

5 **A greater uptake of GPP requires dedicated professionalisation strategies**

This Chapter presents the results from the 2022 OECD Survey on GPP on capacity-building and technical support for GPP. Most notably, it provides an overview of the existing efforts across OECD and non-OECD countries to provide public buyers with the necessary skills, competences, and knowledge base for effective green procurement. The Chapter also highlights potential areas for improvements to strengthen GPP professionalisation in public procurement systems.

5.1. Professionalising GPP

The design of GPP policies and the use of environmental criteria in public tenders requires multifaceted skill sets. GPP requires expertise spanning a wide array of disciplines, including environmental science, cost-benefit evaluations, procurement regulations and legal provisions governing public contracts. Public buyers must navigate intricate decision-making processes where environmental considerations, financial assessments, and legal compliance might be conflicting. For this reason, there is the need for a holistic approach to skill development.

Countries are showing an increasing interest and commitment to GPP professionalisation, and they have undertaken a series of initiatives and actions to provide public buyers with the set of skills and competences to increase GPP uptake, such as:

- Assessing the monetary value of environmental impacts across the life-cycle of products and services,
- Include green criteria in procurement procedures without infringing upon legal provisions on public contracts,
- Engage with private suppliers effectively to ensure competitive bids,
- Understand and promote the benefits of GP

5.1.1. Building capacities for the contracting authorities

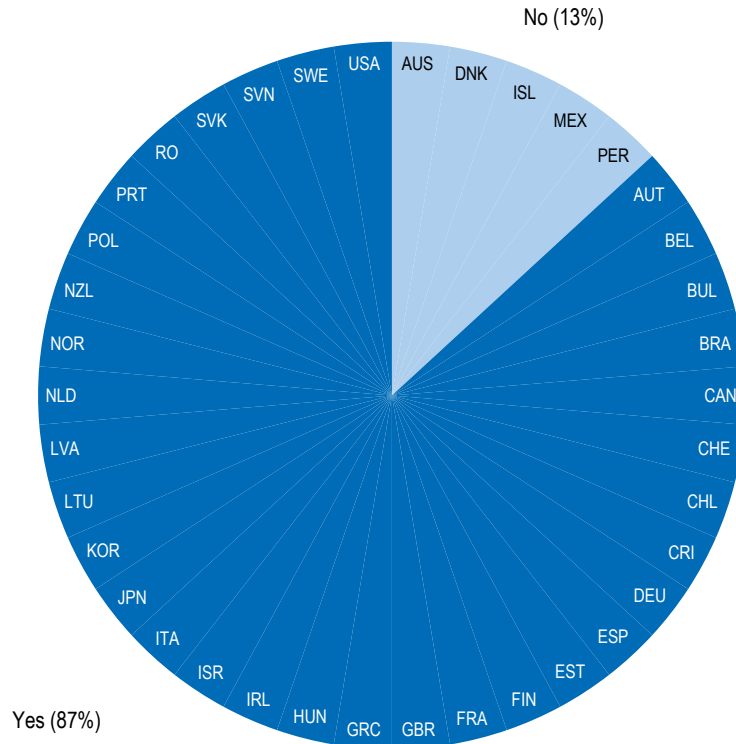
The successful implementation of GPP strategies and actions plans requires procurement staff to improve existing skills, as well as to acquire new competences. Most importantly, public buyers are called upon to move behind the selection of products and services solely based on the lowest bid price and consider environmental performance and quality. To do so, they need to gain a better understanding of the whole-set of environmental consequences associated with public procurement activities, including the carbon emissions and the broader environmental impacts that occur throughout the supply chain of procured goods and services (extraction, processing, manufacturing, and distribution). Moreover, public procurement practitioners should aim at including environmental and climate considerations not only at the award stage, but also throughout the different phases of procurement procedures, i.e. from needs assessment and market engagement to identification of the subject matter of the contract and the definition of technical specifications , and until contract management (OECD, 2022^[1]).

