POSITION PAPER

FROM THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF PUBLIC BUYERS TO A NEW EUROPEAN VISION FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

EU PUBLIC PROCUREMENT
MANAGERS NETWORK



EUPPM.NET
Procurement for People

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Only people can change the quality of European public procurement. The EUPPM (EU Public Procurement Managers Network) is a network of EU public buyers and professionals that promotes professionalisation across all EU Member States. Following the EUPPM Report on Professionalisation of Public Procurement in Europe and its first Conference 'Building the future of public procurement in Europe' in Naples, the first building blocks for a European public procurement community have now been laid and in this Position Paper input on the current reform is presented. EUPPM wants however to continue building on this foundation and make a genuine contribution to the professionalisation of procurement buyers across Europe. We therefore ask the European institutions to support our initiative.

PROCUREMENT FOR PEOPLE

1.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The modernisation of European public procurement cannot rely solely on revising rules. The quality of public procurement also depends on the ability of public administrations to apply those rules effectively, manage increasingly complex processes, translating strategic objectives into public procurement, and make informed use of digital tools, data and emerging technologies. Above all, it depends on people.

This conviction lies at the heart of the EUPPM – EU Public Procurement Managers Network - promoted by ASSORUP, which progressively developed this European initiative.

> *ASSORUP, the Italian Association of Public Procurement Managers, was established in 2022 with the aim of providing greater structure, recognition and professional dignity to those working every day in the planning, award and execution of public contracts. The experience gained since then has increasingly demonstrated that the challenges faced by public buyers are not confined within national borders. Different administrative systems face similar issues: growing procedural complexity, digital transformation, the need for new skills, the management of innovation, and the challenge of translating increasingly ambitious strategic objectives into public procurement activities that can be effectively implemented.*

In 2025, this journey moved to a new level. A certification for European Union Public Procurement Managers was proposed, conceived not merely as a formal qualification, but as a means of recognising skills, promoting common professional standards and contributing to the development of a shared European professional identity for public buyers. At the same time, an international network began to take shape, enabling professionals from different legal and administrative systems to exchange experiences and contribute directly to the debate on the future of European public procurement.

In January 2026, the project entered a new phase with the launch of an international survey involving stakeholders from 32 countries, including countries outside the European Union. The initiative highlighted the international dimension of the debate on the professionalisation of public procurement professionals.

In May 2026, with the support of MEP members of the IMCO Committee, the survey results were presented at the European Parliament. This represented an important milestone in the EUPPM journey, bringing practitioners' experience into a European institutional setting and strengthening the objective of creating a closer dialogue between those who shape public policies and those who are responsible for implementing them in practice.

The next step was the EUPPM Conference 2026, held from 15 to 17 October in Naples, which brought together experts, institutions, academics, public buyers and economic operators with the aim of contributing to the development of the new European public procurement framework. The Conference was structured around thematic workshops, transforming the European dialogue developed over the preceding months into a process of collective reflection and policy development.

The eight workshops addressed qualification systems for contracting authorities and economic operators, artificial intelligence and decision-support tools, public-private partnerships, sustainability and social value, project management and innovation procurement, BIM and public works, European industrial competitiveness, and healthcare procurement.

2.
Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants to each workshop developed recommendations that focused, at times, on legal reform needs and, at others, on managerial steps forward. More specifically, the following indications were set out in the eight workshops:

EIGHT THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

AM01 Qualification Systems in European Public Procurement and the Professionalisation of Public Buyers and Contracting Authorities

AM02 AI Enabled Procurement Systems and Decision Support Tools

AM03 PPP & Public-Private Governance

AM04 Sustainability, Green Procurement and Social Value in Services

PM01 Project Management and Innovation Procurement

PM02 Advanced Solutions for Building Information Modeling (BIM) in Works Contracts

PM03 Made in Europe & Industrial Competitiveness

PM04 Healthcare Procurement: Complexity, Innovation & Risk Management

01. Qualification Systems in European Public Procurement and the Professionalisation of Public Buyers and Contracting Authorities

