



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

Public procurement distance: analysing European public procurement policy implementation in 27 EU member states

Schermerhorn, A.E.

Citation

Schermerhorn, A. E. (2025, October 7). *Public procurement distance: analysing European public procurement policy implementation in 27 EU member states*. Eburon Academic Publishers, Utrecht. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4262551>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4262551>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Public Procurement Distance

*Analysing European public procurement policy implementation
in 27 EU member states*

Alexander Edgar Schermerhorn



ISBN 978-94-6301-571-4

Eburon Academic Publishers
Vredenburg 40
NL-3511 BD Utrecht
The Netherlands
www.eburon.nl

Cover design: Textcetera, The Hague
Graphic design: Dolna Elija, Kostandenets, Bulgaria

© 2025 A.E. Schermerhorn. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, including for text and data mining, AI training, and similar technologies—without prior written permission from the proprietor.

Public Procurement Distance

*Analysing European public procurement policy implementation
in 27 EU member states*

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. dr. ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op dinsdag 7 oktober 2025,
klokke 14.30 uur

door

Alexander Edgar Schermerhorn

Promotor

Prof. dr. B. Steunenberg

Copromotor

Dr. R. de Ruiter

Promotiecommissie

Prof. dr. M. Haverland (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam)

Prof. dr. A.K. Yesilkagit (Universiteit Leiden)

Dr. S. Gürkan (Universiteit Leiden)

Dr. ir. M. Kibbeling (De Haagse Hogeschool)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tables

Boxes

Sources of the images

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1

Introduction: European public procurement policy	13
1.1 Central problem	13
1.2 Research question and objectives	16
1.3 Relevance of this study	17
1.4 Scope and research design	18
1.4.1 Scope	18
1.4.2 Research design	19
1.5 Chapter outline	21

Chapter 2

In perspective: European public procurement policy	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Context of European public procurement policy	23
2.2.1 Numerical importance of European public procurement policy	24
2.2.2 Mandatory European public procurement policy	25
2.3 Non-mandatory European policies	26
2.3.1 Discretionary policy instruments	26
2.3.2 Strategic policy instrument	29
2.4 Policy instruments in more detail	30
2.4.1 Sustainable public procurement	30
2.4.2 Innovation	31
2.4.3 SMEs	32
2.4.4 Cross-border public procurement in a harmonised market	33
2.5 Conclusion	35

Chapter 3	
Theoretical framework: Public procurement distance	37
3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 From policy formulation to policy implementation	37
3.3 The concept of ‘public procurement distance’	39
3.4 Possible causes of procurement distance	41
3.4.1 Administrative organisation	42
3.4.2 Professionalism: Practical experience and training	44
3.4.3 Professionalism: Ideology, intrinsic motivation and serving the public interest	47
3.4.4 Leeway for action: Policy discretion	47
3.4.5 Public administration culture and segmentation	55
3.5 Overview of approaches and expectations	61
3.6 Conclusion	63
Chapter 4	
Methodology: From theory to empirics	65
4.1 Introduction	65
4.2 Research design	65
4.3 Selection of respondents	66
4.3.1 Response data by country	67
4.3.2 Representativeness	69
4.4 Measurement instrument used	70
4.4.1 Testing the draft questionnaire	71
4.4.2 Validity	71
4.4.3 Reliability	73
4.5 Public procurement distance	74
4.6 Making potential causes of public procurement distance measurable	75
4.7 Conclusion	81
Chapter 5	
Respondents: Describing public procurement in Europe	83
5.1 Introduction	83
5.2 Characteristics of the examined units	83
5.3 Mandatory European procurement policy	91
5.4 Discretionary strategic procurement policy	98
5.5 Discretionary cross-border procurement	99
5.6 Conclusion	100

Chapter 6		
Distance: Analysing European public procurement policy		103
6.1 Introduction		103
6.2 Measurement values		103
6.3 Measurements for mandatory European public procurement policy		104
6.4 Measurements of discretionary use of instruments		112
6.5 Measurements for cross-border awarding		118
6.6 Conclusion: Factors affecting public procurement distance		122
Chapter 7		
Conclusions: Public procurement distance explained		127
7.1 Introduction		127
7.2 Answering the central research question		127
7.3 From initial declarations towards full implementation		130
7.4 Policy recommendations to bridge public procurement distance		137
7.5 In conclusion: Agenda for future research		139
Appendices		
Appendix A	Letter to respondents	145
Appendix B	Questionnaire	147
Appendix C	Frequency tables	155
Appendix D	Indicators multivariate analysis	169
Appendix E	Measuring European public procurement policy	173
Samenvatting	Aanbestedingsafstand	181
Summary	Public Procurement Distance	185
References		189
Index		203
Author's index		213
Curriculum vitae		216

