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# P2I EXPERT OPINION DOCUMENT:

Impact of a public procurement competence centre  
by internal and external evaluations

Procure2Innovate  
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## ABOUT

This expert opinion document summarises the results of the knowledge exchange meeting between members of the Procure2Innovate network, which took place in June 2021. The meeting served the main purpose of sharing insights on how to assess the impact of competence centres.

The document contains the perspective of the Procure2Innovate network on this specific topic. The key takeaways expressed in this document are those of the Procure2Innovate network and do not necessarily reflect the views of a Member State.

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# EVALUATING COMPETENCE CENTRE IMPACT: KEY TAKEAWAYS

## RELEVANCE OF COMPETENCE CENTRE EVALUATION

One of the tasks of public procurement competence centres across European Member States is to stimulate and support innovation procurement. This is done by, among other things, raising awareness, providing training and education to procurers and suppliers, or by guiding and participating in innovation procurement. Evaluating competence centres and their impact can help them to work more effectively towards targets, stakeholders, clients and innovation missions. However, defining the right key-performance indicators (KPIs) and conducting qualitative assessments can be a challenge.

Evaluating competence centres has been discussed in the Knowledge Exchange meeting between members of the Procure2Innovate network, which took place in June 2021. Relevant background information to this discussion is that competence centres are diverse in their backgrounds, scopes of interventions, and service offer. Moreover, the actual impact of competence centres on the amount of innovation procurement is hard to review from an aggregate point of view, since there are numerous other factors that influence the uptake of innovation procurement.

In this opinion document, the outcomes of the knowledge exchange meeting are shortly described, distinguishing internal and external evaluation of competence centres and its impact on specific projects.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF COMPETENCE CENTRES

Competence centres use internal and external evaluations to keep track of their overall development, stakeholder and client satisfaction, the realisation of explicit targets that are set for (programs of) some competence centres, and direct strategies (e.g. education and awareness). In order to do this, they use combinations of:

- Surveys, workshops and semi-structured interviews or group interviews among a (randomly

selected) number of clients and employees,

- Analysis of data and documents relevant to the competence centre (e.g. annual reports),
- International benchmarks,
- Internal brainstorming and workshops,
- KPIs.

The 'Procure2Innovate Report D4.8 – Benchmark KPIs' (August 2020) provides an overview of various specific KPIs and the adoption of it by competence centres in order to monitor progress toward the promotion and mainstreaming of innovation procurement. Some examples of KPIs which were mentioned during the Knowledge Exchange meeting are presented in the box below.

#### **Possible KPIs**

Examples of KPIs for measuring competence centre impact are:

- Website statistics: visits; time spent reading; content download;
- Outreach: number of requests for information; number of events organised; number of event participants; number of new publications delivered;
- Satisfaction level of target audience and involved policy departments;
- Consulting services provided;
- Number of support actions to HEurope-innovation public procurement (IPP) calls; number of proposals HEurope-IPP submitted;
- Number of legal IPP support requests; number of legal IPP tendering assistance;
- Number of IPP challenges promoted; number of IPP tender engagements of enterprises;
- Total contract value of innovation focused tenders.

Evaluating aspects such as target realisation and stakeholder and client satisfaction is considered to be a proxy of a competence centre's impact. Compared to measuring impact - which is often challenging - such evaluations are still difficult, but relatively easier to conduct. Baseline measurements or targets (set by clients, ministries or the competence centre) can be taken as a reference point to track the progress of the competence centre over time.

The relevance of some indicators or targets may change over time and thus needs revision as competence centres and public procurement practice develop. For example, awareness of the possibilities of innovation and public procurement might be more important in the starting phase of

procurement development compared to more mature phases. It also noted that the services offered by competence centres throughout Europe differ. This relates to the diversity of competence centres and their tasks, as mentioned in the introduction. Therefore, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution regarding how to evaluate competence centres.

Nevertheless, there is some overlap in how competence centres are evaluated. A combination of internal and external evaluation is recommended in all cases. Both are considered complementary. Together they bring more insights and recommendations for improvement. Typically, internal evaluations take place annually, while external evaluations take place every few years. Internal evaluations can be away days and use brainstorm sessions or workshops focusing on lessons learnt, best practices, KPI scores, and discussing potential areas for improvement.

As compared to an internal evaluation, an external evaluation considers the competence centre through the eyes of stakeholders and clients. External evaluations are conducted by other governmental organisations or independent research organisations. It is preferred if external evaluators have at least some basic knowledge about public procurement and innovation. A few examples of external evaluation reports, including diverse recommendations for competence centres are listed in the box below.

**External evaluation reports**

Examples of external evaluation reports are:

- [External evaluation of Austrian PPPI action plan](#) (Austria, 2018)
- [External evaluation of Dutch program procurement of innovation](#) (The Netherlands, 2019)
- [External evaluation of German competence centre innovation procurement](#) (Germany, 2016)
- [External evaluation of Swedish National Agency for Public Procurement](#) (Sweden, 2017)

Furthermore, having one or more contact persons inside client organisations is recommended, preferably working on innovation procurement. This helps to get feedback from client organisations. Not only can this feedback be used to determine client satisfaction, it could also help to evaluate the impact of innovation procurement projects as we discuss in the next section.

## EVALUATION OF IMPACT

Defining and measuring innovation is challenging and it is even more challenging to measure the impact that competence centres have on driving innovation and promoting alternative solutions with the use of public procurement. Measuring impact is complex, and other (governmental) organisations can also influence the uptake of innovation procurement. This makes it difficult to determine the impact the competence centre has.

To show the impacts competence centres realise on innovation (and other mission domains), project-specific information is called for. To ensure that valuable information is collected, a clear data collection method is required. Among other things, it is important that for tenders, contract values are filled in correctly and that it is indicated whenever a tender uses innovation supporting tools, such as PCP, PPI, etc. Competence centres can play a role here, handing contracting authorities a method to keep track of activities and outcomes that differ from the status quo. Currently, the competence centres indicate that they need better data about tenders and tender outcomes to be able to better measure impact. There is a need for insightful data about innovations and sustainability realised by public tenders and/or during the contract period.

Finally, contact persons inside client organisations can help establish an evaluation infrastructure in contracting authorities, providing project specific information by which activities, outcomes of projects and lessons learnt can be determined ex post. The knowledge retrieved from the experiences of the contracting authorities could in turn be used as feedback to further improve the competence centres' services, thereby stimulating innovation procurement even more.



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