As shown from the responses to the Survey on GPP, countries are increasingly aware of the importance of training and capacity-building to equip procurement employees with the adequate set of competences and tools to implement green public procurement in their daily activities. Indeed, most of the surveyed countries (87%) provide dedicated training for GPP (Figure 5.1), and they do so in different ways, including through in-person workshops or webinars, e-learning courses designed for self-guided and facilitated learning, specialised practical classes for practitioners, and training programs for individuals who will train others. In many countries, including France, Austria, Switzerland, and New Zealand, both in person trainings and e-learning modules focused on GPP are made available for public buyers. In Latvia, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development has been organising methodological workshops and training courses for economic operators and governmental institutions (both at the state and local level) on GPP since 2015. By August 2022, more than 30 seminars have been held and a total of more than 1 500 procurement specialists have been trained. Information about the seminars and videos from the seminars are made publicly available on the Ministry's website.

Moreover, practitioners often find value in hands-on, practical learning experience focused on the design of green procurement strategies and handling of procurement processes. For this reason, capacity-building initiative should also include tangible examples of GPP practices, encourage knowledge sharing and peer learning, and provide specialised training for more technical aspects, such as the use of LCC. In Belgium,

for example, training on social and environmental procurement is provided as part of a larger programme of public procurement training for public procurement practitioners at the federal level. In 2022, two general training sessions on the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental) in public procurement were delivered in the two national languages. The session dedicated to GPP focused on specific product categories and covered the use of green criteria, eco-labels and ISO-standards in public tenders, as well as the use of environmental management systems, LCC methodologies and circular economy principles.

Figure 5.1. Existence of dedicated training courses available to procurement officials on GPP



Note: The figure shows the answers to the question "Are there dedicated training courses available to procurement officials on GPP? Please provide any relevant details"

Source: OECD Survey on Green Public Procurement (2022).

Training courses can also be complemented by practical sessions and additional guidance materials, such as manuals and guidelines. For instance, the European Commission (EC), which has not taken part in the GPP Survey, has developed guidance documents on the strategic use of public tenders to promote environmental objectives, social inclusion and innovation. Moreover, the EC provides detailed guidelines on the use of EU GPP criteria and LCC tools in procurement (OECD, 2023^[2]). Similarly, many OECD countries, such as Costa Rica, have created their own guidelines for GPP (Box 5.1).

Box 5.1. Guidelines on GPP in Costa Rica

As part of its National Policy of Sustainable Development, the General Directorate of Asset Management and Public Procurement (Dirección General de Administración de Bienes y Contratación Administrativa, DGABCA) within the Ministry of Finance (Ministerio de Hacienda) in Costa Rica has developed user-friendly guidelines and manuals to promote the strategic use of procurement.

In 2015, DGABCA issued the Technical Guidelines for the Application of Sustainable Criteria in Public Procurement and Guidelines for its Implementation with the support of the European Commission and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). These technical guidelines focused on the different dimensions of strategic procurement, including GPP, the development of SMEs, innovation and social responsibility.

To support the implementation of the Guidelines, DGABCA also developed two manuals:

- Practical Guide for Sustainable Procurement in the Public Sector that provides guidance to integrate environmental considerations across the entire procurement cycle and offers examples of GPP implementation for different product and service categories;
- Guide on Social Criteria in Public Procurement Processes in Costa Rica that provides guidance to integrate social considerations across the procurement cycle as well as templates of the social clauses to be used in tenders and public contracts.

Moreover, in 2022, the Sustainable Public Procurement Guide was issued. This Guide presents standardised environmental, social and economic clauses and provides recommendations to further promote the participation of SMEs and women in public procurement.

Source: (OECD, 2023^[2]), OECD Survey on Green Public Procurement (2022).