Tables

Chapter	Table	Title	Page
3	1	Theoretical perspectives and expectations	62
4	2	Response data per member state	68
5	3	Distribution of respondents by professional group	85
	4	Further training	86
	5	Job duties by professional group	88
	6	Stakeholder influence on project effects	89
	7	Literal application of the rules	91
	8	Why apply public procurement rules	92
	9	Project effects	93
	10	Procurement segment and project effects	93
	11	Extra costs of project effects	94
	12	Policy influence by actors	96
	13	Satisfaction with procurement outcome	98
	14	Deployment of instruments	98
	15	Cross-border awarding	100
6	16	Influence of professionalism on mandatory public procurement policy	107
	17	Influence of policy discretion on mandatory public procurement policy	108
	18	Influence of professionalism on discretionary instruments	114
	19	Influence of policy discretion on discretionary instruments	115
	20	Influence of culture on cross-border public procurement policy	120
	21	Overview of expectations	123
7	22	Explanations of public procurement distance	130

Boxes

Chapter	Box	Title	Page
2	1	Green public procurement	31
	2	Procuring fresh foods through SMEs	33
	3	Cross-border participation	35

Sources of the images

- Page 12:** Bids for carpentry work on the new kitchen at the Castle of Tervuren, dated 1545.
(ARA, ARK, Administrative files, 132/2). With thanks to Merlijn Hurx (Hurx, 2012: 122).
- Page 22:** Specifications for the delivery of Namur stone for the elevation of the Oude Kerk (Old Church) in Amsterdam, dated 1564 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam 5058. Archive of the Burgomasters: charters from churches and monasteries, inv. no. 16; Van Tussenbroek, 2009: 22).
- Page 36:** Public notice of tender for the repair of the road from Brussels to Charleroi, dated 1796 (Stadsarchief Antwerpen inv. 289#207).
- Page 64:** Public notice of tender for fuel supply to military hospitals, dated 1795 (Stadsarchief Antwerpen inv. 289#64).
- Page 82:** Specifications for infrastructural works around the Waal dike in Dalem. Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Waterstaat (Afdeling III), dated 1814 (Nationaal Archief inv. 2.04.07, no. 5782).
- Page 102:** Specifications for the lighthouse construction on Sumatra. Departement van Kolonien.
Archive Ministerie van Marine: Afdeling Loodswezen (Afdeling IV), dated 1878 (Nationaal Archief inv. 2.12.10 no. 323; 10.4).
- Page 126:** Specifications for foundation and housing related to the lighthouse on Ameland.
Archive Ministerie van Marine: Afdeling Loodswezen (Afdeling IV), dated 1880 (Nationaal Archief inv. 2.12.10 no. 323; 11.4).
- Page 142:** Official report of the tender procedure. Specifications for infrastructural works around the Waal dike in Dalem. Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken: Afdeling Waterstaat (Afdeling III), dated 1814 (Nationaal Archief inv. 2.04.07, no. 5782).

Acknowledgements

The idea for this study arose in the procurement practice where I have worked for years. I regularly see discrepancies between the intended European procurement policy and its implementation, prompting questions about how and why these discrepancies arise and whether they can be explained. It was my curiosity and quest for answers that drove this doctoral study.

My supervisors, Bernard Steunenberg and Rik de Ruiter, provided sharp, critical input and acted as a sounding board. Their comments were highly appreciated. They prompted me to elevate the thought process and thus this study to an ever-higher level. Thanks to Chris Bovis and Brendan Carroll for their willingness to take a seat on the opposition committee.

The willing help of many colleagues has provided me with essential information from the practice of European tender procedures, for which I am grateful. A big thank you also goes to the respondents who took the trouble to complete an extensive questionnaire and – in a number of cases – were even willing to provide me with often colourful stories from their procurement practice. My thanks also go to members of contracting teams who answered my questions and gave me a glimpse behind the scenes of their practices. I am also indebted to Anke, Arnold, Hein, Gert and many other colleagues from the field who read the first drafts of my work and provided critical but constructive comments.

No quantitative research is possible without IT. Thanks to Olaf and Dustin, who helped me to collect and digitise the necessary data. All the data then had to be organised in such a way that statistical analyses could be carried out, and Foeke has been invaluable in this regard.

I dedicate this book to my late parents, who always followed my efforts with great interest and shared my hopes and dreams. Without the unconditional support of Gerda and Tessa, this project would not have been possible. You always kept faith in a good outcome, and that has been so important!