Plenary

Essential Steps for Better Procurement Outcomes

Sandra Simões
Board Member, National Public Procurement Regulatory Authority, Portugal
GOVERNANCE

Public Procurement Governance in PT

Government

Council of Ministries
- Generic CPB (ESPAP)
- Security Certification Body (GNS)

Ministry of Housing
- Regulator (IMPIC)

Ministry of Health
- Health CPB (SPMS)

+ Auditing authorities such as:
  - Court of Auditors;
  - Sectorial Inspectorates;
  - Financial Inspectorate.
FACTS:

An efficient and high-quality procurement function in the public sector requires:

- integrated, dynamic, well-organised, well-managed actions by the public authorities, and
- professionals trained with the right skills and qualifications, with an ethical and moral commitment so that public spending is efficient.

In Portugal there is a diversity of types of contracting authorities and profiles of professionals working in public procurement (PP).

There are still (many) contracting authorities that don't use an electronic platform and don't have a team, either in number or qualification, for public procurement.

Procedures by direct award are the majority.

The “new” PP procedures (negotiation, competitive dialogue, innovation...), introduced as a means to increase competition and improve the effectiveness of public contracts, have not been adopted.
REALITY:

- PP is a neglected activity, wrongly associated with simple administrative tasks to fulfil legal provisions, without considering that the efficiency and effectiveness of public money management depends on a qualified PP:
  - too much emphasis on procedures and too little on results

- Strategic purchasing is not yet a management priority in many public organizations

- Lack of planning:
  - deficient procedural documents that contribute to "additional work"
  - "contract modifications" or litigation, with delays in execution
  - and increased costs

- PP personnel are mostly on-the-job training:
  - inefficient and maladjusted administrative procedures, the result of repetition (fear of innovation, of "doing things differently")
  - fear of making mistakes, so we take refuge in rules and habits
  - always doing things the same way, because that's the way they've always been done
OPPORTUNITIES

- New challenges in terms of green, innovative and socially responsible public procurement,
- Fundamental role in channelling the European Structural and Investment Funds,
- Implementing actions under the Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR).

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Favouring creation of a competency model and strengthening of the training offer and possibility of using the instruments provided by the European Commission to enhance the role of public procurement professionals
- Using public procurement as a strategic tool which involves setting goals and priorities, and mobilizing resources to carry out the actions (resources available to achieve goals are usually limited) and monitoring them
- Change the reactive approach to public procurement and make it proactive
- Engagement of all the interested parties (from top management, leaders, organizational units, partners, markets...).
WHAT WE NEED TO CHANGE

- Being willing to change our way of being and thinking
- Planning purchases in a sustainable and strategic way in good time
- Increase professionalisation - encourage training, disseminate training and trainers, certify public procurement workers
- Contracting authorities, procurement authorities, entities that in one way or another play a role in public procurement must learn to collaborate and work together
- Effective communication and clarity on the function and role of each entity in the public procurement ecosystem