



# BSI – Buying for Social Impact



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## **Promoting Socially Responsible Public Procurement through social economy enterprises: Results and recommendations on *Buying for Social Impact (BSI)*.**

BRUSSELS, BE: The *Buying for Social Impact* project met for its final conference on Monday. More than 100 delegates from across the EU gathered to analyse the findings of the project and learn from best practices in public procurement from around Europe.

Ms Ariane Rodert, President EESC Section for Single Market, Production and Consumption, opened the conference and stressed how social economy enterprises should be a priority for the EU and national policymakers. Ms Natalia Martínez Páramo, Head of Unit for COSME, Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) added that it is crucial to raise awareness of processes and tools for socially responsible buying.

Ms Valentina Caimi, the project manager, explained how the BSI project looked at how the social provisions of the new public procurement directive (2014/24/EU) were transposed at national level across 15 EU member states, identified good practices on socially responsible public procurement (SRPP), and mapped the capacity of social economy enterprises to access public procurement markets.

Ms Caimi also outlined the project's three main recommendations for moving forward. She explained that promoting SRPP cannot be done by transposition of EU Directives into national legal frameworks alone. Political will, supported by national networks of legal experts specialising in SRPP, is needed to achieve social impact in procurement.

The project also recommended improving the knowledge and capacity of contracting authorities and social enterprises by introducing training, help desks, support structures, and facilitators to provide advice and information.

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Following the introductory analyses, experts, contracting authorities and representatives of social economy enterprises presented case studies of best practices in the field of SRPP, noting diverse practices and frameworks.

Ms Dalma Kittka, Head of Department of Public Procurement at the Municipality of Budapest, explained how SRPP is an opportunity to leverage the values required for liveable cities, a good environment and social innovation. Ms Kittka described how the transposition of the EU Directive into Hungarian law had positive social outcomes.

The BSI project found that public authorities often lacked awareness and understanding of social economy enterprises and the role they might play in procurement markets. Of particular note was the issue of the small size and scale of social economy enterprises which made it difficult for them to apply for big procurement contracts.

Barcelona City Council's Commissioner of Social Economy, Local Development and Food Policy, Mr Álvaro Porro, described one solution to this, in the form of reserving contracts and lots for social economy enterprises. Ms Malika Kessous, Head of Socially Responsible Public Procurement, from France's Ministry of Economy and Finances, also explained how arranging meetings between buyers and providers helped contracting authorities to allocate parts of contracts to social economy enterprises.

In tackling the gaps in knowledge and understanding, Mr Porro explained the benefits of Barcelona City Council's approach of setting up an advisory unit, monitoring reserved contracts, interacting with special employment centres and insertion companies, and creating an online directory of social economy enterprises to facilitate engagement.

From Belgium, Mr Pierre Goffart, of Wallonia's Directorate General for Sustainable Development, gave an account of how the Directorate developed partnerships between contracting authorities, companies, social enterprises and training and employment agencies, underpinned by the use of facilitators and a help desk to provide advice and guidance.

Mr Gordon Hahn, CEO of SERUS and Chairperson of Coompanion, explained that social considerations in public procurement is a relatively new concept in Sweden, but has recently been incorporated into Swedish law with positive results. Mr Hahn explained that of the 7 procurement procedures set up by the Procurement Centre of Dalarna, all were won by Work Integration Social Enterprises, and that the Municipality of Vindeln's contract for cleaning of elderly care housing was awarded to an enterprise where 50% of the workforce are persons with disabilities.

Drawing the conference to a close, Mr Giuseppe Guerini, Member of the EESC Group III and President of CECOP, and Ms Ulla Engelmann, Head of Unit for Advanced Technologies, Clusters and Social Economy, European Commission, DG GROW provided upbeat messages on the project and the continued support for SRPP. Mr Guerini reflected that with proper coordination of stakeholders and the whole community in socially responsible procurement, some of the challenges the project had identified can be overcome.

Ms Engelmann added that the project had made clear what has already been done in local, regional and national contexts, laying foundations on which build to ensure public procurement continues to improve the social standards of EU citizens.

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Reflecting on the project as a whole, Ms Marzena Rogalska, Director for Single Market for Public Administrations in DG GROW, said: 'We need to shift to a procurement culture focusing on quality and social impact, rather than price, but every stakeholder needs to contribute to that shift. For the BSI project we got out of our comfort zone to raise awareness on socially responsible public procurement with local practitioners and noticed a lot of interest and sometimes enthusiasm. This shows that there is momentum for socially responsible public procurement, and encourages us to continue on this path.'

Pierre Karleskind MEP, Vice-President of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection committee, added, 'Businesses in the social and solidarity economy are proof that "economic development" can mean "inclusion and social equity"'. We need to make it easier for them to access public procurement, which is a great tool to develop and strengthen this sector.'

Summarising the value of the BSI project Ms Caimi said, 'The Buying for Social Impact project set the foundations for a better understanding of the possibilities the new directive on public procurement offers to public authorities in achieving social goals while buying goods, works or services. Now it is important that all interested actors collaborate to continue raising awareness about socially responsible public procurement, as well as disseminating the good practice that exists.'

Looking forward, Ms Caimi added, 'The European Commission and the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises have now commissioned ICLEI and AEIDL to run a new project with the aim of collecting 70 good practices from all over Europe and third countries and developing communications actions to disseminate them.' Those interested in being featured as a good practice of Socially Responsible Public Procurement, may answer this call by filling in this [form](#).

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