

## **Circular procurement: public and private**

### **24 February 2021**

### **Workshop highlights**

EU Industry Days is Europe's flagship annual event on industry. It serves as the main platform to discuss industrial challenges and co-develop opportunities and policy responses in an inclusive dialogue with a wide range of partners. The 2021 event took place during the week of 23-26 February and the EESC organised a workshop on circular procurement on 24 February. The aim of this workshop was to walk policy makers and decision makers through the circular procurement process and to share the daily concerns and huge change in mindset for those involved in procurement.



**Moderator: Cillian Lohan, EESC Vice-President for Communication and EESC member of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP)**

- The [Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform](#) is a joint initiative of the EESC and the European Commission. It enables stakeholders to be involved in the development of the circular economy and the implementation of the circular economy action plan. The platform enables stakeholders to share [best practices](#), including in relation to circular procurement.
- Stakeholders are asked to share their circular procurement practices, research and lessons learnt through the platform's website: [circulareconomy.europa.eu](http://circulareconomy.europa.eu).



**Melody Van den Acker, Facilitator Circular Economy, Vlaanderen Circulair**

- [Circular Flanders](#) is a consortium of public and private partners working towards a more circular economy in Flanders. Circular procurement is a strategic lever for the transition to a circular economy.
- Circular procurement maximises value retention of products and materials. The shift towards circular procurement involves moving from theory to practice, and to learn together, with each other and from each other.
- Moving towards circular procurement creates a positive impact on the environment and society, while at the same time meeting the functional needs of clients and rewarding those suppliers which already have these solutions and products in place.
- It is essential to help contractors and businesses to comply with circular and sustainable criteria, while making sure that no one is left behind, particularly SMEs.

**Ferre Wyckmans, EESC member and rapporteur for the opinion "Towards circular public procurement "**



- The [EESC opinion on circular procurement](#) examines how European legislation on circular public procurement can combine the primary purpose of the contract with environmental protection, more attention to SMEs, sustainable local production and, last but not least, the protection of social rights.
- National legislation is needed, but it is key that the EU clearly prioritises sustainability and circularity of products and services in the internal market.
- There is a fear that circularity is primarily an extra burden and cost. This cannot be ruled out, but a longer-term approach is key. Measuring the life-cycle cost of a product or service means using criteria beyond price, such as quality, sustainability or social impact.
- It is key to train staff to become circular procurement specialists in different areas: this investment can ultimately lead to lower expenditure and savings.
- The EESC wishes to continue cooperating on this important issue with the stakeholders who can enrich this debate with their expertise: e.g. the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and ICLEI.

**Gonçalo Lobo Xavier, EESC member and co-rapporteur for the opinion "Towards circular public procurement "**



- Moving towards circular procurement implies creating the right conditions for businesses, including SMEs, which can take up new challenges and implement innovation.
- Circular procurement is one of the dimensions of the recovery plan.
- To implement circular procurement we need less bureaucracy, basic legislation and clear communication in order to get everybody on board.

**Diego Dutto, EESC member and rapporteur for the opinion "[Public procurement as a tool to create value and dignity in work in cleaning and facility services](#)"**



- Circular procurement must be the vehicle for taking tangible action on social inclusion, environmental sustainability and equity in the workplace.
- Price is not the only element to be taken into account when awarding contracts. We must also consider other aspects, e.g. the quality of services, workers' rights, social inclusion and the use of products and technologies with a low environmental impact.
- Public procurement is a tool of social cohesion and development. It can contribute to the recovery of the European economy.



### Barton Finn, responsible for Purchaser Engagement, TCO Certified

- [TCO Certified](#) is a comprehensive sustainability certification for IT products covering social and environmental responsibility requirements. The certification relies on an independent verification system for assessing the compliance of products and includes a built-in management system for dealing with identified non-conformities.
- TCO Certified criteria are designed to promote sustainability for IT products following a life-cycle perspective: from material sourcing/manufacturing to use/reuse and recovery/recycling.
- Circularity is one of the key dimensions included in TCO Certified through a set of product lifetime extension criteria aimed at driving the development of products that are durable, repairable, upgradeable and recyclable. These are generally aimed at prolonging the use of products or giving a second life to their components and materials - which is the most important thing we can do to reduce the environmental footprint of IT products.
- Accordingly, TCO Certified requirements enable consumers to use their devices for a longer period of time. With that goal in mind, TCO Certified also provides sustainability performance indicators to empower consumers/purchasers to integrate sustainability into their decision making process on purchasing.



### Nicola Konstantinou, EESC CCMI delegate and co-rapporteur for the opinion "Public procurement as a tool to create value and dignity in work in cleaning and facility services"

- When awarding public contracts, public authorities should base their choice on quality rather than on price.
- Tomorrow's industrial model has to be fair and sustainable. It is imperative to improve working conditions and enhance the dignity of workers. Only companies that respect collective labour agreements in the sector should have access to public procurement.
- With the support of trade unions, public authorities should monitor contracting companies' compliance with social legislation and collective labour agreements throughout the duration of the contract.



### Enrico Degiorgis, Green Public Procurement Policy Officer, DG ENV, European Commission

- The Commission considers that [Green Public Procurement \(GPP\)](#) plays a key role in the transition towards a more sustainable and circular economy.
- The Commission has developed various tools to help contracting authorities make their procurement greener, such as EU [GPP criteria](#), guidance and a [GPP helpdesk](#).
- The Commission will **propose minimum mandatory GPP criteria and targets in sectoral legislation** and phase in **compulsory reporting to monitor the uptake of GPP** without creating an unjustified administrative burden on public buyers.
- Furthermore, the Commission will continue to support capacity building with guidance, training and dissemination of good practices, encouraging public buyers to take part in a **"Public Buyers for Climate and Environment"** initiative, which will facilitate exchanges among buyers committed to GPP implementation.