AM01

Only prior qualification of the economic operator through a European interoperable system linking credible national qualification systems can guarantee the best allocation of public resources and at the same time facilitate the free cross-border participation of all European economic operators in public procurement. For the professionalisation of public buyers, we need a European approach rather than leaving it in the hands of the Member States. The proposal is to build interoperability between national models, rather than impose a single European SOA pre-qualification system. The Italian system could offer a set of transferable principles: independent preventive verification, public supervision, reuse of certifications with a consequent reduction in waste, information updated at the source, and a distinction between the qualification of the economic operator and the assessment during the tender procedure. Furthermore, professionalisation requires institutional recognition, support structures, resources, practical tools, and continuity throughout the procurement cycle. In conclusion, it is highlighted how the prior qualification of the economic operator, together with adequate professionalisation of the contracting authority, can guarantee the best allocation of public resources and, at the same time, facilitate the free cross-border participation of all European economic operators in public procurement contracts for works, services and supplies.

02. AI Enabled Procurement Systems and Decision Support Tools

AM02

The fragmented regulatory landscape on AI in procurement does not contribute to the goal of simplification and poses a challenge for public buyers who want to buy innovation, and for suppliers who want to participate in the tendering procedure. While AI is an excellent tool to assist the decision-making processes, especially the preparation of contract specifications and contract management, a human-centred approach should be followed to allow public buyers to explain how the AI tool reached a certain decision.

03. PPP & Public-Private Governance

AM03

The present PPA proposal is considered wanting in some aspects, as it fails to regulate explicitly projects originating from private operators and to recognise the promoter's contribution in a form compatible with equal treatment and the concept of risk still needs clarification. Operational guidelines should be developed at EU level for uniform application. Moreover, public value should be monitored over the life of the contract with reporting of outcomes.

04. Sustainability, Green Procurement and Social Value in Services

AM04

The new Regulation should not focus only on setting sustainability requirements, but on how those requirements are monitored, updated, enforced and supported in practice. The success of stronger sustainability provisions in the future procurement framework will depend on aspects the current proposal addresses only lightly such as strengthening contract management and monitoring and giving contracting authorities the tools, support and guidance to deliver sustainable outcomes across the full procurement cycle — not only at the moment the contract is signed. To clearly allow dynamic clauses that update sustainability requirements when the standards/regulations change over the contracts lifecycle, with model wording from the Commission. Sustainable procurement requires expertise and resources that many contracting authorities do not currently have. More sophisticated sustainability requirements demand a correspondingly higher level of procurement competence: the capacity to develop meaningful requirements in the first place, to manage contracts over their full life, to analyse performance data, and to engage substantively with suppliers. Participants were explicit that building and retaining that competence inside contracting authorities is a prerequisite for achieving sustainability objectives — not a parallel workstream. A framework that raises ambition without addressing capacity will produce compliance on paper and little change in outcomes. Professionalisation should be recognised in the Regulation as a critical enabler of the whole framework, and supported accordingly. Member States start from very different positions. A uniform rule produces uneven effects depending on how much certification infrastructure a market already has, the maturity level, and that asymmetry should be anticipated rather than discovered during implementation.

05. Project Management and Innovation Procurement

PM01

> To actually achieve sound public procurement practices, a pivot is necessary towards Measuring Impact and Capacity Building. To this end, the focus needs to shift to what happens after the award, moving from a compliance-driven process to a project approach, from output to measured outcomes and benefits and ultimately to assessing the overall performance of the public procurement system. In this context, there needs to be room for experiment and adjustment during execution. Measuring the effects of professionalisation only after the fact is not sufficient. Professionalisation pathways should be informed by an initial, proportionate assessment of relevant organisational capabilities and maturity, to guide targeted capacity-building measures and enable periodic reassessment of organisational progress alongside procurement outcomes and performance.

06. Advanced Solutions for Building Information Modeling (BIM) in Works Contracts

PM02

To make BIM work across the EU a flexible approach is needed. This includes setting a proportionate EU threshold for mandatory recourse to BIM. Moreover, BIM requirements must be matched not just to the value but also – and more importantly – to the complexity and the innovative characteristics of the project. Finally, standardisation at EU level is necessary concerning common European terms and contract rules.

