



Recommendation of the Council on
Enhancing Integrity in Public
Procurement



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Background Information

THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD to articles 1, 2 a), 3 and 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions adopted on 21 November 1997, the Revised Recommendation of the Council on Combating Bribery in International Business Transactions adopted on 23 May 1997 and the related Recommendation on Anti-corruption Proposals for Bilateral Aid Procurement endorsed by the Development Assistance Committee on 7 May 1996;

NOTING that legislation in a number of Member countries also reflects other international legal instruments on public procurement and anti-corruption developed within the framework of the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation or the European Union;

RECOGNISING that public procurement is a key economic activity of governments that is particularly vulnerable to mismanagement, fraud and corruption;

RECOGNISING that efforts to enhance good governance and integrity in public procurement contribute to an efficient and effective management of public resources and therefore of tax payer's money;

NOTING that international efforts to support public procurement reforms have in the past mainly focused on the promotion of competitive tendering with a view to ensuring a level playing field in the selection of suppliers;

RECOGNISING that Member countries share a common interest in preventing risks to integrity throughout the entire public procurement cycle, starting from needs assessment until contract management and payment;

On the proposal of the Public Governance Committee:

I. RECOMMENDS:

1. That Member countries take appropriate steps to develop and implement an adequate policy framework for enhancing integrity throughout the entire public procurement cycle, from needs assessment to contract management and payment;
2. That, in developing policies for enhancing integrity in public procurement, Member countries take into account the Principles which are contained in the Annex to this Recommendation of which it forms an integral part;
3. That Member countries also disseminate the Principles to the private sector, which plays a key role in the delivery of goods and services for the public service.

II. INVITES the Secretary General to disseminate the Principles to non-member economies and to encourage them to take the Principles into account in the promotion of public governance, aid effectiveness, the fight against international bribery and competition.

III. INSTRUCTS the Public Governance Committee to report to the Council on progress made in implementing this Recommendation within three years of its adoption and regularly thereafter, in consultation with other relevant Committees.

ANNEX

PRINCIPLES FOR ENHANCING INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

I. Objective and Scope

1. The Recommendation provides policy makers with Principles for enhancing integrity throughout the entire public procurement cycle, taking into account international laws, as well as national laws and organisational structures of Member countries.

2. The Recommendation is primarily directed at policy makers in governments at the national level but also offers general guidance for sub-national government and state-owned enterprises.

II. Definitions

Public Procurement Cycle

3. In the context of the present Recommendation, the public procurement cycle is defined as a sequence of related activities, from needs assessment, to the award stage, up until the contract management and final payment.

Integrity

4. The Recommendation aims to address a variety of risks to integrity in the public procurement cycle. Integrity can be defined as the use of funds, resources, assets, and authority, according to the intended official purposes and in line with public interest. A 'negative' approach to define integrity is also useful to determine an effective strategy for preventing 'integrity violations' in the field of public procurement. Integrity violations include:

- Corruption including bribery, 'kickbacks', nepotism, cronyism and clientelism;
- Fraud and theft of resources, for example through product substitution in the delivery which results in lower quality materials;
- Conflict of interest in the public service and in post-public employment;
- Collusion;
- Abuse and manipulation of information;
- Discriminatory treatment in the public procurement process; and
- The waste and abuse of organisational resources.

III. Principles

5. The following ten Principles are based on applying good governance elements to enhance integrity in public procurement. These include elements of transparency, good management, prevention of misconduct, as well as accountability and control. An important aspect of integrity in public procurement is an overarching obligation to treat potential suppliers and contractors on an equitable basis.

A. Transparency

1. Member countries should provide an adequate degree of transparency in the entire public procurement cycle in order to promote fair and equitable treatment for potential suppliers.

6. Governments should provide potential suppliers and contractors with clear and consistent information so that the public procurement process is well understood and applied as equitably as possible. Governments should promote transparency for potential suppliers and other relevant stakeholders, such as oversight institutions, not only regarding the formation of contracts but in the

entire public procurement cycle. Governments should adapt the degree of transparency according to the recipient of information and the stage of the cycle. In particular, governments should protect confidential information to ensure a level playing field for potential suppliers and avoid collusion. They should also ensure that public procurement rules require a degree of transparency that enhances corruption control while not creating 'red tape' to ensure the effectiveness of the system.

2. Member countries should maximise transparency in competitive tendering and take precautionary measures to enhance integrity, in particular for exceptions to competitive tendering.

