

# Helping public authorities procure ICT based on Standards

Thank you for participating in this survey, prepared by Europe Economics on behalf of the European Commission (DG INFSO).

The purpose of the survey is to gather your views on possible ways in which public authorities could be helped to procure ICT (information and communications technology) goods and services that are based on greater use of Standards. We invite responses from all interested parties for all sections of the questionnaire.

The Digital Agenda is Europe's strategy for a flourishing digital economy by 2020. It outlines policies and actions to maximise the benefits of ICT for all. Several actions are related to improved standard-setting procedures and increased interoperability. Europe must ensure that new IT devices, applications, data repositories and services interact seamlessly anywhere. The new standard setting process that is in the making will allow to refer to more standards in public procurement. A multi-stakeholder platform will develop a list of standards that can legally be used in public procurement bids (Action 21 of the Digital Agenda).

Procuring ICT that is based on Standards accessible to all ICT suppliers can help promote competition among suppliers responding to public sector ICT tenders, and reduce the risk of public authorities becoming excessively dependent on a single vendor for the provision of ICT products or services beyond the timeframe of the initial procurement contract, a situation otherwise known as 'lock-in'.

One of the main objectives of public procurement is to be as open as possible and to elicit bids from a good number of competitive suppliers. This nurtures competition in the private sector as contractors try to outdo each other to win government tenders. The most suitable company will be awarded the contract, leading to value for money and to improvement in the quality of goods and services provided to the members of public, and hence to more innovation.

However, when a public authority is highly dependent on a single vendor for its ICT systems there will be a lack of competition and value for money might not be achieved in the long term. Symptoms of possible lock-in include using specific brand names of products in tender descriptions and requesting backward compatibility with proprietary systems of which only a few suppliers have knowledge. In a recent survey, 40% of public authorities reported some degree of lock in. The European Commission will issue guidance on how to use Standards in the procurement of ICT, since the appropriate use of Standards will help alleviate lock in. (Action 23 of the Digital Agenda)

Another advantage of using Standards is that they help achieve interoperability, which is defined as the ability of two or more systems to exchange information and use the information that has been exchanged. This is important in the context of the European Commission's ISA (Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations) programme which facilitates electronic collaboration between public authorities. It becomes easier to share information across ICT systems if their architectures are based on common Standards. (Actions 24, 26 and 27 of the Digital Agenda)

Following Directive 98/34, we define a 'Standard' as " a technical specification approved by a recognised standardisation body for repeated or continuous application, with which compliance is not compulsory and which is one of the following:

- international standard: a standard adopted by an international standardisation organisation and made available to the public,
- European standard: a standard adopted by a European standardisation body and made available to the public,
- national standard: a standard adopted by a national standardisation body and made available to the public"

Note that this definition does not recognise the validity of standards provided by private consortia and fora that have developed most of the internet standards. Therefore, the European Commission is reforming the ICT standardisation policy. Means will be provided to use, where needed, fora and consortia specifications having wide market acceptance and complying with public policy requirements such as openness, transparency and balanced processes. Example fora and consortia are OASIS, W3C.

The recognition of technical specifications developed by fora and consortia at EU level will, according to the current plans that still need

to be adopted by the Council and Parliament, be done by a multi-stake holder platform. Once they are approved they can be used in public procurement in the same manner as official standards. As long as they are not recognised they remain 'technical specifications' that can also be used in public procurement, but their legal validity may be questioned, and an additional explanation may be necessary.

For the remainder of this document we will refer to formal standards and technical specifications from fora and consortia that have the necessary properties to be approved by the multi-stakeholder platform as 'Standards'.

## Draft Guidelines

Draft guidelines have been developed to make public authorities aware of the value of procuring ICT that is based on Standards, and to help them to do so. A draft version can be found at

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/ssai/docs/ictprocurementworkshop-dec2011/draftguidelines-action23-21dec2011.pdf>. The guidelines provide detailed background to the issues surrounding the use of standards-based ICT products and services.

Your comments on the draft guidelines are very welcome. Please record these in the text box at the end of the section of the survey on the guidelines.

The rest of the survey gathers views on additional ways in which public authorities could be helped in their procurement of ICT.

Your participation in this survey is very important for this study. If you have any problems in answering the questionnaire please contact Deborah Kelly or Christopher Pickard on +4420 7831 4717 or by email at [ict@europe-economics.com](mailto:ict@europe-economics.com).

Questions marked with an asterisk \* require an answer to be given.

## A.

### Confidentiality

A.1.

Responses to the survey will be treated as strictly confidential and will remain anonymous for reporting purposes. The anonymous responses will be shared with our client, DG INFSO, unless otherwise specified.

Please click here if you would prefer your anonymous responses not to be shared with our client.


## B.

### Part 1 – About you and your Organisation

B.1. Name of Your Organisation


B.2. Type of organisation \*

- Public authority                       Policy group  
 ICT supplier                                 Other

 B.3. Please elaborate

 B.4. If public authority, which sector does your organisation operate in?