To be effective, training and capacity-building initiatives should first assess the current level of knowledge, the prevailing organisational culture, and the skill-gaps within the procurement workforce. This evaluation exercise will help identifying the existing barriers to the uptake of GPP across public buyers and contracting authorities, as well as the kind of competences that need to be developed or strengthened (OECD, 2023^[2]). For instance, in 2018, the Korea Environmental Industry and Technology Institute (KEITI) conducted a survey to assess the training needs of contracting authorities, which covered GPP awareness, motivations of public buyers for purchasing green products, and facilitators of GPP. Based on the results of the survey, the main training needs were identified and informed the KEITI's training activities for GPP: providing explanations on the environmental and economic benefits of green products; sharing of best practices; and training on the use of the online platform and e-Procurement tools. Similarly, in 2019, Lithuania undertook an assessment of the challenges and needs of its public procurement workforce, as well as an extensive review of the training courses and materials and capacity-building tools. The results of the analysis were used to develop a certification scheme and a professional strategy, which also covered strategic public procurement and GPP (see Box 5.2).

Box 5.2. Assessing training needs to inform effective GPP training initiatives

Lithuania: from assessing training needs to the development of a certification system and professionalisation strategy for public procurement

Recognising the importance of promoting professionalisation of the public procurement workforce, in 2019, the Government of Lithuania asked the support of the Structural Reform and Support Services (SRSS) from the European Commission and the OECD to develop a certification framework and a professionalisation strategy. Most relevantly, the OECD has supported the country to undertake an assessment of the challenges and needs of its public procurement workforce, as well as an extensive review of the training courses and materials and capacity-building tools. The assessment also covered strategic public procurement and GPP. For GPP, some of the challenges identified included the misperception that green procurement criteria led to an increase in the price, the need to strengthen the knowledge basis of public buyers, as well as their capacity to include green criteria in procurement procedures and evaluate the costs and benefits of green purchases.

The results from the assessment exercise were then used to inform and develop the professionalisation strategy and the certification framework. Certification courses included e-procurement, GPP, socially responsible procurement, innovation procurement, and SME facilitation. The learning methodologies used are wide-ranging, including face-to-face workshops, e-learning modules, an educational degree program, manuals and guidelines, standardised templates, ad hoc support through a help desk and consultations, and practical training in the form of job-swapping, a community of practice, and internships. All this content is available on a one-stop-shop procurement portal.

For GPP, the certification courses aim at providing:

- A first-hand experience of applying the GPP concept throughout the public procurement process (planning, purchasing, post purchasing);
- A clear understanding on how to implement GPP;
- Best practices and case studies about how GPP is being applied;
- An understanding of the life-cycle costs of products and services.

Moreover, the professionalisation strategy highlights the need of incentives to motivate GPP, including direct financial benefits and non-financial incentives, such as awards to recognise achievements and flexible working hours.

Methodologies used to assess the capacity of public procurement workforce

To assess the challenges related to the capacity of the public procurement workforce in Lithuania, the following methodologies were used by the OECD:

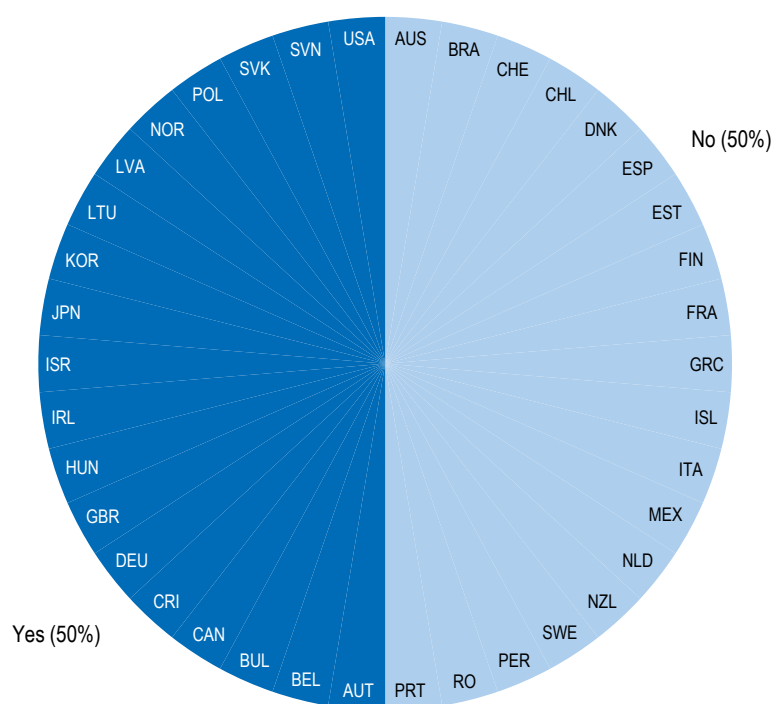
- Questionnaire sent to the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation and the Public Procurement Office (PPO)
- Audit report of the National Audit Office on the functioning of public procurement system (May 2018)
- PPO survey to the contracting authorities and suppliers (2016)
- Two OECD fact-finding missions to Vilnius (March & April, 2018). During the fact-finding missions, the OECD had meetings with the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation, Public Procurement Office, Centralised Procurement Organisation, Ministry of Environment, Special Investigation Service, National Audit Office, and National Common Function Centre. In addition, approximately ten large and small contracting agencies and economic operators were interviewed to assess the training needs.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]).

