



A new Public Procurement Act serving Europe's workers, sustainable businesses and social economy actors

Brussels, 12 March 2026

Dear Commissioner Séjourné,

Dear Head of Unit Henning Ehrenstein,

We, undersigned organisations of the [Network for Sustainable development in Public Procurement](#) (NSDPP), a coalition of social and environmental NGOs, trade unions, social economy networks are writing in the context of the EU revision of the public procurement directives.

[The EU spends approximately 16% of its GDP](#) on procuring goods and services. The way taxpayers' money is spent profoundly shapes the social, environmental, and economic fabric of the Union. **We strongly believe that the forthcoming Public Procurement Act offers a historic opportunity to address persistent problems of race-to-the-bottom bidding**, social dumping, and underuse of procurement as a strategic lever to secure a competitive, decarbonised and socially minded European economy.

The recently published [evaluation report](#) says it clearly: the implementation of strategic procurement across Member States is uneven, with green, innovative, and social procurement continuing to be strategic priorities (p. 71).

For the EU public procurement to align with the promises of the Clean Industrial Deal and the European Pillar of Social Rights, five **key changes must be prioritised** in the coming revision:

1. **To ensure best value for public money, the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) must be the default criterion when awarding public contracts, leaving out the possibility to procure based on the lowest price.** This will provide public buyers with a clear legal mandate in moving beyond procurement on the lowest price. For too long, focusing solely on the "lowest price" has hurt quality, workers' rights, and sustainable businesses. Public procurement must serve long-term public interest.

2. **Mandatory non-price criteria – social and environmental – must be gradually phased in EU legislation**, to ensure fair wages, decent jobs, decarbonisation and social inclusion. Yet, this does not happen in practice, as [indicated by the European Court of Auditor report](#) and the most [recent Commission’s evaluation report](#). To support best value for public money, EU level mandatory minimum criteria - including through sectoral legislation - will provide authorities with the clarity to act fairly and confidently, thus simplifying processes. Mandatory social criteria should include collective bargaining and align with ILO conventions (ILO 94). Contracts must ensure supply chain due diligence, limit subcontracting to one or two sub layers, and enforce shared responsibility for violations.
3. **Enhance social economy access to public procurement through the explicit inclusion of targeted measures for public procurement access.** The EU social economy, with over 4.3 million entities and 11.4 million employees, delivers vital services, strengthens communities, and prioritises social and environmental goals. Aligning public procurement with specific support for the social economy, help foster social innovation and a resilient and more inclusive European social market. The [related 2023 EU Council recommendation](#) further emphasises the importance of social economy access to public procurement, including through reserving contracts to support the work integration of labour market underrepresented groups, such as persons with disabilities, in line with the UN CRPD and EU social inclusion objectives.
4. **The updated framework must align with existing EU provisions** enabling their implementation while ensuring coherence. Direct reference to existing and soon-to-be requirements – from the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation and the forthcoming Circular Economy Act to the European Pillar of Social Rights, Country by Country reporting obligations, the Quality Jobs Roadmap, Social Economy Action Plan and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive – is pivotal.
5. **Evaluating and enforcing public procurement depends on robust and transparent monitoring.** We call for mandatory national data collection on Sustainable Public Procurement, better publication, and improved tender traceability to spot issues, and monitoring of its impacts to ensure value for money and uphold social and environmental goals.

Signatories:

CECOP - European confederation of industrial and service cooperatives
ECOS - Environmental Coalition on Standards
ENSIE - European Network of Work Integration Social Enterprises
Eurodiaconia
EASPD - European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities
European Federation of Building and Woodworkers
EPSU - European Federation of Public Service Unions
Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO)
IISD – International Institute for Sustainable Development
RREUSE
Social Services Europe
Swedwatch