7. To ensure sound competitive processes, governments should provide clear rules, and possibly guidance, on the choice of the procurement method and on exceptions to competitive tendering. Although the procurement method could be adapted to the type of procurement concerned, governments should, in all cases, maximise transparency in competitive tendering. Governments should consider setting up procedures to mitigate possible risks to integrity through enhanced transparency, guidance and control, in particular for exceptions to competitive tendering such as extreme urgency or national security.

B. Good Management

3. Member countries should ensure that public funds are used in public procurement according to the purposes intended.

8. Procurement planning and related expenditures are key to reflecting a long-term and strategic view of government needs. Governments should link public procurement with public financial management systems to foster transparency and accountability as well as to improve value for money. Oversight institutions such as internal control and internal audit bodies, supreme audit institutions or parliamentary committees should monitor the management of public funds to verify that needs are adequately estimated and public funds are used according to the purposes intended.

4. Member countries should ensure that procurement officials meet high professional standards of knowledge, skills and integrity.

9. Recognising officials who work in the area of public procurement as a profession is critical to enhancing resistance to mismanagement, waste and corruption. Governments should invest in public procurement accordingly and provide adequate incentives to attract highly qualified officials. They should also update officials' knowledge and skills on a regular basis to reflect regulatory, management and technological evolutions. Public officials should be aware of integrity standards and be able to identify potential conflict between their private interests and public duties that could influence public decision making.

C. Prevention of Misconduct, Compliance and Monitoring

5. Member countries should put mechanisms in place to prevent risks to integrity in public procurement.

10. Governments should provide institutional or procedural frameworks that help protect officials in public procurement against undue influence from politicians or higher level officials. Governments should ensure that the selection and appointment of officials involved in public procurement are based on values and principles, in particular integrity and merit. In addition, they should identify risks to integrity for job positions, activities, or projects that are potentially vulnerable. Governments should prevent these risks through preventative mechanisms that foster a culture of integrity in the public service such as integrity training, asset declarations, as well as the disclosure and management of conflict of interest.

6. Member countries should encourage close co-operation between government and the private sector to maintain high standards of integrity, particularly in contract management.

11. Governments should set clear integrity standards and ensure compliance in the entire procurement cycle, particularly in contract management. Governments should record feedback on

experience with individual suppliers to help public officials in making decisions in the future. Potential suppliers should also be encouraged to take voluntary steps to reinforce integrity in their relationship with the government. Governments should maintain a dialogue with suppliers' organisations to keep up-to-date with market evolutions, reduce information asymmetry and improve value for money, in particular for high-value procurements.

7. *Member countries should provide specific mechanisms to monitor public procurement as well as to detect misconduct and apply sanctions accordingly.*

12. Governments should set up mechanisms to track decisions and enable the identification of irregularities and potential corruption in public procurement. Officials in charge of control should be aware of the techniques and actors involved in corruption to facilitate the detection of misconduct in public procurement. In order to facilitate this, governments should also consider establishing procedures for reporting misconduct and for protecting officials from reprisal. Governments should not only define sanctions by law but also provide the means for them to be applied in case of breach in an effective, proportional and timely manner.

D. Accountability and Control

8. *Member countries should establish a clear chain of responsibility together with effective control mechanisms.*

13. Governments should establish a clear chain of responsibility by defining the authority for approval, based on an appropriate segregation of duties, as well as the obligations for internal reporting. In addition, the regularity and thoroughness of controls should be proportionate to the risks involved. Internal and external controls should complement each other and be carefully co-ordinated to avoid gaps or loopholes and ensure that the information produced by controls is as complete and useful as possible.

9. *Member countries should handle complaints from potential suppliers in a fair and timely manner.*

14. Governments should ensure that potential suppliers have effective and timely access to review systems of procurement decisions and that these complaints are promptly resolved. To ensure an impartial review, a body with enforcement capacity that is independent of the respective procuring entities should rule on procurement decisions and provide adequate remedies. Governments should also consider establishing alternative dispute settlement mechanisms to reduce the time for solving complaints. Governments should analyse the use of review systems to identify patterns where individual firms could be using reviews to unduly interrupt or influence tenders. This analysis of review systems should also help identify opportunities for management improvement in key areas of public procurement.

10. *Member countries should empower civil society organisations, media and the wider public to scrutinise public procurement.*

15. Governments should disclose public information on the key terms of major contracts to civil society organisations, media and the wider public. The reports of oversight institutions should also be made widely available to enhance public scrutiny. To complement these traditional accountability mechanisms, governments should consider involving representatives from civil society organisations and the wider public in monitoring high-value or complex procurements that entail significant risks of mismanagement and corruption.

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