As professionalisation of GPP across the public procurement workforce is often part of GPP policies and action plans, monitoring the implementation of training and capacity-building initiatives is important to keep track of progress and ensure GPP-related goals are achieved. Nevertheless, the results from the 2022 OECD Survey on GPP reveals that only 50% of the participating countries have measured the number of GPP training courses delivered in the year 2022 (Figure 5.2).

Monitoring efforts can focus on the number of training courses that are delivered each year, the number of methodological guidelines provided by responsible ministries, number of trained procurement officials, among others. Results from monitoring can be used to inform corrective actions to improve training courses and technical supports. Moreover, engaging with the procurement workforce through periodic surveys and in-depth interviews will help identify innovative training solutions.

Figure 5.2. Report on the number of GPP training courses taken in a given year



Note: The figure shows the answers to the question: "Are you reporting on the number of GPP training courses taken in a given year (by hours or by number of trainees)? Please provide any additional information."

Source: OECD Survey on Green Public Procurement (2022)

5.1.2. Building suppliers' capacity on GPP

Countries are increasingly committed to professionalising GPP with various initiatives aimed at equipping public buyers with the necessary skills and competencies for effective GPP implementation. However, there is a need for broader training and guidance on GPP for suppliers, beyond the context of individual procurement processes. While GPP practices are crucial to support environmental objectives, they can inadvertently create barriers for smaller suppliers who may lack the resources to meet environmental requirements in tenders, thus struggling to compete with larger companies. Regular and comprehensive engagement with the market by contracting authorities, including providing resources and guidance, is essential. This approach will enhance suppliers' capabilities in bidding for contracts, fostering a more robust and competitive environment.

Box 5.3. Supporting tools provided for suppliers on GPP

Training on Green Public Procurement for Suppliers in Ireland

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Ireland has developed a training presentation which follows on from the introductory Green Public Procurement video and provides more detailed information for suppliers of goods and services to the public sector in Ireland. Its purpose is to provide all suppliers with background information, advice and practical tips on Green Public Procurement.

The video is accessible online, free of charge.

Online lectures on GPP in Estonia

The Ministry of Climate in Estonia makes available a number of printed training materials on the e-procurement platform, including step-by-step guidance on how to execute a procurement contract according to Estonian law, and on how to use the platform itself, information on the Public Procurement Act and recent amendments, procedural information and forms, and written analyses of different elements of the Estonian procurement system. There are also video guides on using the e-procurement environment.

Source: (Environmental Protection Agency, 2022^[4]) (Estonian Ministry of Climate, n.d.^[5]).

