Tenth International Research Study IRSPP10 (2024-2025) on Public Procurement

SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The International Research Study of Public Procurement (IRSPP) is a long-established network of eminent multi-national procurement executives and researchers, who are endeavoring to develop new knowledge in support of the procurement profession. Approximately every two years, senior practitioners from countries and international organisations are invited to assemble and exchange ideas and visions relating to public procurement. The concept of IRSPP was founded in 2003, by emeritus Professors, Jan Telgen, Christine Harland and Guy Callendar. The current IRSPP organizing team are listed at the end of this report, with members representing all corners of the world and bring their own research knowledge and expertise to the international workshops.

YEAR	THEME
IRSPP1 (2003)	Explored what is known about public procurement and what are the **Major Issues** facing this field.
IRSPP2 (2005)	Examined **Similarities and Differences Across Categories of Spend** in public procurement in health, defense, education, and local government.
IRSPP3 (2007)	Examined how to build **Capacity and Capability** in public procurement.
IRSPP4 (2009)	In the wake of the **Financial Crisis**, this study explored the role of public procurement in designing and delivering economic stimulus packages.
IRSPP5 (2011)	Focused on the **Engagement of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)** in public procurement contracts and how to improve their involvement.
IRSPP6 (2015)	Examined evidence of **Community Benefits** policies and implementation of community benefits clauses (social, economic, and environmental).
IRSPP7 (2017)	Investigated different approaches to **Collaborative Public Procurement (CPP)** by going beyond basic joint procurement or centralised public procurement, to examine experiences of, and the possibilities arising from, effective collaboration.
IRSPP8 (2019)	Explored how Public Procurement engages in **Innovation** initiatives, the connections between innovation policy makers, the implementer, the role of Public Procurement, the level of engagement with suppliers and the overall impact on implementation of innovation policy.
IRSPP9 (2022)	Delayed by one year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the nineth study explored the **role of public procurement in a crisis**. The pandemic period highlighted the need to be better prepared for future crises, and the role that public procurement should play.

Table 1: Summary of previous IRSPP studies

The main sponsor for IRSPP is NIGP - The Institute for Public Procurement. We are grateful for financial contributions previously received by many other professional bodies and institutes

worldwide (CIPS, NEVI, IPSERA, Wesh Government, Cardiff University, Politecnico de Milano). Table 1 provides the main topics addressed by each of the previous nine IRSPP studies.

IRSPP10 The Context



Public procurement offers value far beyond cost savings and compliance with regulation. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embrace environmental and societal priorities as well as economic. As a result, we face an increasingly complex, interconnected, dynamically changing world of government and governance. During the pandemic the switch to online resources happened almost overnight. However, the speed at which countries globally were forced into lockdown, and with demand far exceeding supply, governments and other organizations procured what was available rather than fully understanding what was required. The contribution and capability of procurement was being stretched to its limits, playing an ever-greater role in delivering public value and creating opportunities for the grand challenges ahead.

It is now argued that public procurement opportunities to address societal challenges lie in emerging technologies, which raises many questions. For example, how might Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Internet of Things, smart contracts, blockchain, and broader digitalisation be a part of public procurement's future? How / or what stage is a country's understanding, exploring and harnessing digital tools and technologies? What might the future for public procurement look like? What role will public procurement play in this new era enabled by these technologies?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The tenth international study focused on **how emerging technologies are being used to strengthen public procurement for greater impact on societal challenges**.
All participants were asked to consider TWO overarching questions:

- How does public procurement contribute to addressing pressing societal challenges (SDGs)?
- In this context, how are emerging technologies being deployed to strengthen PP capability?

CONFIDENTIAL

METHOD

Attendance at an IRSPP workshop is always by invitation only. We invited carefully selected, senior practitioners in public procurement (CPO, Head of Department or equivalent status) and we normally invite only one or two people from each country.

Stage 1 of the research took place **in person through case studies**. A three-day workshop was held in Charlotte, US where senior representatives from ten countries or regions (Netherlands, Washington, South Carolina, Albania, Utah, India, Hungary, Nigeria, Belgium, and South Africa) presented case studies to address the research questions. The summary report was sent to all participants and not shared publicly while further work on academic publications is ongoing.

