

Preface

Pre-commercial procurement (PCP) is a specific approach to the procurement of research and development (R&D) services outside the remit of the European Public Procurement Directives.

The European Commission brought this approach to the front of the innovation European policy agenda since 2007. In a Communication from 2007, the Commission explained what economic benefits the wide deployment of PCP may generate and clarified the applicable legal framework.

The European Commission's initiative was partly motivated by the desire to emulate the perceived success of the United States (US) Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program and partly by the desire to prevent that similar national initiatives in the United Kingdom (UK) and the Netherlands would be deployed as illegal state aid schemes. Since its 2007 Communication, the European Commission has undertaken additional efforts to encourage procurers in the European Union (EU) to engage in PCPs; It has commissioned studies with the purpose to understand the barriers to implementation and to promote good practices; it has co-funded cross-border collaborative PCPs; it has financed the drafting of a practical Toolkit which explains the steps in the deployment of a PCP and it has endorsed a team of experts to advise procurers on various aspects of implementation.

The Commission has had several attempts to assess the economic and social impacts of PCP in Europe, with mixed outcomes. This was particularly due to the limited number of projects that qualify as PCP and that have been finalized. The national R&D procurement programs (e.g. in the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium) have also come under internal scrutiny in 2014–2015, prior to deciding their continuation.

PCP in particular and R&D procurement in general are not yet established approaches in the EU. PCP is not widely implemented and the successful examples are still very few. However, partly due to the European Commission efforts, the level of interest and the level of understanding of this procedure by procurers throughout Europe are increasing.

Due to the unfolding debate on the topic, there have been so far no attempts in literature to tackle PCP from a general perspective. Only several articles have been written on PCP, mainly concerning legal aspects or its place within the innovation policy framework.

This book aims to advance the understanding of PCP as innovation policy instrument. First of all, it seeks to place PCP within its political and economic context. It elucidates its origins and its economic rationale. It provides a list of minimum requirements for the appropriate implementation of PCP policy and the appropriate deployment of PCP projects. Second, it assesses the value and achievements of similar policy programs, in the US, the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium and draws additional lessons for the effective implementation of PCP. Third, it suggests a clear conceptualization of PCP and a clear delineation from other innovation policy instruments. In this context, it highlights the gaps in the legislative framework. Fourth, it raises awareness of the remaining obstacles to its wide and effective implementation. It examines various solutions ranging from coordination measures by the European Commission to law interpretation and legislative reform.

This book can be useful to all actors involved in the setting up, coordination and assessment of PCP programs and in the implementation of PCP projects. It is also useful for teaching and training purposes.

This book makes use of illustrative practical examples of policy-making and projects implementation in various countries. Particularly the approaches and performances of the US SBIR program, the UK SBRI program, of the Dutch SBIR program and of the Flemish Procurement of Innovation (PoI) program are discussed. The analysis of these programs is used to assess the appropriateness of EU's effort to promote its own variant of R&D procurement, the PCP. But the book goes beyond presenting cases and policy or legislative frameworks. It outlines the author's own analysis and interpretation of the PCP legal frameworks and cases.

The material in the book is up to date as of July 2016.

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