07. Made in Europe & Industrial Competitiveness

PM03

"Made in EU" is not one legal concept — it covers product origin, R&D location, supply diversification, and operational autonomy across different EU acts. The proposed Public Procurement Act turns these into binding procurement rules but spreads decision-making between the Commission and public buyers in 27 Member States, creating fragmentation and legal uncertainty. Participants in the workshop recognised the need to strengthen the resilience of the EU supply chains and reduce vulnerabilities, especially in certain sectors, and agreed that European preference measures could contribute, to a certain extent, to this objective. However, participants emphasised that the implementation of such measures requires a proportionate approach that balances strategic autonomy with competition, innovation and the risk of protectionist backlash. The EU preference provisions, as they are currently drafted, risk hampering innovation and creating too many uncertainties for contracting authorities, hence undermining one of the central objectives of the reforms, namely, simplification of the EU procurement rules. Furthermore, participants have highlighted that the draft rules raise serious questions of compatibility with the EU's existing commitments under international law.

08. Healthcare Procurement: Complexity, Innovation & Risk Management

PM04

Healthcare procurement might deliver huge savings if only data and information were widely shared and cooperation at EU level was made easier. There is a need to make product data comparable and matchable across providers and countries, to share purchasing data, including net prices, to allow realistic benchmarking and to make sure that public buyers rely on that information unless they have good reasons not to do so. Information and standards should be aligned before moving to joint procurement. Cross-border cooperation should be made easier, allowing outcome-based contracts and risk-sharing and joint purchasing should be preferred where feasible.

3.

Professionalisation of EU Public Buyers

PROFESSIONALISATION OF EU PUBLIC BUYERS

Despite the diversity of these workshop topics, one particularly significant conclusion emerged from the workshops: professionalisation is a cross-cutting issue at the heart of the entire process of modernising European public procurement.

The shared priorities identify the development of public buyers' skills as an essential condition for the effectiveness of the future system, highlighting training, certification, organisational maturity, and the capacity to manage innovation, sustainability, artificial intelligence and public-private partnerships. From this perspective, professionalisation is no longer optional. It is a prerequisite for the effective implementation of the new rules.

At the same time, the Italian pre-qualification model could be identified as a Good Practice, considering that the certification constitutes the sole and sufficient requirement for participation in tender procedures for the categories of works and value classifications for which the company is qualified, while the contracting authority retains responsibility for assessing the tender offer and evaluating the execution of the contract.

This conclusion represents both the outcome of the first phase of the EUPPM project and the starting point for its further development.

The discussions showed that professional skills cannot be considered separately from the broader transformations affecting public procurement. The use of artificial intelligence requires appropriate skills, clear responsibilities, safeguards and human oversight. Innovation procurement requires organisational capacity and project management skills. Sustainability requires administrations capable of incorporating environmental and social objectives into contracts and monitoring them throughout the execution phase. BIM, qualification systems and healthcare procurement all require reliable data, interoperability and appropriate digital tools.

Alongside professionalisation, other common priorities therefore emerged: regulatory clarity and the reduction of uncertainty; interoperability and digitalisation; collaborative governance and lifecycle approaches; sustainability and social value; industrial policy and European strategic autonomy.

These dimensions should not be considered in isolation. Together, they outline a system in which the capacity of public administrations becomes the connecting element between regulation, technology and strategic public policy objectives.

Digital transformation can deliver results only when people have the skills to govern it. Artificial intelligence can support decision-making only when competencies, responsibilities, transparency, auditability and human oversight are clearly addressed. Sustainability becomes effective when administrations have the capacity to translate policy objectives into contractual requirements and monitor their implementation. Innovation requires mature organisations and professionals capable of managing the risks associated with innovative procurement procedures.

This perspective points towards a broader paradigm shift: professionalising public procurement means strengthening the institutional capacity of public administrations to transform public policies into tangible results.

It is precisely within this perspective that the present Position Paper should be read.

The document is the outcome of a journey that began with the need to strengthen the professional recognition of public buyers and gradually evolved into a broader reflection on the future of European public procurement. It brings together the shared priorities emerging from the EUPPM Conference workshops and seeks to provide the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States with a technical contribution grounded in operational experience and dialogue among the different actors of the public procurement ecosystem.

The message emerging from the EUPPM journey is therefore clear: modernising European public procurement does not simply mean writing new rules. It means creating the conditions in which those rules can deliver better results.