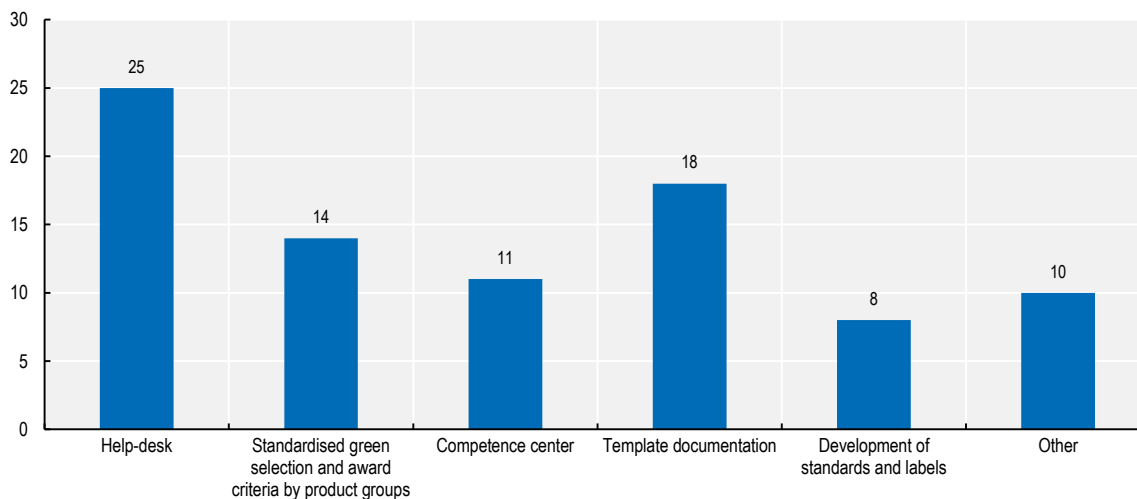
Given that more than half of the OECD survey countries do not provide GPP training or supporting tools for suppliers, it is evident that governments need to address this significant gap. To enhance the uptake of GPP, a collective effort from all stakeholders involved is required, including both larger and smaller suppliers. Governments must prioritise the development and dissemination of tools, resources, and training programs to support suppliers in meeting green procurement requirements. This collective approach will foster a more inclusive, competitive, and sustainable market, ensuring the successful implementation of GPP practices across all sectors.

5.2. Provide public buyers with supportive tools to promote GPP-uptake

The results from the 2022 OECD Survey on GPP show that participating countries have developed a wide array of supportive tools to assist public buyers in implementing green practices in their procurement processes, including standardised green criteria (e.g. selection or award criteria) and guidance on how to integrate them in public tenders, eco-labels or eco-certifications, life cycle costing (LCC) tools, environmental footprint calculators and database (Figure 5.4). For instance, Ecolabelling Denmark has created a guide for tendering authorities to instruct on the use of eco-labels in procurement. Similarly, Public Services and Procurement Canada published the Supply Manual Public elaborated which provides guidelines and recommendations on the application of green standards and use of eco-labels in procurement procedures.

In Germany, various methodological tools and approaches to life-cycle costing have been developed. Notably, these tools are well-established for certain product categories like electronic devices (e.g. computers, monitors, dish washers) and vehicles. However, many of the existing LCC instruments do not adequately account for environmental externalities, e.g. CO₂ emissions. Only the LCC-tool provided by the Federal Environmental Agency covers CO₂ emissions during the usage phase, considering the time of use, electricity consumption and emission factors (measured in grams of CO₂ emissions).

Figure 5.4. Other types of support provided to contracting authorities on GPP



Note: The figure shows the answers to the question: "Besides training, is there other type of support provided to contracting authorities on GPP? Please provide any details."

Source: OECD Survey on Green Public Procurement (2022).

Many of the surveyed countries also provide help-desk services (for more information on existing help-desk services across surveyed countries, see Box 5.4). Help desks serve as a contact point for contracting authorities to receive support and assistance in their daily procurement activities, including for the choice of procurement procedure and the use of award criteria. Moreover, help-desks can also provide ad-hoc support to economic operators. Considering how complex regulatory frameworks on public procurement can be and how frequently they are amended and modified, help desk services represent an effective instrument to provide quick and tailor-made information, facilitating legal compliance for both public buyers and potential bidders (OECD, 2023^[2]).

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and the Ministry of Public Administration offer consultation services by phone as well as written consultations on green subject matters. In Lithuania, a web page on "Frequently Asked Questions" for GPP has been created. Moreover, consultations by e-mail and telephone are provided by Ministry of Environment, with regards to policy issues, and by the Public Purchasing Office that provides specific guidance and consultations on the use of GPP criteria (Public Procurement Office, 2021^[6]).

