only have greener products on the market; I think partially there is now both, see Construction Product Regulation or I think Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation]

## **2c. Strengthening oversight and improve public trust**

As set out in the vision for public procurement in the EU<sup>37</sup>, independent and transparent oversight authorities are key to ensuring trust and fair play in procurement. These authorities can also play a role in ensuring procurement data quality.

Member States should establish or name independent procurement authorities, for example, the competition authorities with a mandate to review procurement procedures through access to e-procurement systems and analysis, allowing them to analyze data across procurement procedures and contracting authorities. Such procurement authorities should also be empowered to bring complaints about

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<sup>36</sup> Communication from the Commission: Long-term competitiveness of the EU: looking beyond 2030, COM/2023/168 final, [EUR-Lex - 52023DC0168 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

<sup>37</sup> [vision for procurement in the EU v3](#) (accessed 11 January 2025).

individual procurement procedures from companies and whistleblowers before review bodies.

These procurement authorities should also be empowered to enforce the correct input of data into eForms, either through ex-ante checks before publication or through ex-post checks and the enforcement of correction of erroneous published data.

### **Data-driven risk management**

The EU should revise its procurement directives and related instruments to harness the power of data analytics, powering ex ante and ex post monitoring through risk analytics and red flags.

The Public Procurement Data Space (PPDS), with some functionality and accessibility adjustments, has significant potential to become a comprehensive data analytics platform for monitoring public procurement performance in real time while enabling stakeholders to detect corruption risks effectively. To achieve this, it is important that, besides procurement data, it also integrates additional datasets that are key to build robust a red flag framework by providing more context to public procurement operations.<sup>38</sup> For example:

- **Company registries** – Linking procurement data to company and beneficial ownership registries would allow users to analyse bidder profiles, ownership structures, and potential conflicts of interest. Beneficial ownership information is particularly critical for identifying hidden relationships between contractors and public officials.
- **Complaints** – Integrating data on complaints filed against specific tenders or contracting authorities would provide insights into recurring issues or patterns of misconduct.
- **Sanctions databases** – Connecting the PPDS to databases listing companies or individuals barred from participating in public procurement due to past violations would ensure that sanctioned entities are excluded from future tenders.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/841d9990-8f7e-4860-9acd-cba1b9f096a3>

To be truly accessible to a wide range of users—including policymakers, journalists, civil CSOs, and citizens—the PPDS should feature intuitive dashboards that present data in an easily understandable format, as suggested by ECA.<sup>39</sup> Interactive visualisations such as heatmaps, trend lines, and bar charts could help users explore procurement patterns and detect anomalies without requiring advanced technical skills. For example, dashboards could display metrics such as single bidding rates, contract award timelines, or deviations from estimated contract values.

## **2d. Empowering civil society and citizens to monitor procurement**

CSOs, investigative journalists, and citizens can play a pivotal role in scrutinising procurement processes, identifying irregularities, and ensuring that public funds are used effectively. In line with the EU objective of “bringing Europe closer to citizens”, Article 83 (Monitoring and reporting), could be revised to encourage member states to: i) set up capacity-building programmes for CSOs to enhance their ability to monitor contracts effectively; ii) invite CSOs to act as independent third-party monitors or observers in high-value or high-risk procurement projects.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications?ref=sr-2023-28>