Stage 2 of the project took place in January with a three-hour **online focus group**, attracting participants from a further 9 countries (England, Croatia, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia, Kazakhstan, Germany, Bulgaria, Jordan). Participants were invited to share their insights on the drivers and barriers for successful implementation of the digitalisation of procurement. Based on each participant sharing their experiences and insights, the group were asked to pick out the most relevant and least relevant factors. A summary of findings now follows.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In Person Workshop

Participants identified fifteen different technology innovations, and these were discussed as part of their case study presentations.

These further critical factors were identified:

- The need to **address inefficiencies and streamline processes** for improving productivity.
- Ensure there are **change management plans in place** that consider backup options and the high risk of failure.
- Change management must include **backup plans** to ensure public services continue despite digital interventions.
- **Prioritize and map out key stakeholder** needs for each digital project.
- The **availability of data does not necessarily lead to better decisions**, and there is a risk of manipulation from the back end.
- There was a view that **current changes might be on par with significant historical shifts** like the advent of the Internet or the transition from horses to cars.
- The need for **transferring knowledge** and planning for these changes is emphasized.
- **Different stakeholders have varying expectations** and needs from digital procurement processes, which may conflict and require prioritization.

CONFIDENTIAL

Online Focus Group Discussions

The online focus group discussions highlighted the need for a holistic approach that addresses both policy and organizational/operational factors to enable the successful implementation of innovative technologies in public procurement.

Most Relevant Factors Include:

We held further group discussions on successful implementation of technologies in procurement, which revealed these most relevant factors:

- **Change management strategies and stakeholder collaboration are critical factors** for successful technology adoption.
- **The impact of regulations, appeal processes, and alignment between national and local frameworks** was highlighted as highly relevant.
- **Cybersecurity, data quality, and compliance** were considered as major concerns that need to be properly addressed.
- **Supply market capacity and readiness**, especially SMEs, to engage with new procurement technologies was noted by online participants as a key factor.

Less or Irrelevant Factors include:

Potentially irrelevant or less relevant factors for successful implementation of technologies in procurement include:

- Some participants felt that factors like political interference and corruption may be less relevant in their specific contexts, where strong governance and legislation already address these issues.
- The absence of alignment between central and local government procurement frameworks was seen as less of an issue in some countries, where local authorities were more innovative than the central government.

Overall, the relevance of each factor can vary significantly depending on two factors:

- Regulatory environment
- Maturity of the procurement system.

Participants further emphasized the need to consider the local context when evaluating the importance of the different policy and non-policy factors.

CONFIDENTIAL

IRSPP10 RESEARCH TEAM

Dr Andrea Patrucco, PhD, is Assistant Professor in Supply Chain Management at Florida International University College of Business, in the United States.	**Professor Jane Lynch, PhD** leads the Centre of Public Value Procurement at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University.	**Professor Tunde Tatrai, PhD**, is Professor at Corvinus University of Budapest in Budapest, Hungary.
Rick Grimm, CPPO, CPPB, FCIPS has served the NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement as its Chief Executive Officer since 1998.	**Esmee Peters** is a PhD candidate in public and healthcare procurement at the University of Twente, the Netherlands	**Professor Louise Knight PhD, FCIPS** co-founded the European Lab on Innovative Purchasing and Supply (EL-IPS), University of Twente.
Ana-Maria Dimand, PhD is an Assistant Professor in the Askew School of Public Administration and Policy, at Florida State University and a Global Research Affiliate with the Sustainable Purchasing Research Initiative at Arizona State University.	**Barbara Allen, PhD** is Associate Professor of Public Management and Policy and Deputy Head of School at the School of Government Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.	**Petra Ferk** is an Associate Professor for Public Administration at the Graduate School of Government and European Studies, Slovenia.

CONFIDENTIAL

More research outputs will be shared publicly in due course. If you would like to know more about IRSPP, please email: enquiries@irspp.org