Box 5.4. Help-desks in France, Lithuania, Colombia

France

The Ministry of Finance (Minefi) operates a call centre and e-mail inbox (CIJAP) with ten staff members who answer inquiries from contracting authorities, in particular local contracting authorities.

In 2014, 86% of the questions were answered on the spot. Most of the questions that are not answered on the spot are addressed in writing within 48 hours. For questions that require a more detailed legal interpretation, the inquiry is forwarded to a specialised Unit “Advice to buyers” of the Directorate for Legal Affairs of the Minefi. This unit generally produces written answers within 45 days. Overall, the call centre has been in high demand, and it deals with 35 000 inquiries per year.

Lithuania

The Public Procurement Office of Lithuania (PPO) set up a help desk not only to support contracting authorities but also economic operators. Currently, the help desk receives questions only through e-mail to ensure consistency and accuracy on the quality of answers.

Regardless of the high volume of questions received through e-mail (2 000 requests / month on average), PPO maintains a good speed of answer - 33% of the requests are answered within 1 hour, 17% in 1-8 hours, 11% (8-24 hours), and the rest 39% in more than 24 hours.

Colombia

Colombia Compra Eficiente administers a help desk operated by 30 people. They handle on average 25 000 requests each month through three channels: phone call, chat, and e-mail.

Source: (OECD, 2023^[2]).

Another solution provided by countries to support GPP professionalisation and promote implementation is through a dedicated Competence Center. A competence centre is an organisation/organisational structure that has been assigned the task by its government and has a mandate according to national law to encourage wider use of strategic procurement (green public procurement, socially responsible public procurement and/or innovation procurement). Its function includes, among others, providing practical and/or financial assistance to contracting authorities in the preparation and/or implementation of procurement procedures, providing training course, administering the digital platform to connect the public sector and private sector, organising networking events to connect the public sector and the private sector, etc. In Germany, as part of the Federal Government Programmes for measuring “Sustainability”, the Competence Center for Sustainable Procurement (KNB) was set up in 2011 at the Procurement Office within the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI). The KNB represents the main contact point for all federal ministries, federal states, municipalities and for the other public procurement offices across the country. Its main activities to promote sustainable procurement consist in providing targeted information to stakeholders as well as training and capacity-building to public agencies (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, n.d.^[7]). Similarly, in Finland, KEINO is a network-based competence centre for sustainable and innovative public procurement (for more information on KNB and KEINO, see Box 5.5).

Box 5.5. Competence centres for GPP

KNB in Germany

Since 5 December 2011, the Competence Centre for Sustainable Procurement (KNB) at the Procurement Office of the Federal Ministry of the Interior has been the central point of contact for all the federal ministries, states, local governments and other government offices responsible for procurement. The KNB carries out different tasks and activities:

- Provides information, training and advise on sustainable public procurement to federal, state and local government procurement offices and other public agencies via phone or e-mail as well as on-site training.
- Works with other organisations to prepare procurement guidelines and information brochures, as well as newsletters on sustainable procurement;
- Develops and proposes new ideas for sustainable public procurement in collaboration with representatives from public administration, industry, NGOs and association.

KNB also operates a web-based information platform that serves as an information, communication and network hub, helps build up a national expert network, and supports communication with companies and NGOs. The platform provides key information, documents, important dates for sustainable procurement, which are available online to staff of public procurement offices and to other interested persons. Moreover, through this platform, KNB can address questions on the use of LCC for different product groups (e.g. from motor vehicles and consumer electronics to household appliances). Indeed, the online platform also offers training modules for life-cycle cost analysis for different products.

KEINO in Finland

KEINO is a network-based competence centre for sustainable and innovative public procurement in Finland and it started operating in March 2018. The founding members responsible for operation and co-development are Motiva Ltd, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd, The Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation – Business Finland, the Finnish Environment Institute SYKE and Hansel Ltd.