- Public order and safety  
 Economic affairs  
 Environmental protection  
 Housing and community amenities  
 Health  
 Recreation, culture and religion  
 Education  
 Social Protection  
 Other

 B.5. Please elaborate

B.6. Member State in which your Organisation is located \*

- |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> AT | <input type="radio"/> BE | <input type="radio"/> BG |
| <input type="radio"/> CY | <input type="radio"/> CZ | <input type="radio"/> DE |
| <input type="radio"/> DK | <input type="radio"/> EE | <input type="radio"/> EL |
| <input type="radio"/> ES | <input type="radio"/> FI | <input type="radio"/> FR |
| <input type="radio"/> HU | <input type="radio"/> IE | <input type="radio"/> IT |
| <input type="radio"/> LT | <input type="radio"/> LU | <input type="radio"/> LV |
| <input type="radio"/> MT | <input type="radio"/> NL | <input type="radio"/> PL |
| <input type="radio"/> PT | <input type="radio"/> RO | <input type="radio"/> SE |
| <input type="radio"/> SI | <input type="radio"/> SK | <input type="radio"/> UK |


B.7. Your name

B.8. Size of organisation (number of employees)

- Less than 10
- 11 – 50
- 51 – 250
- 251 – 500
- 501 – 1000
- More than 1000

B.9. Annual turnover or budget for the last set of audited accounts (expressed in euro)

- Less than €500, 000
- €500,000 – €1 million
- €1 million – €5 million
- €5 million – €10 million
- €10 million - €50,000 million
- More than €50,000 million

 B.10. If you are a public authority, what was the total value of ICT procurement for your organisation in the last year for which you have records? (Expressed as euro)

- Less than €50,000
- €50,000 – €200,000
- €200,001 – €750,000
- €750,001 – €1 million
- €1 million – €4 million
- More than €4 million


## C.

### Part 2 – Comments on Guidelines

We would like to hear your view on the guidelines

C.1. Are all problems in ICT public procurement addressed in the guidelines?

- Yes  No

 C.2. If not, what would you like to add?

C.3. If you are a public authorities chief information architect or public procurer, is this guidance useful to procurers?

- Very
- Moderate
- A little
- Not Useful

C.4.

What could be added to make it more useful?

C.5. Could any additional best practice be included?

Yes

No



C.6. Please elaborate

D.

## Part 3 – Improving the Procurement Process

D.A.

### ICT Procurement strategy

Some Member States have in place ICT strategies that provide a context in which any public procurement of ICT needs to fit, for example a national/regional or sectoral ICT architecture, or recommendations/obligations on the use of certain types of Standards or products. For example, the Netherlands has an ICT strategy that has as a principle that every citizen should enter information for using a public service only once. If other public services need this same information as well, then the two public services should exchange this information automatically and this can be achieved by the use of certain standards.

D.A.1. Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at an organisational level (e.g. individual public bodies)

Yes

No



D.A.2. If yes, please describe



D.A.3. If yes, how helpful are they?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- Do not use



D.A.4. If no, would such a strategy be a helpful source of guidance to the public procurement of ICT?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

D.A.5. Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at a sectoral level (e.g. strategies applicable to certain areas such as transport or health)

- Yes
- No



D.A.6. If yes, please describe



D.A.7. If yes, how helpful are they?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- Do not use



D.A.8. If no, would such a strategy be a helpful source of guidance to the public procurement of ICT?

Yes

No

Don't know

D.A.9. Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at a regional level (e.g. across regions or groups of municipalities)

Yes

No



D.A.10. If yes, please describe



D.A.11. If yes, how helpful are they?

Very helpful

Helpful

Not helpful

Do not use



D.A.12. If no, would such a strategy be a helpful source of guidance to the public procurement of ICT?

Yes

No


Don't know


D.A.13. Are you aware of any such ICT strategy at a national level

Yes


No



 D.A.14. If yes, please describe

 D.A.15. If yes, how helpful are they?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- Do not use

 D.A.16. If no, would such a strategy be a helpful source of guidance to the public procurement of ICT?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know


## D.B.

### Reporting and reviewing


Reports by people responsible for procurement may often represent valuable records of procurement practice, and may be used to inform future behaviour. Reviews of procurement practice are also useful in encouraging good practice.

D.B.1. Do you report regularly on your ICT procurement activities?

- Yes
- No


 D.B.2. If yes, have you ever identified a lock-in situation and planned to resolve it?

- Yes
- No


 D.B.3. If yes, please elaborate

D.B.4. Are your ICT procurement practices reviewed internally in your organisation?

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Never
- Don't know

 D.B.5. How helpful are such internal reviews in encouraging good practice in ICT procurement?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- Not helpful

 D.B.6. Would the inclusion of such reviews within annual reporting requirements be a useful discipline?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

## D.C.

### Provision of procurement advice


Some Member States have central sources of advice for procurers (e.g. helpdesks; websites) that provide some or all of the following:

- (a) Advice on following procurement law
- (b) General principles of procurement best practice
- (c) Ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders
- (d) Advice on analysing purchasing needs
- (e) Training on good procurement practices for ICT
- (f) Sharing of best practices


D.C.1. Advice on following procurement law

Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

- Yes  No

 D.C.2. If so, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful  Helpful  Not helpful  Do not use


 D.C.3. If no, how useful would such advice be to procurers?

