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Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in Health Hearing on ‘public procurement in healthcare systems’

Brussels, 3 February 2021 (virtual meeting)

Aim and objectives

The Expert Panel on effective ways of investing in health (EXPH) is an interdisciplinary and independent group established by the European Commission in 2012 to provide non-binding independent advice on matters related to effective, accessible and resilient health systems in the form of opinions.

The aim of this hearing was to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to share their views on the draft opinion of the Expert Panel on '**Public procurement in healthcare systems**'. The draft opinion was made available on the Expert Panel's website prior to the hearing.

Panel members - speakers

Prof. Luigi Siciliani (Chair of the hearing), Prof. Martin McKee, Dr Anna Garcia-Altes (Rapporteurs)

In total 140 participants attended the hearing.

Presentation of the draft Opinion

The Chair and the Rapporteurs presented the main elements of the opinion (1) public procurement, its rationale and drawbacks, (2) health sector specificities in relation to public procurement, (3) health sector challenges, (4) cross-cutting considerations, (5) how to improve procurement, and (6) what further EU cooperation can be developed. The opinion concludes with the Panel's recommendations, including:

- recognize public procurement as a means to achieve the goals of the health care sector, taking into account the interests of actual and potential patients,
- increase the use of public procurement to promote wider social, economic, and environmental goals,
- professionalise procurement, and recruit, retain, and continuously develop those with the necessary skills and expertise, as well as consolidate knowledge and best practices,
- ensure there is repository of evidence, supported by a community of practice, on corruption in health sector procurement,
- review public procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- promote cross-border procurement in those circumstances where benefits outweigh costs.

Open discussion: participants' views

Participants in the discussion:

- Emphasised the importance of taking quality (non-price) aspects into account in public procurement.
- Stressed that regional and local dimension is a key factor in exploring public procurement and emphasized the role of cross-border cooperation.
- Drew attention to value-based procurement focusing on the improvement of patient reported outcome and the care delivery process and gave a practical example of the 'Value Based Procurement Community of Practice'.
- Suggested including an explicit reference to the use of healthcare professionals as experts in procurement processes (e.g. hospital pharmacists)
- Agreed on importance to support sustainability of digital transformation of healthcare.
- Emphasised the need for innovative ways to procure for capital equipment and for green procurement.
- Asked the Panel to further assess the importance (the impact) of using Lots (the need to split the procurement into lots) vs the economic downsides for the procurer (too many contractors, difficulties implementing an integrated care approach).
- Pointed at the use of joint public procurement, which should be proportionate to the needs identified by the participating Member States or regions and limited to situations where purchase and supply of products cannot be ensured as efficiently by other means (e.g. individual purchase country by country).
- Shared the experience on use of managed entry agreements, with a number of principles for improving such models, including increased transparency of the use of such agreements and sharing of best practices.

In a live poll conducted during the hearing, 35% of respondents said they represented government or public authority. 27% of respondents indicated that they were involved in public procurement as policy makers, 13% as buyers, 13% as suppliers and 13% as consultants. In a poll asking participants to rank the Panel's recommendations in order of importance, the recommendation on professionalisation was ranked as No.1, followed by the recommendations on purchasing strategies and cooperative procurement.

Next steps

Participants were invited to send any additional comments by 12 February 2021 via email to SANTE-EXPERT-PANEL@ec.europa.eu.

The Panel will finalise its work on this opinion in February 2021.