KEINO is part of the Government Program's implementation, and it is funded and steered by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Moreover, the strategic management of KEINO is supported by a Secretariat, which is appointed separately from the representatives of the ministries and a broad-based co-operation group.

KEINO offers support to public procurement practitioners in Finland through Change Agents (KEINO-muutosagentti in Finnish) operating at the regional level, which serve as local contact point. Change Agents are paid by KEINO, but they are part of each Agent's employees.

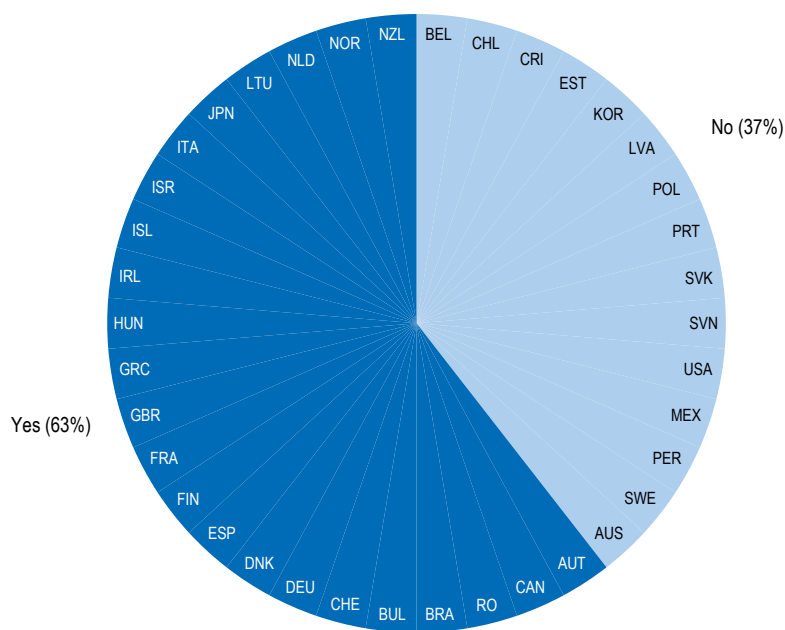
The priorities of Keino's activities in 2022–2023 are:

1. Procurement of new solution;
2. Implementation of ecosystem agreements with cities;
3. Refining lessons learned into practical tools and operating models for procurement units.

Note: KEINO Competence Center's term has ended in February 2024 and currently under discussions is new operative knowledge hub
Source: (Procurement Office of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, n.d.^[8]); (KEINO, n.d.^[9]).

Moreover, 63% of surveyed countries have created dedicated spaces to share experiences and discuss key challenges for GPP (Figure 5.5). Most notably, professional networks or communities of practice are examples of shared platforms where procurement practitioners can share knowledge and raise questions. They also offer the opportunity to present good practices, reflect on lessons learned and identify innovative solutions to deliver better value for money (OECD, 2023^[2]). Moreover, they can help strengthen the motivation of procurement officials to uptake GPP, and nurture a sense of professionalism (OECD, 2023^[2]). The French Ministry for the Ecological Transition has created a platform called RAPIDD, which allows public procurement practitioners to share resources, exchange ideas and disseminate information on socially and environmentally responsible purchases. In Hungary, as part of the Sustainable Hungary Programme to promote sustainability in public procurement, the Sustainability Working Group has been created. The Working Group aims, among other things, at strengthening dialogue among procurement professionals and practitioners. In Canada, a nationwide survey on sustainable public procurement across the public and private sector is carried out on an annual basis (Canadian Collaboration for Sustainable Procurement, 2022^[10]). The annual surveys for sustainable procurement have also been used to inform the quadrennial Sustainable Procurement Barometer, which allows public and private organisation to self-assess and compare their performance with peers over time (ECPAR, 2020^[11]) (for more information, see Box 5.6).

Figure 5.5. Existence of a platform in which contracting authorities can share experience



Note: The figure shows the answer to the question: "Is there any fora or platform in which contracting authorities can share experiences? Please provide any additional details."
 Source: OECD Survey on Green Public Procurement (2022).

