



GLOBAL REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

2017

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Foreword

Procurement processes that consider social, economic and environmental factors are able to drive sustainability along value chains. This was acknowledged by the international community when it included a target on sustainable public procurement in the Sustainable Development Goals. Target 12.7 focuses specifically on promoting “*public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities*”.

But what are the keys to making this happen? How can we expand our understanding of the drivers, barriers, needs and expectations that promote or hold back sustainable procurement? The *2017 Global Review of Sustainable Public Procurement* provides an up-to-date overview of the scale and type of sustainable procurement activities undertaken worldwide in the past three years. It addresses a longstanding need of stakeholders to access reliable and comprehensive information on activities and organizations involved in this critical organizational function.

The *2017 Global Review* confirms that sustainable public procurement is progressively embraced by both national and local authorities. Furthermore, and compared to the *2017 Global Review*, an increasing number of organizations and governments were found to monitor their sustainable public procurement policy implementation and results, and to set specific targets. This is key to managing internal performance and shifting from the occasional inclusion of environmental and social factors in procurement processes to a culture in which sustainable public procurement is the norm, and sustainability is seen as a strategic consideration in the purchasing of goods, works and services.

The *2017 Global Review* also recognizes that, in order to transform production and consumption patterns, it will be necessary to foster collaboration among stakeholders throughout the entire value chain. Rather than focusing merely on the purchasing procedures of public organizations, driving the procurement sector to sustainability will require significant cooperation between the public and private sectors. The creation of multi-stakeholder collaboration and knowledge-sharing platforms at local, national and international level will be essential to achieving this goal.

UN Environment is committed to contributing its share to the full implementation of sustainable public procurement. Our organization took the lead in establishing the 10YFP Sustainable Public Procurement Programme, which brings together more than 100 partners to collectively address some key barriers to sustainable public procurement such as insufficient political support and the persistent perception about the higher cost of sustainable products. UN Environment is also actively contributing to the development of a robust methodology for the measurement of SDG Target Indicator 12.7.1 on sustainable public procurement and took part in the development of the ISO 20400 *Sustainable Procurement guidance* standard, which will provide public and private purchasing entities a much needed guidance and benchmarking tool.

Sustainable public procurement has reached a turning point as its relevance as a strategic tool to drive sustainability and transform markets is no longer questioned. We now need to ensure that it is better integrated in broader sustainable consumption and production policies so that, together, they deliver on their promises. We also need to scale up the support to collaborative platforms, such as the 10YFP Sustainable Public Procurement Programme, that will allow us to accelerate the transition to sustainable procurement and ensure the full participation of developing and emerging economies to this global movement.

We hope that the *2017 Global Review* will help raise awareness about the great potential contribution of sustainable purchasing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and that it will motivate organizations and countries across the world to engage into sustainable procurement policies.



Ligia Noronha
Director of the Economy Division, UN Environment

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National government questionnaire

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Stakeholder survey

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¹ Ecoinstitut SCCL is a sustainability consulting firm founded in 1999 that support organizations in achieving real changes with a positive environmental, social and economic impact, through policy design and evaluation, direct support and capacity building, among others. <http://www.ecoinstitut.coop/en/>

² Industrial Economics, Inc is an economic and environmental consulting firm founded in 1981 that provides policy analysis, programme design, measurement and evaluation work in sustainability. <http://www.indecon.com/>

Two hundred and one individuals contributed to this study by taking the stakeholders survey. A list of the organizations that these individuals work for is provided in Annex 7. We thank all of them for their time and for sharing their opinions on sustainable procurement.

Best practice case studies

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Executive summary

Public procurement wields enormous purchasing power, accounting for an average of 12 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in OECD countries, and up to 30 percent of GDP in many developing countries.³ Leveraging this purchasing power by buying more sustainable goods and services can help drive markets in the direction of sustainability, reduce the negative impacts of an organization, and also produce positive benefits for the environment and society. In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Development Agenda. At its core are 17 so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals, and take into account the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The SDGs have reiterated the strong link between environmental protection, sustainable development, and public procurement. In fact, one of the targets under Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns focuses specifically on the promotion of “public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities”.⁴ The advancement of sustainable public procurement (SPP) practices is thus recognized as being a key strategic component of the global efforts towards achieving more sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Against the backdrop of this global interest in the potential of public procurement to drive change towards a more sustainable future, the *2017 Global Review* builds on the findings of the *2013 Global Review*⁵ and explores the progress made in the past three years at a global scale, highlighting regional trends. The research investigated what 41 national governments are doing to promote, implement and measure the outcomes of SPP to benchmark results and assess progress over time. To track the progress made on sustainable procurement (SP) across public and private organizations, the *2017 Global Review* also analyzes the views of over 200 stakeholders from 186 different organizations and 62 countries collected through a stakeholder survey. The survey gathered input from stakeholders on their views on the drivers, risks, barriers, and outcomes for sustainable procurement broadly, and as it is practiced within their organizations.

SPP stakeholders have long requested reliable and up-to-date information on activities and organizations involved in SPP. The *2017 Global Review* meets this need and adds to the existing literature by:

- Expanding our understanding of the drivers, barriers, needs and expectations that promote or hinder SPP using stakeholders’ opinions gathered through survey data and expert interviews.
- Illustrating the range of different SPP activities by highlighting short best practice examples from a variety of organizations around the world.
- Reporting on progress made by national governments with data provided and validated by governments themselves.
- Providing insight into SPP practices from world regions that are not typically covered by the literature in English.
- Initiating discussions on the creation of a set of objectives and common indicators to measure progress towards SPP adoption and implementation that can be replicated in future studies, and help support and measure the adoption of the SDG Target 12.7.⁶

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