- Very helpful  Helpful  Not helpful  Do not use

D.C.4. General principles of procurement best practice

Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

- Yes  No

 D.C.5. If so, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful  Helpful  Not helpful  Do not use


 D.C.6. If no, how useful would such advice be to procurers?

- Very helpful  Helpful  Not helpful  Do not use


D.C.7. Ready text or templates for inclusion within tenders

Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

- Yes  No

 D.C.8. If so, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful  Helpful  Not helpful  Do not use

 D.C.9. If no, how useful would such advice be to procurers?

- Very helpful  Helpful  Not helpful  Do not use

D.C.10. Advice on analysing purchasing needs

Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

- Yes  No

 D.C.11. If so, how helpful is it?

Very helpful       Helpful       Not helpful       Do not use

 D.C.12. If no, how useful would such advice be to procurers?


Very helpful       Helpful       Not helpful       Do not use

D.C.13. Training on good procurement practice for ICT  
Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

Yes       No

 D.C.14. If so, how helpful is it?

Very helpful       Helpful       Not helpful       Do not use

 D.C.15. If no, how useful would such advice be to procurers?


Very helpful       Helpful       Not helpful       Do not use

D.C.16. Sharing of best practices  
Are you aware of any such sources within your Member State?

Yes       No

 D.C.17. If so, how helpful is it?

Very helpful       Helpful       Not helpful       Do not use

 D.C.18. If no, how useful would such advice be to procurers?

Very helpful       Helpful       Not helpful       Do not use

## D.D.

### Provision of help with ICT Standards

In some Member States there exist central bodies (for example, the Dutch Standardisation Board and Forum) to promote the use of ICT Standards that may:


- (a) Undertake assessments of existing ICT Standards
- (b) Publish catalogues of appropriate ICT Standards according to the ICT domain, product or service
- (c) Provide advice on which ICT Standards to use for particular needs
- (d) Provide ready text or templates to be included in tenders referencing standards
- (e) Provide ready text or templates on how to avoid the inappropriate use of brand names in tenders

Please address the following questions for all 5 types of advice listed above:


D.D.1. Undertake assessments of existing ICT standards

Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

- Yes  No  Don't know

 D.D.2. If yes, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful  
 Helpful  
 Not helpful  
 Do not use

 D.D.3. How helpful would such a resource be to procurers?


- Very helpful  
 Helpful  
 Neutral  
 Not helpful

D.D.4.


Publish catalogues of appropriate ICT Standards according to the ICT domain, product or service

Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

- Yes  No  Don't know

 D.D.5. If yes, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful  
 Helpful  
 Not helpful  
 Do not use


 D.D.6. How helpful would such a resource be to procurers?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- Not helpful


D.D.7. Provide advice on which ICT Standards to use for particular needs

Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

 D.D.8. If yes, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- Do not use

 D.D.9. How helpful would such a resource be to procurers?


- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- Not helpful

D.D.10.


Provide ready text or templates to be included in tenders referencing standards

Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

 D.D.11. If yes, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- Do not use

 D.D.12. How helpful would such a resource be to procurers?


- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- Not helpful

D.D.13.


Provide ready text or templates on how to avoid the inappropriate use of brand names in tenders

Is there access to such a source of information in your Member State

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

 D.D.14. If yes, how helpful is it?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- Do not use

 D.D.15. How helpful would such a resource be to procurers?

- Very helpful
- Helpful
- Neutral
- Not helpful

**D.E.**

**Additional comments**

D.E.1. Any additional comments on the improvement of procurement through the better use of Standards?

## E.

### Part 4 – Wider Impacts

The draft guidelines and the above mechanisms aim to enhance the procurement of ICT that is based on Standards and help public authorities avoid excessive dependence on single ICT vendors or suppliers (lock-in).

**E.1** In your opinion, would an increased focus on ICT Standards in the procurement of ICT goods and services have an effect on:

	Increase	Decrease	No change	Don't know
E.1.1. The use of brand names or proprietary technical specifications in tenders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E.1.2. Number of suppliers responding to public ICT procurement tenders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E.1.3. Quality of the solutions proposed by suppliers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E.1.4. The costs suppliers need to bear in order to respond to public tenders	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E.1.5. Competition in the ICT market	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E.1.6. Levels of innovation in the ICT market	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## E.2 Would public authorities requesting standards-based ICT systems have an effect on

	Increase	Decrease	No change	Don't know
E.2.1. Short-term costs of solutions proposed by suppliers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E.2.2. Long-term costs of solutions proposed by suppliers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

E.3. Any further comments on the impact of the use of ICT Standards in public procurement and a reduction in vendor lock-in?

## F.

### Further Contact

Thank you for your participation in our survey. We may wish to contact you in order to clarify your answers.

F.1.

Please click here **only if** you would prefer us **not** to contact you in the future.

Do not contact me in the future