Europe needs clearer rules. It needs interoperable digital infrastructures. It needs reliable data. It needs tools capable of supporting innovation, sustainability and competitiveness. But above all, it needs capable public administrations and recognised, qualified and professionalised public buyers.

For this reason, professionalisation is not simply one of the subjects addressed by this Position Paper. It is its underlying thread.

The EUPPM Conference 2026, with over 160 participants, highlighted that the modernisation of European public procurement goes beyond regulatory reform alone. It represents a broader cultural and organisational transformation requiring skills, tools, governance and a shared vision.

This Position Paper builds on that conviction and puts forward a clear perspective for the future: people, professional skills and the organisational capacity of public administrations must be placed at the centre of the future evolution of European public procurement.

Public buyers are not afraid of complexity, be that linked to technical progress, such as AI or BIM, or to the complexity of some contract schemes, such as PPPs and concessions, or to the need to actually monitor what is delivered through procurement contracts or to sustainability in its different aspects. But Public buyers ask for measures of professionalisation to be able to manage those tools and to contribute to reach the EU public procurement policy objectives. They ask for investment in their knowledge, and for recognition of their specific professional skills through an EU-wide certification scheme and an EU community (EUPPM).

4.

Consolidating EUPPM Network

CONSOLIDATING EUPPM NETWORK

The next step is to consolidate the European public buyers community through the formal establishment of the EUPPM Network . Under the guidance of a Steering Committee composed of representatives from public organisations, experts and academics across different European countries, the Network will build on the work carried out so far and develop a stable framework for cooperation, dialogue and professional growth.

Its main activities will include promoting interdisciplinary seminars, developing practical tools to support public buyers, producing thematic guidelines and insights, and facilitating the exchange of experiences and good practices.

The Network will also aim to strengthen the European community of public procurement professionals, encouraging the active involvement and support of public and private organisations committed to professionalisation, innovation and skills development in public procurement.

A.

Annex

PARTICIPANTS IN THE EUPPM CONFERENCE 2026

This annex provides an overview of the members of the Scientific Committee, speakers and facilitators involved in the EUPPM Conference 2026, based on the information published by the organisers.

1. Scientific Committee

NAME	PROFESSIONAL ROLE / AFFILIATION	NATIONALITY
Daniele Ricciardi	International public procurement expert; President of ASSORUP	Italy
Claudio Galtieri	Professor of Public Procurement Law; Coordinator of the ASSORUP Technical and Scientific Committee	Italy
Alfonso Maria Cecere	Associate Professor of Administrative Law, University of Naples Federico II; Chair of the EUPPM Conference Scientific Committee	Italy
Roberto Caranta	Professor of Administrative Law, University of Turin	Italy
Renata Spagnuolo Vigorita	Professor of Public and Administrative Law, University of Naples Federico II	Italy
Silvia Tuccillo	Professor of Public and Administrative Law, University of Naples Federico II	Italy
Michele Cozzio	Coordinator of the Observatory on European and National Public Procurement Law, University of Trento	Italy

2. Speakers — Opening Session

NAME	PROFESSIONAL ROLE / AFFILIATION	NATIONALITY
Carla Masi	Director of the Department of Law, University of Naples Federico II	Italy
Fiorenzo Liguori	Professor of Administrative and Public Law, University of Naples Federico II; Chair of the Opening Session	Italy
Claudio Galtieri	Chair of the ASSORUP Technical and Scientific Committee	Italy
Alfonso Maria Cecere	Chair of the EUPPM Conference Scientific Committee	Italy
Daniel May	Director of Procurement Talent Development, NASPO	United States
Roberto Caranta	Professor, University of Turin	Italy
Charlotte Sander	Head of Secretariat, IKA Association	Denmark
Pia Ziegler	Chief Procurement Officer, City of Copenhagen	Denmark
Klodiana Cankja	Proconsulting Albania	Albania
Valerio Di Eugenio	AI Specialist, Delivery & Operations, Evin S.r.l.	Italy
Daniele Ricciardi	President of ASSORUP	Italy

