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**Belgium** \****Strategic framework, action plan and scope for procurement for innovation policy***

There is no dedicated procurement for innovation action plan at the federal level, but ad hoc initiatives exist. The federal administration focused on the development of an e-procurement platform, available to all Belgian public administrations. Other elements are: facilitation of SME participation, sustainability, maximising competition in framework agreements.

Recently at federal level a new project just started. The objective is to implement a new procurement process to make public procurement accessible for start-up companies with a minimum of regulation and to quickly implement innovative solutions.

At the regional level, initiatives are taken as well. For example, the Flemish government approved an Action Plan on Procurement of Innovation in 2008. This action plan focuses on procurement for innovation that needs a pre-commercial research and development phase, i.e. pre-commercial procurement. The Flemish Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology (Instituut voor Innovatie door Wetenschap en Technologie – IWT, this organisation has now been absorbed by the newly formed “Flanders Innovation and Entrepreneurship”, as from 1 January 2016.) manages the pilot programme under this action plan. It aims at a horizontal integration in the innovation policy mix, whereby the policy domains of government buy innovation from companies and research centres. The government is the first receiver of innovative solutions and the society can be supplied by innovative products in some lead markets. The innovative procurement instrument should become a fully integrated part of a balanced innovation policy mix strategy. The Flemish ministers decided on participation for their respective area and nominated a contact point that identifies the challenges and opportunities that can be solved through procurement for innovation. Through this process, 48 project proposals were received and 15 selected. The first pilot was located in the cultural sector and provided a digital book platform. Other procurements that have been launched include an eye screener for young babies, monitoring systems for excavations, POP (personal development plan), etc.

Wallonia public procurement policy focusses on fostering sustainability and ethical and social clauses, which can be a driver for (eco-) innovation. Dematerialisation of public procurement is another priority, aiming at simplifying and facilitating access of SMEs. These actions are part of the regional development strategy, and are anchored in several action plans, such as the Marshall Plan 2.green, the Walloon Small business Act, the simplification and e-gov action plan, Environment-Employment Alliance, etc. Specific actions on procurement for innovation remain a challenge for Wallonia.

***Implementation***

Aside from implementing latest EU directives, procurement for innovation at the federal level is conducted via ad hoc initiatives. Examples are the development of an e-procurement platform and guidelines sustainable buying, trainings and workshops on social economy (clothing) related to the preparation of tender documents.

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Flanders: The Flemish administration is currently implementing its action plan on procurement for innovation (see above.) Aside from that, the administration is exploring innovation-friendly ways to boost commercial procurement of innovation by the Flemish government, thereby principally stimulating the PPI-path through setting some indicative targets. Certain lead areas provide guidance for improvements related to procurement for innovation, such as Economy, Science and Innovation (Department of Economy, Science and Innovation), Public Governance (Public Procurement Division) and Services for the General Government Policy (Government of Flanders Executive Office Division) Innovation can be stimulated through traditional public procurement by means of eliminating (or at least reducing) legal, financial, precautionary or other hurdles that hinder tender participation of innovative actors (e.g. SME and young innovative companies, etc.).

The Walloon region introduced guidance and standard clauses to facilitate green procurement and SME-friendly procurements.

Brussels Region commenced the Smart Cities Mobility Platform project. This project aims at better integrating ICT tools in the mobility ecosystem of the region, for example through apps, traffic management systems and data mining of mobility data.

### ***Good practices***

At federal level, a successful practice was the development of the e-procurement platform led to a single application used by all economical operators and by all administrations.

At the regional level, a good practice was submitted by Flanders: Flanders was one of the first EU regions that launched the first PCP and PPI's projects. IWT's Knowledge Centre on innovative procurement was crucial for the projects' success. The Centre elaborated a viable methodology consisting of two steps, first, to detect and spot suitable innovation projects from procurers, and second, to assess needs of the end-user requirements.

The mapping and fine-tuning of the procurers' needs remain a crucial aspect to fully deploy procurement for innovations; after mapping the needs, it is essential to bridge the gap with the supply-side. Therefore, market consultation sessions are important to match the supply and demand-side. In these sessions, information on the capabilities of suppliers and the feasibility to develop the envisaged technological solution can be retrieved. In addition, these sessions serve to clarify potential risks.

### ***Successful policy instruments***

Successful policy instruments include the Smart@Fire project methodology (on regional level). As part of this project, IWT in Flanders developed a methodology that was approved by the European Commission.

At the national level, due to a restrictive interpretation of the procurement legislation, the PCP procurement procedure is still confronted with obstacles to be resolved in order to allow a flexible, timely and more innovation friendly implementation. This corresponds with the envisaged, more PPI-oriented approach mentioned above. In total, development phase, 3 have been stopped), three PCPs are waiting for approval, five PPIs have been successfully finalised.

A single portal for public procurement, with a toolbox and a helpdesk available to facilitate insertion of ethical, social and environmental clauses in the procurement documents. In that

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perspective, a facilitator network was also created to sensitise and train procurers at the on regional level.

### ***Challenges, risks and solutions to overcome obstacles***

Main challenges are related to obstacles in the national legislation and a restrictive interpretation of the exemption for R&D (PCP -art 16f Procurement Directive), the lack of financial commitment and interest in the subject, the low level of knowledge about innovation and the PPI-PCP procedures, etc. Another major challenge is the lack of personnel capacity appointed for the bottom-up implementation of such a high-level instrument with a broad target group of entities from 13 policy areas.

PCP and PPI in the future.

### ***Key lessons learned***

On the level of knowledge there is still a long way to go in order to enhance the awareness, general understanding and willingness to invest in PCP-PPI. Some “Meet and greet” sessions will be organised to establish contact with buyers.

### ***Measurement and impact assessment***

Belgium has quantified its 3% target for procurement for innovation and measures/follows up moves to reach of this target. But the target actually has not yet been achieved. For the time being there are no impact assessments, evaluation studies and/or studies of state of play regarding any type of procurement for innovation on national level, but on regional level (Flanders) studies of state of play.

At federal level, the use of the e-procurement platform by all administrations is targeted and measured. Indicators for SME participation are currently being implemented.

In the near future, Flanders’ interdepartmental working group on procurement of innovation will implement a monitoring system for the 3% target.