

SCALING UP CIRCULAR AND SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT THROUGH INTERREGIONAL COLLABORATION

30 October 2025, 10 – 11.30h

Agenda

- **Welcome and introduction**
- **Presentation of the Networks**
 - Urban Agenda Partnership on Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement
 - C-PRONE
- **Showcase of EU-funded projects**
 - **Circular Shift** (Interreg North West Europe)
 - **CISUTAC** (Horizon Europe)
 - **CE-PRINCE** (Interreg Central Europe)
- **Panel discussion and Q&A**
- **Closing remarks**

Summary

The moderator (Núria Cases i Sampere, ACR+) opened the webinar by engaging the audience with some participatory questions, asking for a show of hands of who felt that stronger collaboration is a key driver of circular procurement.

Presentation of the Networks

Valentina Schippers-Opejko (City of Haarlem) first introduced the [Urban Agenda Partnership](#), a network of European cities and regions, as well as EU authorities, focusing on innovative, circular, and climate adaptive public procurement. She explained who the current members were and showcased how participants can join as Community Members of the Urban Agenda in order to receive monthly emails on events, tools, and news relating to circular procurement.

Joan Prummel (Rijkswaterstaat) then introduced [C-PRONE](#) (Circular Procurement Network), a network developed jointly by ACR+ and Rijkswaterstaat to provide an answer the question: “What has been done already on circular procurement, and who is working on this topic at the moment?”

C-PRONE is an online one-stop-shop connecting networks, projects, initiatives, and especially the people within them. C-PRONE initially arose from the ProCirc project but is envisioned to become a self-contained entity. The goal is to become the first source for anyone who wants to get involved with circular procurement.

The three objectives of the network are to:

- Facilitate the exchange of info (networks, training, connections, conferences).
- Create a body of knowledge (good practices, capacity building tools, sources).
- Provide policy insight (access updates, sharing news, discussing recommendations).

Showcase of EU-funded projects

Joan Prummel (Rijkswaterstaat) then presented the [Circular Shift](#) project, which was set up to investigate and then demonstrate how to scale up circular procurement pilots. The project arose from the realisation that pilots in circular procurement often fail to become widely implemented. Circular Shift supports the scaling up of pilots by:

- Increasing value chain collaboration.
- Building internal commitment for circular products and services.
- Predicting and monitoring the real impact of circular procurements.

The first steps of the project are to identify communities of practice and the criteria that lead to good practices, to set up working groups to establish collaboration within the value chain, and to investigate the circular strategies of pilots, before helping them to make impact-based decisions.

The main expected outputs include:

- A methodology for procurers to initiate value chain collaboration.
- Training modules and guidance for organisations to engage and commit the right people (in the right positions) to implement successful pilots, taking pilots to the next level instead of starting new ones.
- A decision-making framework for making choices based on potential impact, monitoring the outcomes of what is actually happening.

The main product groups tackled are phones, laptops, and workwear, selected as examples of commonly procured products. The aim is to connect people working with these products and find the reasons why pilots don't usually scale up. The project is therefore open to collaboration.

Q&A (Are you using a specific carbon measuring tool?) One of the Circular Shift partners, Nyenrode Business University, is looking into such tools and determining when they can be used; every product has its own supply- and value-chain emissions, so it is important to determine if one emission measuring tool can be used for all product groups or if they need multiple, and if these could be scaled to address other products.

Ekaterina Stoyanova (Euratex) presented [CISUTAC](#), a Horizon project whose principle objective is to increase circularity and sustainability in textiles & clothing in Europe. CISUTAC shows how to close loops at product & material level, developing several pilots.

The project conducted a survey about green public procurement (GPP), collecting feedback on challenges and opportunities from both companies and contracting authorities. The target respondents came from the CISUTAC community and external stakeholders, with the aim of finding data to ground sensible GPP guidelines that provide the best support to all parties.

In the survey, 16 companies from 7 Member States responded, as well as 12 contracting authorities from 7 Member States.

Among the companies who responded, most were large (250+ employees and EUR 50M+ turnover) selling workwear, intermediate textile products, personal protective equipment, and uniforms. They use recycled fibres, certifications, organic materials, and low-carbon methods. These companies

identified barriers to GPP such as price pressure, low-cost competition from outside the EU, limited demand by procurers, technical barriers such as the recyclability of textile fibres, and a lack of clarity within public tenders. Their main recommendations to improve GPP were to monitor compliance of non-EU entities, support local producers, prioritise circular economy principles with mandatory criteria, and balance criteria with economic feasibility.

Among the contracting authorities who responded, all reported already including green or circular criteria in their tenders, but nearly none used tools such as lifecycle assessments and lifecycle costings. They mainly procure workwear, uniforms, interior textiles, and personal protective equipment. Criteria they already use include certification, durability, chemical restrictions, and recycled content minimums. The main challenge reported by these procurers were monitoring and verification of environmental impact, definition of award criteria, and the limited availability of circular solutions on the market. Their main recommendations to improve the legal framework were to simplify and reduce the administrative burden (a noticeable finding given it is usually private entities who make this point), facilitating and clarifying the use of labels, and enabling the selection of local suppliers.

Q&A (What technical or financial support do you think is needed to boost public authorities' capacity to procure more sustainable and circular products?): The responses to the CISUTAC surveys indicate a preference for technical training, for monitoring and verification of circular outcomes, and for the legal aspects of circular procurement. For funding, public authorities want funding for hands-on tools such as guidelines, and awareness raising actions to engage stakeholders.