Box 5.6. The Sustainable Hungary Programme

In April 2021, the Public Procurement Authority (PPA) launched the Sustainable Hungary Program to promote sustainability in public procurement. Under this initiative, the Sustainability Working Group was created. The Working Group brings together representatives of the PPA, the largest national contracting authorities, as well as representatives from other organisations working with the Authority. Its scope is to raise awareness among public procurement stakeholders, strengthen professional dialogue, support practitioners and disseminate good practices at the national and international level.

A summary of the sustainable public procurement practices shared by participants at the first meeting is available on the Public Procurement Authority's website. The second meeting of the Working Group was dedicated to the preliminary market consultation. The summary of the second meeting is also available on the Authority's website and contains practical information on preliminary market consultation as well as good practices from the attending organisations.

Annual reports on the State of Sustainable Public Procurement in Canada

The Canadian Collaboration for Sustainable Procurement (CCSP) is a member-based network of Canadian public-sector institutions working together to align their spending with their values and commitments on sustainability.

Founded in 2010, the CCSP is a member-based network of over 40 Canadian public sector institutions and over 200 staff members working together to align their spending with their values and sustainability commitments. Representatives from Procurement, Sustainability, Diversity & Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and other interested internal business units meet virtually on a regular basis to network, learn, share information, and co-create tools to better address the environmental, ethical, social, and Indigenous risks and opportunities in their supply chains.

CCSP releases Annual Reports on the State of Sustainable Public Procurement in Canada, which highlights national sustainable procurement trends, showcases CCSP member accomplishments, and features success stories from across Canada. Information in these reports are gathered through interviews with CCSP members.

The 2022 annual report highlighted that procurement teams faced significant challenges due to staff turnover and supply chain volatility, yet there was a notable rise in sustainable procurement policies and discussions, especially from elected officials. This heightened focus on sustainability increased pressure on procurement teams to expand their expertise across environmental, social, Indigenous, and ethical pillars, amidst labor shortages and volatile market conditions. Despite these challenges, the CCSP played a crucial role in supporting teams by facilitating knowledge sharing and practical peer exchanges, helping to implement sustainable practices and respond to senior leadership inquiries.

Source: (OECD, Forthcoming^[12]); (Canadian Collaboration for Sustainable Procurement, 2022^[10]).

5.3. Conclusions

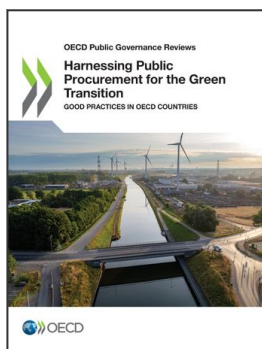
GPP is a complex topic, and it needs expertise and abilities that span across various fields, including procurement regulations and managing public tender procedures, environmental policy, and economic evaluations. For this reason, it is important to provide the procurement workforce with the relevant training, skills and capabilities. Training and capacity-building activities need to address existing skill-gaps and should progress and adapt, as GPP uptake proceeds. At the early stages of GPP implementation, capacity building tends to focus on motivations (“why” procuring green), then shifting to skills (“how to” procure) as GPP matures. Ultimately, the goal of capacity-building programs is to embed GPP in the core skills of public procurement professionals.

It is important to provide public buyers with a comprehensive understanding of what “purchasing green” means, as well as to strengthen and develop the set of technical skills to integrate environmental and climate considerations across the different phases of the procurement cycles, i.e. from needs assessment to awarding of public contracts. Moreover, governments need to monitor their training initiatives, as well as to assess the results achieved. This will help identify challenges and barriers to intervene with corrective actions and new supportive interventions, as needed.

The results from the Survey reveal that GPP training and professionalisation can be realised in different ways, and surveyed countries rely on a variety of training instruments and initiatives, including courses, webinars, handbooks and manuals, dedicated competence centres and help-desk services. Moreover, surveyed countries are developing and participate in peer-to-peer networks, wherein public buyers and contracting entities can meet, share experiences and lessons learned, as well as work together to develop innovative approach to GPP and improve implementation.

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