2. Speakers — Workshop Speakers

NAME	PROFESSIONAL ROLE / AFFILIATION	NATIONALITY
Domenico Asprone	Professor of Structural Engineering, University of Naples Federico II	Italy
Chiara Biagini	Administrative and international contract law specialist; Of Counsel at ESNA SOA S.p.A.; member of UnionSOA	Italy
Filippo Borriello	Lawyer; Research Fellow in Administrative Law, University of Naples Federico II	Italy
Samira Boussetta	Senior Expert in Innovation and Sustainable Public Procurement; Founder of Altaee Consultancy	France
Pierre-Jean Clausse	PhD Researcher in Law, University of Geneva and University of Turin	Switzerland / Italy
Veronica De Michele	Lawyer; Doctor Europaeus PhD in Administrative Law; specialist in administration and project financing	Italy
Mirjana Dimc-Perko	ZZZS (Slovenia's public health insurer)	Slovenia
Džeina Gaile	Researcher and university lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Latvia	Latvia
Giuseppina Galluzzo	Head of International and Institutional Relations; Sustainable Public Procurement Specialist, CONSIP	Italy
Beatriz Gómez Fariñas	Senior Legal Procurement Consultant, Corvers Commercial & Legal Affairs	Netherlands
Pier Luigi Guida	Engineer, ISIPM – Italian Institute of Project Management	Italy

NAME	PROFESSIONAL ROLE / AFFILIATION	NATIONALITY
Branislav Hudec	Director General, Methodology and Training Section, Public Procurement Office	Slovakia
Reida Kashta	Director General, Public Procurement Agency	Albania
Pasquale La Selva	Lawyer; PhD in Administrative Law, University of Perugia	Italy
Giuseppe Langellotto	Public Procurement Officer; consultant to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers; Administrative Law scholar, University of Naples Federico II	Italy
Ximena Lazo Vitoria	Professor of Administrative Law, University of Alcalá	Spain
Benedetto Marsili	Lawyer; PhD in Administrative Law, University of Naples Federico II	Italy
Ana Isabel Peiró Baquedano	Senior Legal Procurement Consultant, Corvers Commercial & Legal Affairs	Spain
Massimo Ricchi	Lawyer, Legal Compliance Directorate, ANAS S.p.A.	Italy
Ivan Tomka	Expert Blacklight Analytics (Swiss health analytics)	Switzerland
Marko Turidić	Professor at the University of Zagreb	Croatia
Steven Van Garsse	Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Law, Hasselt University	Belgium
Martine Vidal	Public Procurement Expert, Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)	Netherlands
Roxana Vornicu	Practicing lawyer and Senior Lecturer at King's College London	Romania/UK
Dieter Zocholl	XMED iQ (hospital group purchasing)	UK

3. Facilitators

NAME	PROFESSIONAL ROLE / AFFILIATION	NATIONALITY
Gian Luigi Albano	Adjunct Professor of Economics at LUISS "Guido Carli" University; Agenzia del Demanio	Italy
Vinicio Brigante	Administrative and Public Law Researcher	Italy
Paolo De Iturbe	Consultant in Project Management, Governance and Public Procurement	Switzerland
Federico Esu	Entrepreneurship Programmes Lead, Climate KIC	Italy
Elisa Frenz	Health Proc Europe Association	Germany
Fabrizio Galeazzi	Organisational Systems Economist; ISIPM-Maturitas® Assessor; Innovation Manager and Change Manager	Italy
Beatriz Gómez Fariñas	Senior Legal Procurement Consultant, Corvers Commercial & Legal Affairs	Netherlands
Christian Miguel Jurado Meza	Specialist in sustainability, innovation and circular economy	Norway
Tor Gausemel Kristensen	Expert in circular economy, sustainability, and data management based	Norway
Annamaria La Chimia	Professor, University of Nottingham	UK/Italy
Tomislav Maksimovski	Head of Legal and Procurement, DEPT Engineering LLC, Skopje	North Macedonia
Miriam Odden	Senior Adviser in Strategic Public Procurement, Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ)	Norway
Carlotta Ozino Caligaris	Head of Planning and Case Allocation, BENTLEY SOA S.p.A.; member of UnionSOA	Italy
Violeta Shakleva	Public Procurement Expert; MPPM, MSc; Certified Public Procurement Trainer	North Macedonia

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