Serena Mancini (Regione Liguria) presented the [CE-PRINCE](#) project, an Interreg Central Europe initiative since 2024. CE-PRINCE aims to support the circular transition by leveraging public procurement to improve companies' circularity while empowering public authorities to use circular criteria in their tenders. The four key economic sectors targeted are agri-food, manufacturing, construction, and tourism.

The project assessed the variety of GPP standards in Central Europe, finding different methods and degrees of obligations between countries and regions. Criteria and standards are usually mentioned but they can be stricter, weaker, voluntary or mandatory. Mandatory criteria exist in Italy, Germany, Slovenia, Croatia; in Austria they are partly mandatory; in Hungary, Poland, and at EU-level they are voluntary.

The project also conducted surveys and 1-to-1 interviews in the Central European region, with both public authorities and private companies. The results of the surveys revealed:

- Significant disparities between public authorities and companies in the implementation of circular practices.
- Fragmentation in the types of action and strategies adopted.
- Companies are more inclined toward waste management but lag behind on strategies such as design, circular criteria in procurement, and logistics.
- Public authorities integrate GPP more into their procurement of IT devices, cleaning services, roadworks. They do so less regarding furniture, data centres, and food catering/services.

Common elements across the Central European region include:

- (Barriers): Misalignment between the public and private sectors, limited knowledge and technical expertise, complex and rigid procurement procedures, lack of common standards across regions and MS, financial constraints.
- (Drivers): Economic benefits for enterprises, growing alignment through transnational cooperation, greater stakeholder engagement in procurement processes, openness to innovation and sustainability.
- (Opportunities): Capacity building and specialised training, development of shared guidelines and best practices, digital platforms for procurement and cooperation, better public-private partnerships.

The project also offers a graphic schema demonstrating possible actions for both public authorities and companies at different levels, both regarding internal and external actions.

CE-PRINCE developed a transnational strategy adopted by all project partners, providing a structured and scalable approach to enhance CPP across Central Europe. The transnational approach focuses on shared capacity-building activities (e.g. training sessions, exchanges of experience, webinars) to build knowledge and understanding. Partners can use this common approach to address their country-specific needs.

The expected results of the project include improved circular policies in public procurement, spreading knowledge of GPP levers as a tool for the circular transition, strengthened cooperation between public and private sectors, reduced barriers, increased capacity among public procurers to add circular criteria into their tenders, and the enhanced ability of economic actors to respond to these tenders.

Q&A (What level do you work on (country level or EU level) to analyse GPP criteria?): We started with EU-level criteria but also look at individual Member State criteria to see where there are parallels between EU and national legislations. Once we have a clear picture of the landscape, we will try to upgrade these criteria via 4 sets of upgraded criteria (one for each economic sector tackled by the product). The upgraded criteria should apply to all countries and take a sectoral approach.

Q&A and panel discussion

From your experience, what are the main barriers to scaling up circular procurement methodologies across different economic sectors?

- **Serena Mancini:** There could be a geographic enlargement of our project, as well as an economic enlargement to different sectors. The main barriers are the variety of criteria and legislations.
- **Joan Prummel:** This question also shows why Circular Shift was set up. Although a holistic approach would be nice, every sector is different and methodologies are not always directly applicable across sectors – but still, they can provide lessons. For instance, a value chain collaboration approach for phones and laptops might give inspiration to actors operating in other sectors. That is why we should share as much as possible.
- **Valentina Schippers-Opejko:** To scale up you need strong commitment internally and from local politicians. During the revision of the EU Public Procurement Directives, it's important that the new directives enable and stimulate the scale-up of CPP more than current ones.

How do you measure the success of a project? We would like to govern based on real impact...

- **Joan Prummel:** There are two ways to be successful: you have your own aims as the partner, and you have the aims of the funding programme who want you to deliver what you promised. Sometimes we don't deliver exactly what we promised but we come up with something that has impact. For me the biggest success is that we deliver something useful as promised, but that we also create something that is shared and distributed
- **Valentina Schippers-Opejko:** Project success could be that you delivered on time, within the budget, and that you met your KPIs, but these are administrative successes. The real success is in the scaling-up, collaboration, inspiration and replication.
- **Joan Prummel:** The real success of a product is in its use -- something that has to be measured and monitored. The pre- and post-tender phases of the project are also really important.

Question for Serena Mancini: Considering the 4 topic areas suggested in your presentation which area are you having the biggest impact?

- **Serena Mancini:** Currently, it's too early to have results in terms of impacts in the economic sectors, as capacity building activities and pilot actions are just being launched in the project countries. We can say that the 4 economic sectors have been chosen among the most relevant in the territories of the project based on the work of partners. We can also highlight that construction and agrifood are the sectors where the majority of partners have connections both with the public and the private sector. Contrarily, the manufacturing sector is the sector where we are experiencing some difficulties in finding related public tenders and private companies working in the field, despite it is the sector where the majority of product categories with GPP criteria can be classified into.

Closing remarks

We learned about three different projects from different funding programmes, but the common element is that each one benefits from sharing knowledge and lessons learned. CE-PRINCE could be replicated across different sectors and areas. CISUTAC shows insights that are very interesting for Circular Shift. Exchange knowledge between public authorities and private entities is key. The Urban Agenda and C-PRONE networks are a key platform to build these relationships, inspire stakeholders, and share our knowledge about circularity.